



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Sociology and Community Development*

Community participation in realising the digital reading corner program: A Case Study in Tebing Tinggi City, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The decreasing interest in reading books has resulted in books being replaced by digital media. Changes in community behavior in the era of disruption occur because people are more interested in information obtained through online news that is spread on various websites and social media. This study aims to determine community participation in the implementation of Pondok Baca Digital (Henceforth POCADI) or the Digital Reading Corner program in Tebing Tinggi City which focuses on community involvement in utilizing the POCADI program to increase reading interest and digital literacy in Tebing Tinggi City. This research used descriptive qualitative research methods. The data collection techniques were interviews, observation and documentation. The results show that the POCADI program still has not shown a positive impact in increasing interest in reading and literacy in the community. Community participation in this program has not been carried out optimally at each stage. Especially at the implementation stage, where the community has not fully utilized POCADI as a reading place that supports an increase in interest in reading and digital literacy in the community.

KEYWORDS: community participation, digital literacy, digital reading corner, policy implementation

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Introduction

The low interest in reading in various circles of society is a fundamental problem that results in the low quality of human resources (Ferisia et al., 2020; Mahmudah & Musthofa, 2023; Sinar et al., 2023, 2024; Yusuf et al., 2021, 2024). People in Tebing Tinggi City have a low reading culture, especially among students. This can be identified when the rapid development of digital technology has transformed to replace books, magazines and newspapers as information media (Liu, 2005). Printed media in the form of books, magazines and newspapers used to obtain information is replaced by digital media that is more sophisticated in providing information through online news, uploaded on various websites and social media (Gabbadini et al., 2020; Kencana & Meisyanti, 2020; Setyowati, 2021; Triyono & Putri, 2020). Before the rapid development in digital technology in Tebing Tinggi City, there were many bookstores, newspapers and magazines that subscribed to magazines and newspapers that were willing to deliver magazines and newspapers to homes, coffee shops and other places every day, if they were not caught reading the latest magazines and newspapers, the community felt that they had missed information.

Changes in people's habits and behaviour in this era of disruption can be proven through DataIndonesia.id, which shows that 73.7% of Indonesia's population has used the internet (Karnadi, 2022), noting that the number of internet users in Indonesia has reached 205 million people in January 2022. Not only that, quoted from Antaranews.com, "the research company Nielsen announced the results of measuring the number of analogue and digital television (TV) viewers had increased from the initial measurement of 58.9 million viewers to 96 million viewers until July 2022, indicating an increase in the number of viewers up by around 70% (Antara, 2022)." From the data above, it indicates that people are more interested in obtaining information through digital media than print media.

This change in behaviour in the disruption era is due to the lack of public interest in reading books due to the many digital media that attract more public attention, so they began to leave books as a medium of information (Kurniasih, 2017; Lukita et al., 2023; Pane et al., 2025; Varga, 2020; M. Yusuf, Hanafiah, et al., 2021). This agrees with Liu's statement (2005) as follows: One of the impacts of technological development is the decline in interest in reading books, because it is replaced by a new habit of reading from employee screens (*screen-based reading behaviour*). Screen-based reading behaviour is characterised by a large amount of time spent looking at, and skimming what is on the internet, non-linear reading, only occasionally for short periods of time. As a result, one has less time to read deeply and gain more diverse insights. People who began to leave books as reading material encouraged the Tebing Tinggi City Regional Library and Archives Office to continue making serious efforts to regain interest in reading and reading culture in the City. The National Library of the Republic of Indonesia carries an innovative reading service for the community entitled *Pojok Baca Digital* (POCADI).

Pojok Baca Digital (POCADI), is a digital reading corner that provides learning materials (Zutiasari et al., 2021). The existence of POCADI Kota Tebing Tinggi does not seem to be used in accordance with its role and function as a reading place that can foster public interest in reading. The massive number of student visits to the POCADI program indicates the commitment of the Tebing Tinggi City Regional Library and Archives Office in introducing the POCADI program to the community, one of which is through visits to schools. However, the context of the visit is only limited to introducing the POCADI program in general without any further explanation on how the community should use and utilise the POCADI program as a means of improving literacy. Most students do not understand the contribution of the POCADI program in utilizing the potential that POCADI has to increase the reading interest and reading culture of Tebing Tinggi City students. The available facilities are not utilised as much as possible to enrich students with knowledge, but are used to access entertaining social media and seek pleasure by viewing content accessed through *Facebook*, *Youtube* and *Tiktok* through computer devices and *WiFi* available at POCADI. The use of digital technology in POCADI is irrelevant so it becomes a problem if the use of digital technology is utilised for things that are not productive and not related to literacy activities.

