

## Exploring community reading park's role in Sorong City

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### Abstract

Mansapur Community Reading Park, TBI Robert Fulton, and EGAD Kairos Reading House are community reading parks in Sorong that aim to increase the community's reading interest. Reading remains a significant issue in Indonesia, especially in Papua. This research aimed to identify community reading parks' efforts, supporting and inhibiting factors, and their contributions to enhancing reading interest. The research method used was a descriptive qualitative case study. Three informants from TBI Robert Fulton, EGAD Kairos Reading House, and Mansapur Community Reading Park were interviewed, and then observations and documentation studies were conducted. The study found that various efforts were made by community reading parks, including collaboration with other communities, foundations, and the government as supporting factors. However, there were also issues, such as a need for more human resources and books and problems with the location of reading parks. The study also found that community reading parks contributed to increasing reading interest. The conclusion this study concludes that despite facing various challenges, these three community reading parks provide efficiently accessible spaces, serve as sources of reading and recreation through various activities, build partnerships with many parties, and promote literacy through social media campaigns. The study also needs to identify gaps in their role as academic or research reference sources.

Keywords: Community reading park; Literacy; Reading interest

## *Menjelajahi peran taman baca masyarakat di Kota Sorong*

### Abstrak

Taman bacaan masyarakat Mansapur, TBI Robert Fulton, dan Rumah Baca EGAD merupakan taman bacaan masyarakat di Kota Sorong yang telah hadir untuk meningkatkan minat baca di masyarakat Papua. Terlebih membaca masih menjadi persoalan di Indonesia, khususnya di Tanah Papua. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui upaya, faktor pendukung dan penghambat, serta kontribusi taman bacaan masyarakat dalam meningkatkan minat baca masyarakat. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah studi kasus kualitatif. Tiga informan dari TBI Robert Fulton, Rumah Baca EGAD, dan Taman bacaan masyarakat Mansapur, serta dilakukan observasi dan studi dokumentasi. Penelitian menemukan bahwa ada ragam upaya yang dilakukan taman bacaan masyarakat, termasuk melakukan kolaborasi dengan komunitas lain, seperti yayasan dan pemerintah sebagai faktor pendukung. Meski begitu, ada juga persoalan yang ditemukan pada taman bacaan misalnya persoalan seperti kurangnya sumber daya manusia, buku dan persoalan lokasi taman bacaan. Penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa taman bacaan berkontribusi meningkatkan minat baca masyarakat. Kesimpulan penelitian ini adalah meski menghadapi beragam persoalan, tiga taman bacaan masyarakat ini hadir dengan menyediakan ruang yang mudah diakses, menjadi sumber bacaan dan rekreasi melalui ragam aktivitas, membangun kemitraan dengan banyak pihak, serta mempromosikan literasi melalui kampanye media sosial. Penelitian ini juga mengidentifikasi kesenjangan dalam peran masyarakat sebagai sumber referensi akademik atau penelitian.

Kata Kunci: Taman bacaan masyarakat; Literasi; Minat membaca

## INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, libraries have served as vital communal spaces that facilitate access to literature and promote academic study. These institutions have been designed to offer a conducive environment for reading, research, and the pursuit of knowledge. Librarians, central to the operation and spirit of libraries, perform many tasks essential to maintaining the functionality and relevance of these institutions (Huang, 2015).

In this case, a public library has provided opportunities for information, learning, and education and has the advantage of offering the basis for lifelong learning. Public libraries are managed by various levels of government—from provincial to district, city, sub-district, and village authorities—and can also be operated by community organizations. Consequently, the funding for public libraries primarily comes from government budgets and tax revenues (Balapanidou, 2015; Salman et al., 2018). Public libraries serve as crucial support for education and literacy, offering various services, activities, collections, and resources for educational and recreational purposes (Abumandour, 2021).

