



## Enhancing Literacy and Character Building among Bupolo Millennials: Strategies and Impact of the Community Learning House on Buru Island

Harziko<sup>1</sup>, Iin Sulastri Ode Ami<sup>1</sup>, La Ode Alimin<sup>1</sup>, Susiati<sup>1\*</sup>, Selfa Yanti Umasugi<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Iqra Buru, Buru, Indonesia

[\\*susiatiuniqbu@gmail.com](mailto:*susiatiuniqbu@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

Revitalizing literacy among millennials, particularly those in remote regions like Buru Island, necessitates collaborative efforts from government bodies, literacy communities, and families. The Bupolo millennials face significant challenges in accessing quality reading materials. The establishment of the Community Learning House (RBK) on Buru Island aims to address these challenges by fostering a literacy culture. This study identifies effective strategies to enhance literacy and build character among Bupolo millennials through RBK. Using a descriptive qualitative approach with phenomenological methods, data were collected via participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation at RBK, Buru Island. Findings reveal nine key strategies: Oral Tradition Literacy, Media Literacy, Basic Literacy, Literacy Tourism with Coastal Children, Literacy Carnival, Literacy Enters Village, Mountaineering Literacy, School Literacy, and Sharing Literacy. These strategies cultivate qualities such as curiosity, honesty, tolerance, creativity, hard work, independence, cultural appreciation, nationalism, and social responsibility among Bupolo millennials.

**Keywords:** *Buru Island; Community Learning House (RBK); Literacy Revitalization; Millennials*

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### INTRODUCTION

The strong influence of globalization has a tremendous impact on every aspect of people's lives. The current generation predominantly exhibits low moral awareness and poor character/ethics, largely due to a declining literacy culture, especially reading culture (Sadat, et., al. 2019; Susiati, 2019). The millennial generation's literacy culture is waning as children become more addicted to social media. Additionally, today's generation rarely exhibits a high motivation to read books, often showing indifference to the need for reading. These factors contribute to the lag in literacy levels in Indonesia compared to other countries.

The fading of reading culture among the current generation is driven by rapid technological advancements, with books being increasingly rivaled by technological tools such as gadgets (Mansyur, et., al., 2023). This shift negatively affects the reading interest of the younger generation, indirectly impacting their character development. To

cultivate a healthy and superior generation, it is crucial to prioritize character education from an early age.

Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017 emphasizes the strengthening of character education, asserting that a cultured nation can be realized by reinforcing values such as religious faith, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, national spirit, peace-loving, nationalism, respect for achievements, communication, love of reading, environmental care, social care, and responsibility.

Literacy and character education are closely interconnected, as highlighted in the Presidential Regulation, which underscores reading as a key value supporting generational character. Literacy serves as a means to acquire, understand, and apply knowledge through formal and informal education. Reading, a core activity of literacy, enables generations to gain comprehensive information and exert influence globally. Thus, fostering a literacy culture is fundamental to improving individual quality, as it helps develop a critical mindset, broad insight, and strong character education.

On Buru Island (Buru Regency), Maluku Province, there is a significant need for character education strengthening (Tuasalamony, et., al., 2020). To address this, the Buru Island Community Learning House (RBK) conducts reading literacy activities to support the education of an advanced and broad-minded generation. Rumah Belajar Komunitas (RBK) serves the Bupolo millennial generation from various backgrounds, including elementary schools, junior high schools, high schools, students, and out-of-school children.

RBK represents a solution on Buru Island, promoting literacy and spreading the literacy culture to remote areas (Goa, et., al., 2023). Founded by a dedicated literacy activist, La Ode Alimin, RBK aims to instill a love for literacy in Bumi Bupolo (Buru Island). In an interview, La Ode Alimin stated, "We are crowned as children of ancestors, children of tribes, children of the nation who continue to thirst for education. Education is not a curse for us to remain silent but the emergence of educational civilization for us to move to the end point. Therefore, if we want to build Buru Island, let's build it through early education for the Bupolo generation so that the spirit of literacy, reflecting the sense of *kai wai*, is embedded in their souls."