The spread of POCADI in almost all districts/cities in Indonesia is expected to increase and increase the Indonesian Reading Literacy Index (Kosasih et al., 2021). It can be seen through the calculation of the Reading Literacy Activity Index in 34 provinces in Indonesia in 2019, which shows that the National Alibaca index is quite low, namely at 37.32 on a scale of 100 (Agustina, 2021; Solihin, 2019). The community also plays a role

in building reading habits so that the efforts that have been made get a positive response and together improve reading literacy ratings both at the national and international levels in the context of developing quality and competency of human resources and being able to compete with world countries (Saputri & Khairani, 2001). In the guidebook for increasing community social participation, participation is the taking part or involvement of community members by providing support, both energy, thought and material and responsibility for the decisions taken, in order to achieve common goals (Askew & Khan, 1990; Fraser, 2005; Hasim, 2019). Increasing interest in reading and literacy in Indonesia is an important factor in efforts to increase human resources which would determine the future of the nation in building superior and quality generations. The participation of the Tebing Tinggi City community, especially students, is needed in realising the Digital Reading Corner program with the aim of increasing the nation's intelligence and empowerment in this case fostering interest and reading culture among the people. Therefore, this study aims to determine community participation in the implementation of POCADI or the Digital Reading Corner program in Tebing Tinggi City which focuses on community involvement in utilizing POCADI program to increase reading interest and digital literacy in Tebing Tinggi City.

Method

This research used qualitative research approach with a descriptive approach that aims to find meaning and understanding of a phenomenon in the setting studied by the researcher through stage by stage, and the meaning is concluded during the process from the beginning to the end of the activity, as narrative, and holistic (Yusuf, 2014). The data collection techniques used are observation, interviews and documentation techniques. The location of the research was the POCADI of Tebing Tinggi City and the Tebing Tinggi City Regional Library and Archives Office. The informants were chosen by purposive sampling, which a data source sampling technique is based on certain considerations related to the case study under study and the researcher's objectives (Sugiyono, 2019). This technique was used because the information collected was directed according to the needs of the researcher and the determination of informants was aimed at parties who really know and master the information needed and could be trusted as a source of data. The intended research informants consist of the head of library services and cooperation sub, digital reading corner staff, library instructors and digital reading corner visitors

Results and Discussion

1. Community Participation in the POCADI Program

Community participation is an important thing to do in a development because together with participation, indicators of program success can be seen from the high level of participation by recipients of development programs. POCADI program, is a program launched by the National Library which offers each local Public/District/City Library Office to get a reading corner unit for each office that submits recommendations and requests for POCADI units as a reading service that supports the acceleration of increasing interest in reading, reading culture and digital literacy of the community (Aswat & Nurmaya, 2019). In order to support the POCADI program, participation is needed in every implementation. To see the participation of the community/visitors in this POCADI program, researchers will analyse how community participation is based on the participation stages of Cohen & Uphoff (1977) which consist of decision making, implementation, benefit taking and evaluation.

2. Decision Making

Decision making is the initial stage in determining policies determined in order to alleviate a problem that is being faced. Community participation in decision-making on POCADI Program was carried out in an open meeting called the Public Consultation Forum held by the Tebing Tinggi city library office. The forum consists of various layers of society ranging from the Principal of SD/SMP/SMA/SMK/Students, library managers, Tebing Tinggi City children's forum, student council management and members of the Tebing Tinggi City mosque council. In the Public Consultation Forum through the head of service, it began to introduce services the community can use in order to fulfil their need for information through library services. The community can participate through this forum so that it becomes a means for the library service to involve them in realising the digital reading corner program for Tebing Tinggi city. The community has contributed quite well and responded

to the existence of POCADI which was placed in Tanah Lapang Merdeka Kota Tebing Tinggi. POCADI itself is included in the service that provides a place and space, and facilities used by the community to carry out learning activities through printed books and digital books which are also equipped with computers and tablets as library assistance in reading.

This can be a solution to the problem of low interest among students, by introducing the use of digital technology as a means of supporting reading and learning activities, through digital literacy programs (Husna et al., 2021). Tebing Tinggi City regional library and Archives Office makes POCADI a forum for lifelong learning for the community which should be utilised in achieving goals in increasing knowledge and insight, especially students who are at a productive age to develop their talents and interests. In addition, people who do not go to school can also make the most from the facilities available at POCADI, so that they can adapt keeping up with the times that lead us to increase knowledge in digital technology. This improvement can be done in stages and slowly by utilizing POCADI as a medium to become a more knowledgeable human being.