As a place for storing publications and books, if referring to the historical context of Islam, libraries can have several essential functions: first, as a place to obtain reference materials for students at all levels of education; second, as a resource for research by Muslim intellectuals; third, as a storage place for valuable books and manuscripts from scholars; fourth, as a location for scientific discussions and intellectual debates; and fifth, as a symbol of pride for the caliph and local rulers (Saepudin, 2016). Even in times of crisis, the presence of libraries can

be interpreted as places that support a "school of peace," economic recovery, and mental healing (Alajmi, 2016).

In Indonesia, libraries are established based on Government Regulation Number 24 of 2014 on the Implementation of Law Number 43 of 2007 on Libraries (Republik Indonesia, 2007). This regulation provides detailed provisions for implementing various stipulations in Law No. 43/2007, including library standards, management, and interlibrary cooperation. Moreover, the regulation establishes national standards for different types of libraries, including public libraries, school libraries, university libraries, and special libraries. The various types of libraries each play a crucial role in supporting education, research, and cultural preservation. Each library type has a specific role and targets different audiences, making them a fundamental foundation for learning and access to information for the general public. We know reading is an essential foundation for developing literacy, and as a symbol of civilization, the library is indispensable as a source of knowledge. For example, the 18th century is known as the Age of Enlightenment because advances in libraries and literacy marked it. At that time, reading and writing became a tradition for people who explored knowledge (Retnaningdyah et al., 2017). The role of libraries and public libraries, including community reading parks, has been a topic of research (Asif et al, 2021; Karki et al., 2024).

Even so, reading and reading interest studies remain attractive, especially when considering literacy issues. We know that fostering a robust reading culture is crucial in addressing Indonesia's literacy rates, particularly in regions like *Tanah Papua*. A strong correlation exists between a

society's reading habits and literacy levels. However, instilling a fervent reading culture necessitates several prerequisites. Primarily, efforts to enhance reading interest must commence with bolstering reading proficiency, as the ability to read serves as the gateway to engagement with written material.

The Reading Literacy Activity Index study "Alibaca Index (2019)" was conducted by the Ministry of Education and Culture and examined literacy in 34 provinces of Indonesia. The study shows that the national Alibaca Index, which measures literacy, is very low, namely 37.32%. This indicates a severe literacy issue across the nation. It mainly points out that Papua Province, West Papua Province, and West Kalimantan Province have the lowest literacy rates, indicating that these regions need more focused

educational support and resources (Solihin et al., 2019).

Further insights from the Alibaca index emphasize four dimensions influencing literacy engagement: (1) Skill Dimension: The foundational ability to access and comprehend literacy resources. (2) Access Dimension: The provision of resources like libraries and bookstores, facilitating community access to literacy materials. (3) Alternative Dimension: The array of information and entertainment technologies offering electronic and digital avenues for accessing literacy resources. (4) Cultural Dimension: The formation of ideas, values, norms, and meanings within families, communities, and broader society, shaping literacy behaviors. Here, culture acts as a catalyst in fostering literacy habits.

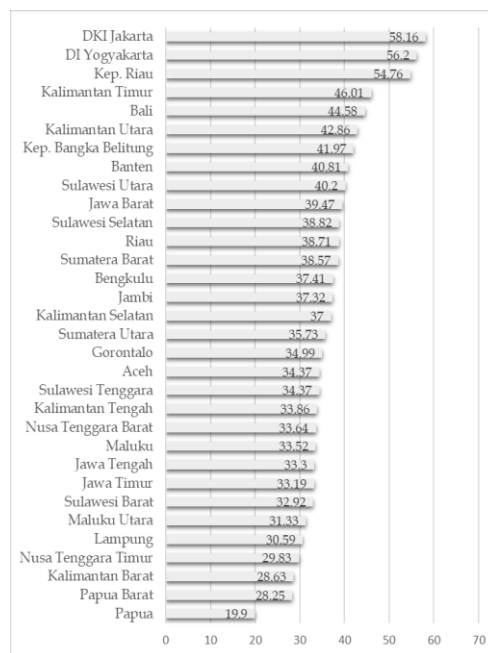


Figure 1. Reading literacy activity index

Source: Solihin et al., 2019

However, a critical examination of the Alibaca index, particularly its literacy access and comprehension measures, reveals limitations. The index uses two leading indicators: Latin alphabet literacy

and average schooling duration. However, recognizing the alphabet does not necessarily imply the ability to understand text, as confirmed by the latest PISA results. Since Indonesia began

participating in PISA in 2000, it has consistently been seen that Indonesian students' reading skills still need to be improved (Mustafa, 2023; Nugrahanto et al., 2019; OECD, 2022; PISA, 2023; Sari et al., 2023).