On Buru Island, RBK offers an alternative to cultivate the Bupolo millennial generation. The activities at RBK, grounded in literacy culture, indirectly reinforce character values, ensuring that the generation becomes not only broad-minded but also *kai wai*, cultured, nationalist, and virtuous individuals.

Given this context, the purpose of this study is to identify strategies to improve literacy culture and character formation among the Bupolo millennial generation through RBK on Buru Island.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Literacy Culture

Literacy culture is a person's habit of critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and knowledge development. Cultural literacy (cultural literacy) is the ability to understand, implement, and establish differences and similarities in the attitudes, habits, beliefs, and communication of a person. Hirsch in Aprinta (2013), cultural literacy is developed because

everyone cannot read, write, and communicate with others as skills separate from knowledge culturally.

Aprinta (2013) also revealed that cultural literacy is a person's knowledge of history, contribution, and perspective on one's own culture used in reading and writing activities. Padmadewi and Artini (2018) explain literacy broadly, which is a language ability that includes the ability to listen, speak, read, and write as well as the ability to think which is an element in it. Literacy is the use of social, historical, and cultural situation practices in creating and interpreting meaning through writing (Saomah, 2017).

The specific objectives of literacy according to Suragangga (2017), namely cultivating literacy in schools, increasing the capacity of residents and the school environment to be literate, making schools a friendly and fun learning park, and maintaining learning continuity by presenting a variety of reading books.

### **Literacy Improvement Strategy**

Various strategies commonly applied by a literacy-driving community to increase literacy interest among children, such as regular reading, reading fairy tales, discussions about story books, the existence of a class library, book reading awards, diligent writing, and the use of technology.

In line with the above, there are also several strategies to build a literacy culture, namely conditioning an environmentally friendly physical environment, striving for a social and affective environment, striving for school as a literate academic environment, utilizing a variety of reading materials, familiarizing reading activities in class, practicing problem-solving, having fun with words, and making reading literacy as communication.

According to Fitria et.al (2022), several strategies must be done to improve literacy, namely starting to think critically, utilizing information technology, and understanding digital culture. In addition, Rosyadi, et.al (2022) stated that there are literacy strategies used by Bajo Pulau fishermen, namely identification literacy strategies, independent literacy strategies, and combined literacy strategies.

### **Character Education**

Character education is a system of instilling character values which includes components of awareness, will, knowledge, and action to implement these values towards God Almighty, oneself, others, the environment, and nationality. The development of national character can be realized through the development of one's character.

However, because humans live in certain social and cultural environments, the development of one's character can only be carried out in the social environment concerned.

It can be said that cultural and character development can be carried out in an educational process that does not release students from the social environment, community culture, and national culture. Pancasila is a mirror of the nation's social and cultural environment so cultural and character education is the development of Pancasila values in generations through heart, brain, and physical education.

Lickona (2012), a character is formed from a habit. Habits from childhood usually last until adolescence. Parents can influence the good or bad of their children's habit formation.

Character education is contained in Law Number 23 of 2003 concerning the National Education System which in article 3 explains that National education functions

to develop abilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation to educate the nation's life which aims to develop students' potential to become human beings who believe and are devoted to God Almighty, have noble morals, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and a democratic and responsible citizen (Susiati et.al, 2020).

Kusuma (2011) suggests that the purpose of character education must be based on the philosophical concept of education that liberates and prepares the next generation to survive and successfully face the challenges of the times.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach with a phenomenological methodology to explore the role of literacy culture in shaping the character of the Bupolo millennial generation through the Community Learning House (Rumah Belajar Komunitas, RBK). Primary data, sourced from children participating in RBK and teaching staff, and secondary data from RBK office documents were collected. Data collection methods included moderate participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods. Data analysis involved a systematic process of data reduction, data display, verification, and conclusion drawing. The moderate participatory observation allowed engagement with participants while maintaining objectivity, and semi-structured interviews provided detailed responses. The study's comprehensive approach to data collection and analysis provides a robust framework for understanding the impact of literacy culture on the Bupolo millennial generation.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Strategies to Improve Literacy Culture in the Character Building of Bupolo Millennial Generation

Literacy culture on Buru Island is a form of varied and diverse culture. Since long ago, the millennial generation of Bupolo already has a strong literacy tradition even though it still relies on oral tradition literacy. The literacy culture of the Bupolo generation on Buru Island has now been seen by the existence of literacy-loving communities, one of which is the Community Learning House (RBK) which consists of various groups from children, and adolescents, to parents and school dropouts.

