
THE ROLE OF LITERACY EDUCATION IN BUILDING THE ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE OF THE BAHITOM VILLAGE COMMUNITY, CENTRAL KALIMANTAN

Mardiana Gabriella

Faculty of Teacher and Education, Univesity of Palangka Raya

mardianaupr@gmail.com

Received: September, 2024; Accepted: September, 2024

Abstract

Literacy education plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life, particularly in rural areas that still face challenges in accessing formal education. Literacy is not limited to the ability to read, write, and perform arithmetic but also encompasses the skills to comprehend information and apply it in daily life situations. Bahitom Village, as a rural area, faces numerous challenges in human resource development. Low literacy levels often hinder the community from leveraging economic opportunities and accessing essential information that could enhance their well-being. Literacy education is believed to provide a solid foundation for building economic independence, as literate individuals are better equipped to understand and utilize information for productive activities, such as managing small businesses, agriculture, or other economic ventures. Literacy education programs in rural villages also serve as a means of community empowerment by emphasizing the importance of fundamental skills to enhance participation in socio-economic activities. This study aims to assess the extent to which literacy education contributes to building economic independence in the community of Bahitom Village, Central Kalimantan. It is expected that the findings will offer new insights into the development of community-based literacy programs that are more effective and aligned with local needs. This study was conducted using a qualitative approach and reference-based methods. The choice of these methods was motivated by the focus on research questions closely related to social factors that influence individuals' mindsets, perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors within society. Based on the research findings, literacy education has proven to play a crucial role in fostering the economic independence of the community in Bahitom Village, Central Kalimantan. This program not only enhances basic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic but also broadens access to information and economic opportunities. With improved literacy, community members are better equipped to manage small businesses, record transactions, and plan economic activities independently.

Keywords: Literacy education, economic independence, community

Abstrak

Pendidikan literasi memegang peranan penting dalam meningkatkan kualitas hidup, terutama di daerah pedesaan yang masih menghadapi tantangan dalam mengakses pendidikan formal. Literasi tidak hanya terbatas pada kemampuan membaca, menulis, dan berhitung, tetapi juga mencakup keterampilan untuk memahami informasi dan mengaplikasikannya dalam situasi kehidupan sehari-hari. Desa Bahitom, sebagai wilayah pedesaan, menghadapi berbagai tantangan dalam pengembangan sumber daya manusia. Rendahnya tingkat literasi sering kali menjadi hambatan bagi masyarakat dalam memanfaatkan peluang ekonomi dan mengakses informasi penting yang dapat meningkatkan kesejahteraan mereka. Pendidikan literasi diyakini dapat memberikan landasan yang kuat untuk membangun kemandirian ekonomi, karena individu yang melek huruf lebih mampu memahami dan memanfaatkan informasi untuk kegiatan produktif, seperti mengelola usaha kecil, pertanian, atau usaha ekonomi lainnya. Program pendidikan literasi di desa-desa pedesaan juga berfungsi sebagai sarana pemberdayaan masyarakat dengan menekankan pentingnya keterampilan dasar untuk meningkatkan partisipasi dalam kegiatan sosial-ekonomi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menilai sejauh mana pendidikan literasi berkontribusi dalam membangun kemandirian ekonomi masyarakat Desa Bahitom, Kalimantan Tengah. Diharapkan hasil penelitian ini dapat memberikan wawasan baru dalam pengembangan program literasi berbasis masyarakat yang lebih efektif dan sesuai dengan kebutuhan

lokal. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan pendekatan kualitatif dan metode berbasis referensi. Pemilihan metode ini didasarkan pada fokus pertanyaan penelitian yang erat kaitannya dengan faktor sosial yang memengaruhi pola pikir, perspektif, sikap, dan perilaku individu dalam masyarakat. Berdasarkan temuan penelitian, pendidikan literasi terbukti memainkan peranan penting dalam mendorong kemandirian ekonomi masyarakat di Desa Bahitom, Kalimantan Tengah. Program ini tidak hanya meningkatkan keterampilan dasar dalam membaca, menulis, dan berhitung, tetapi juga memperluas akses terhadap informasi dan peluang ekonomi. Dengan meningkatnya literasi, anggota masyarakat lebih mampu mengelola usaha kecil, mencatat transaksi, dan merencanakan kegiatan ekonomi secara mandiri.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan literasi, kemandirian ekonomi, masyarakat

How to Cite: Gabriella, M. (2024). The Role Of Literacy Education In Building The Economic Independence Of The Bahitom Village Community, Central Kalimantan. *EMPOWERMENT: Jurnal Ilmiah Program Studi Pendidikan Luar Sekolah* 13 (2), 95-100.