Additionally, the duration of schooling varies significantly in regions with uneven educational quality, such as Papua. Sorong City in West Papua has the highest average educational duration, while Tambrau and Pegunungan Arfak districts have the lowest. This disparity highlights a challenge that needs to be addressed (Nisa et al., 2020). Papua and West Papua, as regions that have received special autonomy with a variety of specialties, apparently have so many educational problems. Among these challenges is a regression in educational achievements and mismanagement (Afriansyah et al., 2019; Afriansyah, 2022; Efriandi et al., 2019; Parker et al., 2024; Saifullah et al., 2022). The corruption problem in Indonesia that also affects education system (Dirwan, 2019; Indonesia Corruption Watch, 2021; Siswantari et al., 2019; (Welch, A., & Aziz, 2023). Teacher absenteeism is a significant problem, with educators needing to be present to conduct

their classes (ACDP Indonesia, 2014; Febriana et al., 2018; Unicef, 2024; Wolomasi et al., 2022). The dropout rate in Papua and West Papua is also an educational issue that needs attention, for instance, the issue of school dropouts occurring in Papua (Hasibuan, 2022). It is not to mention several news reports about student dropouts in Papua. For example, Kompas reported that more than 68,988 school-age children in West Papua in 2022 have dropped out of school, most of whom are Indigenous Papuan children (Costa, 2023a; Costa, 2023b; Loby, 2023; Majid, 2023; Wahyudin et al., 2021).

The Education Indicators for Papua Province (2021) show that access to the school library is crucial for building reading habits and a literacy culture. Even though the Papuan government has issued a policy to build a library in every school and the number of libraries continues to grow, there are still many schools that need them. As can be seen in Table 1, the data shows that the lowest percentage is at the elementary school (SD) level, where only 36 to 37 out of 100 schools have libraries (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Papua, 2021).

Table 1  
Ratio of libraries to number of schools by education level and school status, academic year 2020/2021

Education level	Public	Private	Public + Private
1	2	3	4
SD	34,39	41,33	36,98
SMP	76,69	68,64	74,31
SMA	90,13	83,33	87,13
SMK	85,56	85,71	85,62

Source: Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Papua, 2021

Special attention needs to be paid to the elementary school level when a reading culture is crucial to be introduced from an early age. All aspects, including literacy, will significantly influence

children's willingness to face the school world (Solihin et al., 2018). These various educational problems have affected the literacy and numeracy abilities of school students in Papua. In Tanah Papua, we still

find cases where students who have reached advanced elementary or junior high school classes need help with reading (Afriansyah, 2022; Alik, 2024; Kahar et al., 2019; Nursalim et al., 2018; Tjahjadi et al., 2018; Saifullah et al., 2022). A breakthrough in addressing educational challenges is needed to improve human resources in Papua. Education should be flexible and tailored to learners' needs. Non-formal institutions like community reading parks can be crucial in this improvement (Purbaningrum, 2017).

Non-formal education, also known as out-of-school education, is one of the educational pathways responsible for meeting society's educational needs to create quality human resources. Non-formal education programs refer to Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, such as institutions of non-formal education, including Courses and Training Center (LKP), Community Learning Center (PKBM), SKB, Community reading parks (TBM), *taklim* assemblies, and similar educational units (Kurniawan et al., 2021).

The Community reading park serves multiple functions: (1) It acts as an independent learning center supporting literacy and Out-of-School Education programs; (2) It offers a diverse range of books and reading materials tailored to the learning needs of the community; (3) It functions as a research hub by providing access to various reading resources; (4) It serves as a reference source for academic activities, offering relevant materials; and (5) It doubles as a recreational space, providing entertaining reading materials that enrich free time with valuable knowledge and information (Saepudin et al., 2016).