3. Implementation

The implementation stage is the second stage that has been determined. It begins with the delivery of the POCADI unit through cargo expeditions by ship. Then in the preparation, assembly and operation of the entire device were carried out. The items provided can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. List of Equipment Items POCADI

No.	Type/Type of Goods	Total
1.	<i>Server, ID, Router, Modem</i>	1
2.	3 <i>All in One</i> PCs and 3 Tablet	1
3.	43" LED TV	1
4.	Carpet Tile 50x50	1
5.	UPS <i>Power</i>	1
6.	<i>All In One</i> Table	3
7.	Pulpit Table	1
8.	Bookshelf	2
9.	Cabinet Shelves	1
10.	<i>Back Droop</i>	1
11.	Sofa	1
12.	Chair	2

Source: Tebing Tinggi City Library Office, 2025

This was carried out within 1 week and right on 16 December 2020 at 09.00 WIB at POCADI area of Tebing Tinggi. There are three related agencies where each agency has different interests and limited authority in reaching the main tasks and functions of the fields needed to realize the POCADI program as a reading service in Tebing Tinggi City. Until now, the POCADI program has been running for more than 4 years, with thousands of students visiting POCADI, which is expected to have the potential to increase people's interest in reading. However, based on the researcher's observation, POCADI is only used as a place to stop by after school without any perceived benefits in terms of science and academics.

Students who visit POCADI consider it only as a place to hang out and spend time with school friends. So, they need another gathering place that does not require expensive costs and is a short distance from their school to get back together. Basically, literacy activities are based on the concept of reading without a bill, which culminates in the community's perception that reading is a necessity, rather than an obligation. People can choose the reading material they want according to cognitive level without the burden of assignments and bills or questions to answer, or even without the necessity to finish the book if it is boring or too difficult (Hidayah & Widodo, 2019:96). This is in line with the habits of students who visit POCADI, during the researcher's observation, most of them are only limited to utilizing POCADI as a reading and an internet play space in which they are used to access the internet with few of them interested in reading digital books through the available

computers. With the habits of students who visit POCADI, the interest in reading and the reading culture of the community will be slower to increase every year.

4. Benefit of Visiting POCADI

Community participation in taking advantage of this POCADI program relates to the quantity and quality of benefits provided to the community. The community can take as many benefits as needed while in POCADI as long as it supports the increase in reading interest and reading culture in the community. However, in reality, visitors who come to POCADI often do not utilise the potential that POCADI has in fostering interest in reading and the reading culture of the community itself. Therefore, as long as POCADI has not been fully utilised by the community for academic purposes through reading potential, the existence of POCADI has not been able to have a significant impact in advancing and increasing interest in reading and literacy in the Tebing Tinggi City community. However, the POCADI program will continue to run even though it has not been used appropriately and quickly in accelerating community literacy development.

One of the efforts that the community must make in relation to the literacy movement is sustainability and this needs to start with literacy activities. The lack of socialization and technical guidance seems to be a factor that makes communities still reluctant to take the initiative to conduct literacy activities. In fact, the first step that needs to be taken so that people have knowledge about literacy is through socialization (Hidayah et al., 2019). In addition, it is also equipped with a collection of books through the DCC classification. It can be seen that the most POCADI collections are in the religion category and the least collections are in general works and pure knowledge.

Table 2. POCADI Reading Corner Library Collection Digital City High T.

Notation DCC	Classification of library materials	Total
000	Public works	4
100	Philosophy	19
200	Religion	58
300	Social science	22
400	Language	20
500	Science pure	4
600	Science applied/technology	53
700	Arts, sports	43
800	Literature	42
900	History, geography	10
	Total	475

Source: Digital Reading Corner of Tebing Tinggi City, 2025

Library materials with religious categories are the largest collection because POCADI Kota Tebing Tinggi is visited by many students who are expected to learn about religion so that they become students who have good morals, polite and courteous. The book code system is very helpful in providing access to the community to find appropriate reading material. Instead of using numbers and letters in general, book coding is equipped with a colour method to make it easier for lower-level children (elementary school) to know the type of book they want to read (Hidayah et al., 2019). In addition to the printed book collection, visitors can also access digital books through electronic devices in POCADI in the form of *Personal Computers*, tablets and their respective gadgets. Visitors can read digital books through the iPusnas application.

5. Evaluation

Evaluation is the process of providing information about the extent to which a particular activity has been achieved (Umar, 2005). In this regard, at the evaluation stage, POCADI Kota Tebing Tinggi is carried out by the Tebing Tinggi city regional library and archives office every year to the National Library of the Republic of

Indonesia. The evaluation is intended to determine the achievement of POCADI by comparing the implementation with the target that has been set. The evaluation of the POCADI Program is made in the form of a POCADI Implementation Report in 2020 of the Tebing Tinggi City Regional Library and Archives Office. The report is a performance indicator for POCADI Tebing Tinggi which is used as a means of evaluation for POCADI Tebing Tinggi management and as a form of accountability. For POCADI itself, the main evaluation material is visitors, because without visitors the POCADI program is considered interesting and useful for the community. However, the implementation of the POCADI Program shows that the level of interest in reading and literacy of the community does not have a good impact increasing interest in reading and literacy due to the low use and understanding of POCADI facilities in reading activities. Visitors are the main evaluation material that is considered in every library service. High and low visitors will be a benchmark in the success of a library service. To see the number of POCADI visits, it can be seen based on filling out the guest book which has been combined through recapitulation by POCADI Staff so that it is well recorded.