On Buru Island RBK has become the foundation for the progress of the Bupolo generation in the field of education and culture. Here are some strategies to improve literacy culture in the formation of the character of the Bupolo millennial generation on Buru Island.

**Table 1.** Strategies to Improve Literacy Culture in Character Building of Bupolo Millennial Generation through RBK

<b>RBK Strategy</b>	<b>Formed Characteristics</b>
Oral Tradition Literacy Movement ( <i>Gerakan Literasi Tradisi Lisan</i> )	cultural love, nationalist, <i>kai wait</i> , critical, creative, and independent.
Media Literacy Movement ( <i>Gerakan Literasi Media</i> )	honest, democratic, socially caring, responsible, and peace-loving.

Basic Literacy Movement ( <i>Gerakan Literasi Dasar</i> )	friendly, curious, critical, creative, independent, and national spirit.
Literacy Tourism with Coastal Children ( <i>Wisata Literasi Bersama Anak Pesisir</i> )	religious, tolerance, hard work, kai wai, obedience, familiarity, respect for achievement, and care for the environment.
Literacy Carnival Movement ( <i>Gerakan Karnaval Literasi</i> )	<i>Kai wait</i> , responsibility, communicative, peace-loving, creative, innovative, love of culture, and national spirit.
Literacy Enters Village ( <i>Literasi Masuk Kampung</i> )	Social care, environmental care, peace-loving, religious, honest, <i>kai wait</i> , culture-loving, creative, and disciplined.
The Mountaineering Literacy Movement ( <i>Gerakan Literasi Naik Gunung</i> )	<i>Kai wait</i> , love of culture, curiosity, national spirit, social care, nationalism, and care for the environment.
Literacy Enters Schools ( <i>Literasi Masuk Sekolah</i> )	hard work, discipline, tolerance, creativity, independence, curiosity, friendliness, appreciation of achievements, and love of the motherland.
Sharing Literacy Movement ( <i>Gerakan Literasi Berbagi</i> )	social care, familiarity, togetherness, friendship, honesty, creativity, and responsibility.

## 1. Oral Tradition Literacy Movement

One ongoing strategy to enhance the literacy culture among Bupolo millennials is the "Gerakan Literasi Tradisi Lisan" (Oral Tradition Literacy Movement). Buru Island boasts a rich heritage of oral traditions that encapsulate the fundamental philosophy or worldview of the community, known as "kai wait." This heritage includes various fairy tales, legends, "dendang jawi" (traditional songs), folk songs, and mythology, which serve as valuable educational resources for the millennial generation of Bupolo. These narratives, beyond providing entertainment, play a crucial role in character development and reflection on life. The literacy culture thus indirectly shapes the character of the Bupolo generation, prompting RBK to consistently intensify and promote literacy activities, particularly reading, among the generations on Buru Island.

At specific intervals, the millennial generation of Bupolo, through RBK, organizes simple events where participants recount fairy tales, sing folk songs, and share mythological stories believed to have historical significance on Buru Island. These stories and songs have been orally transmitted by the ancestors of the "bumi lalen" (the indigenous people of Buru Island), conveying lessons about the nature and character of the Buru Island people. The characters cultivated through the oral tradition literacy movement include a love for culture, nationalism, "kai wai," critical thinking, creativity, and independence.