To overcome obstacles to access and reading interest in the community, this can be done by introducing community reading parks managed by residents. Several community reading parks exist in Sorong City, Southwest Papua, to address literacy issues. Community involvement in increasing reading interest and culture in their environment is also realized through the community reading park, which has various programs that can meet the learning needs of the people in Papua.

Therefore, it is essential to investigate the challenges Community Reading Park faces in Sorong City, Southwest Papua, explore what Community Reading Park has undertaken to enhance the community's reading interest and map the function of Community Reading Park as a multifunctional educational hub, offering independent learning facilities, diverse books and reading materials for community needs, resources for research and academic reference, and recreational reading options to enrich knowledge during leisure time (Saepudin et al., 2016). Understanding this will provide a comprehensive overview of the role of community reading parks, particularly in Sorong City, Southwest Papua.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research used descriptive qualitative methods. According to Denzin and Lincoln, qualitative research encompasses multiple methods and adopts an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subjects. This involves studying phenomena in their natural environments and attempting to understand them through the meanings that people assign. It utilizes a deliberate collection of diverse empirical materials, including case studies, personal experiences, introspective

accounts, life stories, interviews, observational data, historical records, and interactive and visual texts. These resources document ordinary and problematic aspects of individuals' lives (Aspers et al., 2019).

The researchers employed several methods to collect data. Firstly, a literature review was conducted to gather basic information. Secondly, direct field observations were carried out to obtain data related to the role of the community reading park. Thirdly, interviews were conducted with relevant informants, in this case, the founders of the three community reading parks. The founders served as our primary informants. Data was obtained from informants, as well as from observations and document reviews. Ansri Nauw, the founder of EGAD Kairos Reading House, Margaretha Wambrau, the founder of TBI Robert Fulton, and Yuliana Wambrau, a kindergarten teacher who also founded and manages Mansapur community reading park, were among those interviewed.

The selection of this research approach was driven by the need to understand the activities and operations at several community reading parks in Sorong City. From  $\pm 15$  community reading parks in Sorong City, we focused on three (3) community reading parks where the founder is Papuan. The selected informants had sufficient knowledge regarding the research focus. These subjects were selected to ensure that the data obtained was valid and diversified.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sorong City, named after the local word "Soren", which means deep and wavy sea, is situated in the Southwest Papua Province and is directly bordered

by the ocean. Geographically, the city is bounded by the Dampier Strait and Sorong Regency (specifically Makbon District) to the north, Sorong District (Aimas District) and Raja Ampat District (Salawati District) to the south, Sorong District (Sorong District itself) to the east, and again by the Dampier Strait to the west. Covering an area of 1,105 square kilometers, Sorong City is predominantly characterized by its hilly terrain, providing a unique landscape compared to flatter coastal regions.

Sorong City, with a population of 289,767 in 2022 (Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Sorong, 2022), has been equipped with sea and airport facilities that facilitate the mobility of people and goods. In the past, flights to Sorong City were only available twice a week. Since 2023, through Law No. 29 of 2022, Sorong has become the capital of the Southwest Papua Province, which was established in early 2023, with several areas comprising its administrative regions, namely Sorong Regency, South Sorong Regency, Raja Ampat Regency, Tambrau Regency, Maybrat Regency, and Sorong City.

As a city with 80 elementary schools and 21,193 students (Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Sorong, 2022), in Sorong, several community reading parks are managed by various parties. By the mandate of Law Number 43 of 2007 concerning Libraries, the government is responsible for ensuring the continuity of the organization of libraries as learning resource centers for the community. Furthermore, the government should ensure the availability of library services evenly distributed throughout the country. This law emphasizes the library's vital role as an institution that provides access and services to the learning resources needed

by the community. The government is entrusted to carry out this task seriously so that everyone, regardless of social, economic, or geographical background, can benefit from libraries. In this context, the government is responsible for ensuring that libraries are not only places for storing books but also become centers of activities that support learning and community development (Yanto et al., 2016).