INTRODUCTION

Literacy education plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life, particularly in rural areas that still face challenges in accessing formal education. Literacy is not limited to the ability to read, write, and perform arithmetic but also encompasses the skills to comprehend information and apply it in daily life situations. As outlined in Article 26, Paragraph (3) of the National Education System Law, the mentioned programs include literacy education, life skills education, entrepreneurship education, women's empowerment, equality education, and vocational education and training (Depdiknas, 2003). In Indonesia, literacy levels remain a significant concern, particularly in remote areas such as Bahitom Village, Central Kalimantan. Bahitom Village, as a rural area, faces numerous challenges in human resource development. Low literacy levels often hinder the community from leveraging economic opportunities and accessing essential information that could enhance their well-being. Literacy education is believed to provide a solid foundation for building economic independence, as literate individuals are better equipped to understand and utilize information for productive activities, such as managing small businesses, agriculture, or other economic ventures.

Literacy education programs in rural villages also serve as a means of community empowerment by emphasizing the importance of fundamental skills to enhance participation in socio-economic activities. Thus, literacy becomes a crucial asset for the residents of Bahitom Village to foster creativity and innovation in economic endeavors. Additionally, literacy education plays a role in providing access to technology and market information, which can drive the growth of micro-enterprises and promote economic independence at the local level. As identified in previous studies, international research shows that adult literacy rates have increased globally since the 1990s. Initiatives such as the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) have played a significant role in measuring literacy skills across many countries (DeWalt & Pignone, 2005). This study highlights that literacy plays a crucial role in driving economic, social, and technological advancement in modern society. The majority of illiterate adults are concentrated in developing countries, particularly in regions of Asia and Africa. Literacy programs in these countries face significant challenges, including poverty and limited access to formal education (Montoya, 2018). UNESCO notes that literacy is not only the basic ability to read and write, but also a means of empowerment to access further education and employment opportunities.

However, in practice, literacy education programs in rural areas often encounter various challenges, such as a shortage of teachers, limited facilities and infrastructure, and low community participation due to a lack of awareness about the importance of education. Therefore, it is essential to identify the strategic role of literacy education in building economic independence, enabling the community of Bahitom Village to optimize their potential and improve their well-being sustainably and independently.

On the other hand, economic independence often correlates with the competence of individuals or communities. Previous studies illustrate the development of an economic independence index, which assesses the extent to which a nation can sustain itself without relying on external economies. This research identifies several key indicators that reflect economic self-reliance and provides insights for governments to enhance the economic resilience of their countries (Helmy, 2022). Furthermore, a study conducted in Palangka Raya explores the lives of women working in the informal sector and examines their roles within traditional markets. The focus lies on how these women actively participate in the local economy, whether by choice or due to social pressures, and how this involvement contributes to their economic independence (Melianti et al., 2022). These studies offer different perspectives on economic independence, addressing it from the angles of policy, the informal sector, and social factors that influence the financial resilience of individuals and communities.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to assess the extent to which literacy education contributes to building economic independence in the community of Bahitom Village, Central Kalimantan. It is expected that the findings will offer new insights into the development of community-based literacy programs that are more effective and aligned with local needs.

METHODS

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach and reference-based methods. The choice of these methods was motivated by the focus on research questions closely related to social factors that influence individuals' mindsets, perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors within society (Affandi, 2020). Apart from that, the choice of this method focuses on an intensive study of the implementation of literacy education and its impact on the economic growth of the Bahitom village community, especially in terms of services and learning methods in an effort to strengthen and improve human knowledge (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, the choice of this method focuses on an intensive study of the process of implementing literacy education and its impact to the economical increase of the Bahitom villagers, especially regarding learning services and techniques in an effort to empower and increase community literacy.

The instruments utilized in this study include interviews, observations, and documentation reviews. The data analysis process involves three key stages: reducing the data, presenting it in an organized manner, and drawing conclusions based on the findings (Suharsimi, 2013). This study was conducted by collecting data during the implementation of a literacy education program in Bahitom Village, located in Central Kalimantan Province.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Literacy education embodies the essence of lifelong learning for all individuals in society. It emphasizes continuous personal development through various stages of life, grounded in socio-

cultural learning theories and practices appropriate for early childhood development. These theories suggest a dynamic relationship between language and thought, where both elements are deeply interwoven, influencing and being influenced by one another. Moreover, language and cognition are not isolated but are embedded within the cultural fabric of specific communities, playing a pivotal role in both preserving and transforming the culture over time (Hasselbring, 2004).

Bahitom Village is situated in the Murung district, within the Murung Raya Regency of Central Kalimantan Province, Indonesia. This village, historically known as Muara Bahitom, is located near the Barito River. It originally served as a resting place for the nomadic Dayak Murung tribe, who practiced shifting agriculture. Officially established in 1915 during the Dutch colonial era, the village has since developed into a more structured community.

Bahitom spans a geographical area of approximately 56,000 hectares, characterized by a combination of flatlands and hilly terrain. The village is relatively close to the district capital, Puruk Cahu, with a travel time of around 20 minutes, and about 400 kilometers away from Palangka Raya, the provincial capital, requiring roughly eight hours of travel.