## 2. Media Literacy Movement

The literacy culture of the Bupolo millennial generation is also evident in their ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate information across various media platforms. RBK leverages media literacy as a platform for generations to receive information and interpret messages critically. This approach is designed to empower RBK students to control and critically assess existing information. Media literacy is also employed to hone skills in evaluating the meaning of different types of messages, organizing that meaning for practical use, and constructing messages to communicate to others.

RBK has implemented the Media Literacy Movement as a strategy to enhance the literacy culture among Bupolo's millennial generation. This initiative aims to stimulate interest and awareness, encouraging a greater desire to read and write. The media literacy movement fosters the development of character traits in the Bupolo generation, such as honesty, democracy, social responsibility, selectiveness, critical thinking, and a peace-loving attitude.

### **3. Basic Literacy Movement**

The foundational literacy applied in RBK encompasses both basic literacy and cultural or civic literacy. RBK runs regular literacy programs, including various activities conducted outdoors or in public places such as tourist attractions or fields. One of the notable initiatives by RBK is the "Lapak Baca Buku Gratis" (Free Book Reading Stall). By offering a wide range of books as reading material, RBK aims to foster a love of reading among the Bupolo generation. Additionally, these literacy activities are designed to educate and address the literacy needs of generations transitioning from illiteracy.

Cultural or civic literacy is instilled to embed the values of nationalism and local culture in the hearts and minds of the Bupolo generation. In every activity, whether conducted indoors or outdoors, RBK ensures the integration of cultural or civic literacy. Buru Island, being a traditional area rich in various customs, requires individuals to adhere to these traditions. The cultural literacy imparted by RBK teachers provides insights into the life philosophies inherent in the Buru Island community, such as divine values, togetherness, noble values, "kai wai" values, beauty, obedience, sacredness, and human values. This movement indirectly cultivates character traits such as a strong sense of friendship, curiosity, critical thinking, creativity, independence, and a national spirit.

### **4. Literacy Tourism with Coastal Children**

The literacy tourism promoted by RBK is intended as a concrete effort to 'humanize humans' who lack access to knowledge. As a literacy activist, RBK has intensified literacy tourism activities with the Bupolo millennial generation along the coast of Buru Island to combat educational inequality and the marginalization of out-of-school children. Below are the insights from an interview with the founder of RBK.

Literacy Tourism with Coastal Children, which is filled with meaningful activities at every opportunity, aims to shape the character of the Bupolo millennial generation. The goal is to foster a generation that embodies religious values, tolerance, hard work, "kai wai" (respect for others), obedience, a sense of community, respect for achievements, and environmental awareness.

### **5. Literacy Carnival Movement**

The Literacy Carnival is a key initiative by RBK designed to foster awareness and a love for literacy among the Bupolo millennial generation on Buru Island. Due to the

limited availability of reading materials and infrastructure, Literacy Drivers have innovated to engage the Bupolo generation in reading and writing activities. The Literacy Carnival involves RBK students and people from all walks of life, who participate by marching through the streets of Buru Island city, carrying books and banners.

This movement aims to significantly shape the character of the Bupolo millennial generation, fostering qualities such as respect ("kai wai"), responsibility, effective communication, a peace-loving nature, creativity, innovation, cultural appreciation, and a strong national spirit.

## 6. Literacy Enters Village

The next initiative by RBK in promoting literacy is the "Literacy Enters Village" movement. In remote areas of Buru Island, literacy levels remain low, particularly reading literacy. To address this, RBK collaborates with the government to raise awareness of the literacy movement by implementing the "Literacy Enters Village" program. This initiative aims to provide the Bupolo millennial generation in remote regions with access to high-quality, diverse reading materials that are relevant to current issues.

Additionally, there are significant disparities in literacy access between remote and urban areas, as well as among different social groups. These gaps can hinder the overall development of a literacy culture on Buru Island. The "Literacy Enters Village" movement strives to bridge these gaps.

The movement is expected to cultivate a range of positive character traits in the Bupolo generation, including social awareness, environmental care, a peace-loving nature, religious values, honesty, "kai wai" (respect for others), cultural appreciation, creativity, and discipline.