Up to the present, perfect conditions for community access to educational resources have yet to be fully realized. The government is responsible for ensuring adequate access to these resources for all. However, the existing limitations have sparked various literacy movements that are not government-led. Instead, these initiatives are driven by community groups and individuals who are passionate about improving literacy and education. These grassroots efforts fill the gaps left by governmental programs, demonstrating a solid communal commitment to enhancing educational opportunities and resource availability across different sectors of society. These movements supplement existing resources and innovate the methods and accessibility of learning, thereby broadening the impact and reach of educational support in underserved areas.

Moreover 2017, a collaboration between The Indonesian Mobile Library (*Pustaka Bergerak Indonesia*) and the Community Reading Parks Forum (*Forum TBM*), initiated by the Indonesian Reading Ambassador, collaboratively launched the Free Cargo Literacy program with *PT. Pos Indonesia*. Starting May 20, 2017, this program became operational and helped many community reading parks with books (Santoso et al., 2019).

In Sorong, the community has also experienced the impact of Free Cargo Literacy. During the implementation of this program, numerous community reading parks were established in Sorong, and support was received from this initiative. However, since 2020, there has been no more free cargo literacy (Bunga, 2020). Consequently, this study explored the roles played by three community reading parks in nurturing a culture of reading in Sorong City. Specifically, the study examined the contributions of TBI Robert Fulton, EGAD Kairos Reading House, and Mansapur community reading parks towards this endeavor.

TBI Robert Fulton is a community reading park established with the help of the Kambik Abhirama Foundation in Sorong. Located in the Melati Raya area, Sorong Manoi District, Sorong City, it was initiated by Margaretha Wambrauw. She started by teaching English to local children, who also wanted access to reading books. After over five months of discussions with the foundation, this reading house was finally established on July 14, 2021. It manages around 500 books, primarily children's literature. Activities can be followed on Instagram at @tamanbacarobertfulton.

The EGAD Kairos Reading House, founded by Ansri Nauw on October 5, 2021, is located on Jl. Tanjung Dofior Km.8, behind the Sorong Muhammadiyah University campus. It targets children aged 3 to 9, many of whom cannot read. This reading house has a collection of around 600 books, primarily children's stories, encyclopedias, storybooks, comics, and general books. Follow their activities on Facebook at Ruba Egad Kairos. Mansapur is a community reading park

that was founded during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, where all children had to learn from home. Yuliana Wambrauw initiated the community reading park to respond to children in her neighborhood who need help accessing smartphones for online learning. Mansapur helps children learn reading and arithmetic. The location is in the Rufeai area, West Sorong District, Sorong City. This community reading park manages around 200 reading books, including children's story books, general knowledge, folk tales, and textbooks. The most extensive collection is children's books. Mansapur community reading park activities can be accessed online through Instagram social media @tbmmansapur.

In its efforts to boost reading interest, TBI Robert Fulton encountered several challenges. Firstly, they need more staff or volunteers, making it challenging to manage the community reading park, especially since the founder was also busy with campus activities for her thesis. Another problem is that the reading park is located in a flood-prone area, which leads to frequent flooding. It damages the community reading park and discourages children from visiting, reducing their interest in participating in activities. Additionally, fewer children are visiting the reading park over time; although many initially showed up, their numbers slowly decreased.



Figure 2. Children at TBI Robert Fulton

Source: Documentation from Margaretha Wambrauw, 2023

At TBI Robert Fulton, as seen in Figure 2, they have made several efforts, including organizing learning activities to assist children around the community reading park and focusing on strengthening reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. Moreover, TBI also provides reading books to support these learning activities.

Furthermore, TBI Robert Fulton has tiered reading books consisting of 5 categories and three types, making it easier for children to choose reading material.

These categories include a) Toddler books for children aged 0-3 years with one sentence per page, b) Early childhood books for children aged 4-6 years with two to three sentences per page, c) Children's books for early age readers aged 7-9 years with material relevant for grades 1-3 SD, d) Children's books for intermediate level readers aged 10-12 years with material relevant to children aged 4-6 SD, and e) Children's books for advanced readers aged 13-18 years with material relevant to SMP-SMA. In addition to reading books,



TBI Robert Fulton also provides activity books, educational games, and general books, primarily focusing on categories b, c, and d, along with activity books. The EGAD Kairos Reading House, led by founder Ansri Nauw, has tried to foster a love for reading in the community, though it faces several challenges. One major issue is the recruitment of additional volunteers, whose varying enthusiasm and availability can hinder operations.