The village aims to foster economic growth and self-sufficiency among its residents through local initiatives. It emphasizes sustainable development, including community empowerment and infrastructure improvement, contributing to the well-being and prosperity of its population. Today, Bahitom serves as a hub for both agricultural activities and cultural heritage, continuing to honor its Dayak roots while engaging in modern development efforts.

Based on observations and interviews with participants and facilitators of the literacy education program in Bahitom Village, several key findings emerged regarding the program's impact on the community's economic independence:

1. **Basic literacy skill improvement;** Program participants showed significant progress in reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. This improvement enables them to access relevant information for economic activities, such as market prices and business opportunities.
2. **Increased access to economic opportunities;** Graduates of the program can actively engage in local economic activities, including small businesses and trading in traditional markets. With enhanced literacy skills, they manage transactions independently and plan business operations more effectively.
3. **Changes in attitude and confidence;** The literacy program not only enhanced participants' technical skills but also positively impacted their attitudes. They gained greater confidence in communicating with others and became more proactive in seeking new economic opportunities.
4. **Social support and community collaboration;** The program also fostered collaboration among participants, creating strong social support networks within the community. Study groups formed during the program provided a platform for participants to share experiences and motivate each other.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that literacy education not only plays a crucial role in enhancing basic literacy skills but also positively impacts the social and economic aspects of the community. Improved literacy enables people to gain broader access to information and economic services, ultimately fostering their economic independence.

Consistent with previous research, literacy education contributes to the economic empowerment of rural communities by equipping them with the tools needed to achieve financial and social independence. However, challenges remain, such as limited access to educational resources and low public awareness of the importance of literacy. Thus, support from the government and local stakeholders is essential to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the program in the future.

Overall, the literacy education program in Bahitom Village has demonstrated positive outcomes in promoting the community's economic independence. With sustainable efforts and active community participation, Bahitom Village can serve as a model of successful economic empowerment through literacy education in rural areas.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, literacy education has proven to play a crucial role in fostering the economic independence of the community in Bahitom Village, Central Kalimantan. This program not only enhances basic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic but also broadens access to information and economic opportunities. With improved literacy, community members are better equipped to manage small businesses, record transactions, and plan economic activities independently.

Additionally, literacy education contributes to increased confidence and shifts in community attitudes, encouraging individuals to become more proactive in engaging in both economic and social activities. The collaboration among program participants strengthens social networks and facilitates knowledge exchange, further enhancing the local community's economic resilience.

However, challenges in implementing the program persist, such as limited resources and low public awareness about the importance of literacy education. Continued support from the government and active community participation are essential to ensure the program's sustainability and long-term impact.

Overall, literacy education in Bahitom Village demonstrates that improving literacy goes beyond technical skills; it also serves as a tool for economic and social empowerment. With sustainable program reinforcement, Bahitom Village has the potential to become a model of success for other rural areas in implementing literacy education to build community economic independence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author expresses gratitude to the Faculty of Teachers and Education at the University of Palangka Raya, along with the Community Education study program, for their facilitation and support in providing various resources and access. Their contributions were instrumental in enabling this research to be conducted effectively and beneficially for the community of Bahitom Village, leading to its publication in the Empowerment Journal of IKIP Siliwangi.

REFERENCES

- Affandi. (2020). The Contribution of the Literacy Village Program to Community Empowerment (A Descriptive Study on Nonformal Education Services in Literacy Villages). In *Jurnal AKRAB*, Volume XI, Issue 2/October.
- Creswell, J. (2013). Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. In *Research design*.
- Depdiknas. (2003). *Undang-undang sistem pendidikan nasional*.
- DeWalt, D. A., & Pignone, M. P. (2005). Reading is fundamental: The relationship between literacy and health. In *Archives of Internal Medicine*. <https://doi.org/10.1001/archinte.165.17.1943>
- Hasselbring, S. (2004). Flexibility in adult literacy programmes: Lessons learnt from Botswana. *Language Matters*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10228190408566225>
- Helmy, H. E. (2022). New Estimates of the Economic Independence Index: Is Economic Independence Necessary for Sustaining Economic Growth? *Journal of Economic Issues*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00213624.2022.2093582>
- Melianti, M., Yamani, H. A. Z., & Berkat, B. (2022). EVALUASI PROGRAM KELOMPOK USAHA BERSAMA (KUBE) DI KOTA PALANGKA RAYA. *JOURNAL SOCIO ECONOMICS AGRICULTURAL*. <https://doi.org/10.52850/jsea.v17i1.4341>
- Montoya, S. (2018). Defining literacy: UNESCO. *Unesco*.
- Suharsimi, A. (2013). *Prosedur Penelitian : Suatu Pendekatan Praktik (Edisi Revisi)*. In *Jakarta: Rineka Cipta*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>