Table 3. Number of POCADI users 2024

Month	User		Total
	Students	General	
January	1173	736	1909
February	1452	1144	2596
March	1219	1196	2415
April	1144	1136	2280
May	1173	1150	2323
June	1351	1144	2495
July	1334	1265	2599
August	1265	1242	2507
September	1365	1254	2619
October	1180	1288	2468
November	1188	1386	2574
December	1265	1495	2760
Total	15109	14436	29545

Source: Regional Library and Archives Office of Tebing Tinggi City, 2025

The number of POCADI visitors mostly comes from students who are indeed the target of the POCADI program in Tebing Tinggi City. The Tebing Tinggi city library and archives office routinely conducts socialization to all schools every week to see the development of a reading culture among students. Another form of evaluation carried out on the POCADI program can also be seen from the action plan. The action plan is a planning document for a one-year period that contains policies for development programs and activities, both those implemented directly by the local government and those taken by encouraging community participation. In connection with this, the action plan contains targets on policy programs. Action plans are very important in determining changes through predetermined planning so that the objectives of plan can be achieved through targets that become work references every year. Tebing Tinggi city library service action plan contains the Library's target of reading interest improvement program every year. In the indicator of the number of visitors in 2021, it is targeted to reach 93,000 people. The final realisation obtained stated that the number of visitors in 2024 reached 96,000 people. These visitors are divided into all services in the Tebing Tinggi city library development program. If calculated based on the total number of visitors in 2024 which reached 96,000 people, some of these visitors came from the POCADI program which managed to record 29,545 visitors, which is close to 1/3 of the total number of visitors to the Tebing Tinggi city library development program.

In addition to visitors, POCADI evaluation is also reviewed in terms of operational budget. In implementing the POCADI program, the budget used is combined with the budget of the Tebing Tinggi City Regional Library and Archives Office in a period of one fiscal year. The budget contains what is needed in

the implementation of the POCADI program in providing services to the community. In addition, community participation in the evaluation stage is still constrained due to the limited forum or discussion space conducted by Tebing Tinggi City Regional Library and Archives Office office, so that there is room for the community to convey the results of POCADI program that are enjoyed and felt by the community. Through the delivery of program results from the community's perspective, this can be feedback in obtaining input, criticism and suggestions for making improvements to the implementation of the POCADI program so that it suits the needs of the community. At the evaluation stage, community participation was not directly involved and only functioned as evaluation material through the number of visitors who came to the POCADI program.

The digital literacy program with the aim of improving the functional literacy of the community around the library is relatively new, as most similar programs are aimed at academics or aim to improve the ability to use digital technology, create digital content, and the internet in a healthy manner (Bawden, 2001). This program does not target behavioural change in the community and is only limited to providing knowledge in order to build public awareness to optimize the use of technology for productive and educational activities. However, the expected benefit is the growing awareness of the important role of the library as a learning house in improving functional literacy in the community (Husna et al., 2021). Based on the description of the evaluation stages of the POCADI program above, it can be concluded that the evaluation has run quite well with the form of an evaluation report conducted by the Tebing Tinggi City Library and Archives Office on the POCADI program to the National Library. Where the report is evidence of the implementation of the program that has been carried out every year, which includes reporting on the number of visitors and the budget obtained in the POCADI program each year. However, this form of evaluation does not include the number of increases in public interest in reading among POCADI visitors, which is a measure of the success of POCADI as a community reading service.

Conclusion

Community participation in POCADI Program in Tebing Tinggi city has not fully provided impact in realization of increasing interest in reading and literacy. It also has not maximally provided benefits in encouraging changes in reading and literacy culture. Although by continuing to visit POCADI, it has shown public interest in literacy. Some things that need to be underlined are that the community has not fully contributed actively in shaping awareness of the importance of literacy culture and digital literacy in today's increasingly advanced technological developments, without adequate literacy and digital literacy skills, it will be a concern for some people who will be increasingly left behind in various aspects and fields that have been transformed and continue to be entered by the development of digital technology. With the existence of POCADI, it is hoped that it can help a little in building education in Tebing Tinggi City to be able to compete with other cities. Non-formal education through POCADI also determines the running of development in Indonesia so that more attention must be given to continue to increase in order to build and prosper human resources in all regions of Indonesia, especially Tebing Tinggi City.

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