Consequently, the reading house is only accessible when the founder is present. Furthermore, using the house's terrace as a reading area presents environmental challenges; dust invades the space with the wind, and rainwater disrupts reading activities during wet weather. Additionally, there is a frequent

shortage of suitable children's books, which are in high demand among young readers.

However, The EGAD Kairos Reading House has made and continues to make significant efforts to promote literacy, as we see in Figure 3. Among their initiatives, the EGAD Kairos runs a routine program called "eradicating illiteracy," which trains children to read. Additionally, they evaluate the children's learning progress monthly, incorporating joint meals and involving them in various learning activities or competitions in person and online. They also organize an annual competition for children aged 6-10 years, aiming to encourage them to confidently showcase the skills they have acquired at the EGAD Kairos Reading House.



Figure 3. Ansri Nauw from EGAD Kairos  
Source: Documentation from Ansri Nauw, 2023

Meanwhile, Mansapur Community Reading Park faces challenges in boosting interest in reading among the community. A significant issue is the need for parental motivation for children to attend the reading park consistently. Despite it being a parental duty, the community reading park staff encourages children to come, play, and learn together. Additionally, children often prefer spending time playing or accompanying their parents to the market, which reduces their interest in reading. Furthermore, some children need help with reading fluently, and the

influence of their play environment can diminish their enthusiasm for learning. Consequently, only a few children attend regularly and study diligently, even though many were previously enthusiastic about learning.

For this reason, Mansapur Community Reading Park has implemented several strategies to foster an interest in reading. The organization provides a reading room and collaborates with the Indonesia Barokah Foundation to organize the "Bright Papua" program. This initiative features Smart TV learning

activities that help children develop numeracy literacy by watching educational material and completing assignments in module books.

Furthermore, to enhance the children's experience, they are provided with additional nutrition in milk and doughnuts, encouraging their participation in literacy guidance. At the

end of every month, children who have consistently attended literacy tutoring are invited to participate in "game days" and tours, with the winners receiving prizes from donors. This activity in Mansapur, as we see in Figure 4, is designed to motivate children to be enthusiastic about their learning experiences at the Mansapur community reading park.



Figure 4. Yuliana Wambrau in action

Source: Documentation from Yuliana Wambrau, 2023

Based on research findings, several factors hinder efforts to increase the community's interest in reading, as experienced by TBI Robert Fulton, EGAD Kairos Reading House, and Mansapur Community Reading Park. Among these challenges are resource constraints, particularly the need for volunteers to help manage community reading parks, which can affect the consistency of operations and impact reader attendance. Additionally, observations of community reading park activities shared across social media reveal a need for routine management, complicating efforts for those interested in learning more about community reading park activities.

Moreover, the availability of library materials, especially those suitable for children, needs to be increased, with reading park founders noting a need for more quality and relevant children's books. The location of the community reading park, often in the founder's house,

can also be problematic, being either non-strategic or unsafe—such as being roadside or in flood-prone areas—posing challenges for founders to secure the books and maintain operations.

Furthermore, many children still struggle with reading fluency, prompting the community reading park to shift its function towards becoming a learning class. This change demands additional focus and pedagogical skills from founders who initially aimed only to provide a reading space for children.

In addition, several supportive factors contribute to increased reading interest and culture within the community. One community reading park notes that the support from parents and the local community, who accompany their children or participate in reading activities at the reading center, is crucial. This engagement is vital for community reading and for their founders to impact society meaningfully. Moreover,

community reading park founders have benefitted from the support of fellow founders and communities, such as the Sorong Literacy Forum and the Sorong Community Reading Park Forum (Forum TBM Sorong). Since 2019, these groups have held regular monthly meetings to build networks and support each other through book donations, ensuring that these meetings are consistently held in a maintained space.