## 7. The Mountaineering Literacy Movement

Rumah Komunitas Belajar (RBK), as one of the leading literacy advocates on Buru Island, consistently introduces creative and innovative literacy movements each year to enhance literacy among the millennial generation on the island. One such innovation is the Mountaineering Literacy Movement (Gerakan Literasi Naik Gunung). This initiative enables the Bupolo millennial generation in the plains of Lake Rana and Kaku Date (Mount Date) to engage in literacy activities, particularly reading and writing. The communities in the Rana Lake and Mount Date regions lead very traditional (primitive) lifestyles due to the significant distance from urban centers, which results in inadequate educational access.

RBK focuses on the Mountaineering Literacy Movement because many children in these areas do not receive proper education. Additionally, the people of Buru Island regard the plains around Lake Rana and Mount Date as sacred, believing these locations to be the origin of their ancestors and the repository of ancient secrets and customs. Educational infrastructure, particularly Junior High Schools and High Schools, is lacking, contributing to the low education completion rates in these communities.

Through the Mountaineering Literacy Movement, RBK provides various reading materials to the community, especially the millennial generation of Bupolo. Literacy advocates also emphasize the importance of reading books, which are considered windows to the world, fostering critical thinking and selective information processing. The movement aims to cultivate character traits in the Bupolo millennial generation,

including respect ("kai wai"), cultural appreciation, curiosity, national spirit, social responsibility, nationalism, and environmental care.

## 8. Literacy Enters Schools

RBK's strategy to enhance the literacy culture among the millennial generation of Buru Island includes intensifying the Literacy Goes to School movement. This initiative targets not only non-formal environments but also formal education settings, particularly schools in remote areas of Buru Island. The Literacy in Schools activity involves encouraging students to develop a love for literacy, focusing on reading and writing.

Literacy activists provide a variety of quality reading materials within the school environment, allowing students to freely enjoy the books available. Additionally, these activists consistently instill the value of "kai wai" (living as brothers and sisters), fostering a sense of camaraderie among students across different classes. The literacy movement in schools aims to guide and shape the character of Bupolo's millennial generation, promoting traits such as hard work, discipline, tolerance, creativity, independence, curiosity, friendliness, respect for achievement, and love for the country.

## 9. Sharing Literacy Movement

The next strategy by RBK is the Sharing Literacy initiative. This activity involves providing various forms of assistance, such as reading books and stationery, to the millennial generation of Bupolo across different regions of Buru Island. These donations are intended to enhance the attractiveness and interest of the younger generation in reading and writing.

The Sharing Literacy Movement aims to indirectly cultivate positive attitudes and character traits in the Bupolo millennial generation, such as a high sense of social care, familiarity, togetherness, friendship, honesty, creativity, and responsibility.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of previous research and discussions, several findings were identified regarding strategies to improve literacy culture and character formation among the Bupolo millennial generation through RBK on Buru Island. The strategies to enhance literacy culture and character formation include nine key initiatives: 1) Gerakan Literasi Tradisi Lisan (Oral Tradition Literacy Movement); 2) Gerakan Literasi Media (Media Literacy Movement); 3) Gerakan Literasi Dasar (Basic Literacy Movement); 4) Wisata Literasi Bersama Anak Pesisir (Literacy Tourism with Coastal Children); 5) Gerakan Karnaval Literasi (Literacy Carnival Movement); 6) LIMASKAM (Literasi Masuk Kampung - Literacy Enters Village); 7) Gerakan Literasi Naik Gunung (Mountaineering Literacy Movement); 8) Literasi Masuk Sekolah (Literacy Goes to School); 9) Gerakan Literasi Berbagi (Sharing Literacy Movement)

Through these initiatives, the Bupolo millennial generation has developed various positive character traits, including curiosity, respect (kai wai), religious values, familiarity, togetherness, honesty, tolerance, discipline, creativity, hard work, democratic values, independence, cultural appreciation, nationalism, respect for achievements, communication skills, friendliness, a peace-loving attitude, a love for reading and writing, environmental care, social responsibility, and overall responsibility.



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