Training provided by various organizations and communities, including the Sorong Literacy Forum and the Sorong Community Reading Parks Forum, has been instrumental in increasing the capacity of founders and broadening their networks. Additional support has come from the Central Committee of Community Reading Park Forum (PP Forum TBM), the Papua Language Center (*Balai Bahasa Papua*), and other community groups. Furthermore, support from foundations and communities outside Sorong has been essential, providing community reading park founders with resources such as reading books, tables, blackboards, and other facilities.

The local mass media have also begun to support the initiative by covering community reading park activities and introducing them to a broader audience, which helps raise public awareness. Eventually, the local government is starting to recognize the value of community reading parks and, in some cases, has provided support, such as donating reading books to initiatives like the EGAD Reading House. This growing awareness and support from the government are pivotal for the sustainability and expansion of community reading parks.

From the study, it is evident that the community reading park significantly contributes to fostering an interest in reading among the residents of Sorong City through several initiatives. Children are given a space to read, and their parents' involvement in accompanying them to the reading room underscores its critical role as a communal learning space. The availability of community reading park services every day, including weekends, provides easy access to reading materials for the public.

Collaborative efforts by the community reading park, which partners with various entities, help enhance participants' skills, including community reading park founders, leading to more organized management of community reading park facilities. Increasingly, more individuals and groups are becoming invested in literacy, which boosts reading interest in the community. Therefore, those motivated to promote literacy are supported by the literacy community network in Sorong, facilitating connections with other networks to foster mutual assistance. The importance of reading is promoted through social media and mass media campaigns, with community reading park founders setting a solid example for the community. This collective effort plays a pivotal role in enhancing the reading culture in Sorong City.

Research shows that TBI Robert Fulton, EGAD Reading House, and Mansapur have effectively implemented Kemdikbud's 2006 community reading park guidelines. These community reading parks excel as learning resources, fostering literacy and providing spaces for children to read and write. They offer diverse books tailored to community needs, enhancing engagement through activities and social

interaction; however, their potential as reference and research sources is underutilized. Strengthening this aspect could support academic endeavors and inform policy recommendations, increasing their community impact and relevance.

Table 2  
Comparison of research on community reading parks

Research	Objective	Key activities	Impact	Challenges
Exploring reading parks in Sorong City, 2024.	Identify the efforts of community reading parkin increasing community reading interest.	Enhancing reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. Annual competition for 6-10 year-olds to display their skills. Bright Papua program partners with other organizations and provides additional nutrition to children.	Crucial for promoting reading and improving literacy in local communities.	Lack of funding, limited resources, and difficulties engaging the community
Padang Panjang Community Reading Park Toward UNESCO Version of Literacy City, 2023.	Promote literacy and social inclusion to achieve UNESCO Literacy City status.	Reading and writing classes, craft workshops, cultural activities.	Enhanced literacy skills, community engagement.	COVID-19 impact on activities and participation.

Source: Afrina et al., 2023

When comparing two studies on the efforts of community reading parks in Indonesia to increase reading, we can see that by comparing them, the following conclusions emerge: Table 2 below shows that all studies aim to increase literacy and foster a love for reading within their communities, each with unique objectives. The other aim is to promote UNESCO Literacy City status, enhance early childhood education, or use IT to boost reading interest. The Sorong City study focuses on efforts, supporting and inhibiting factors, and community reading park contributions to improving community reading interest. All studies emphasize diverse literacy-promoting

activities, including reading and writing classes, practical training, and community events. The Sorong City study highlights unique programs like the "Eradicating Illiteracy" initiative and annual competitions tailored to local needs.

If we also compare on the research Asif et al. (2021), the research delves into the critical role of libraries in fostering a culture of reading. The study emphasizes the importance of promoting reading as a lifelong habit, particularly in the internet era. It explores various factors impacting reading habits, including the influence of technology and the challenges associated with declining reading culture. Additionally, the study highlights the

significance of libraries in shaping reading habits and recommends strategies to promote reading culture among students. Apart from that, studies in Pakistan show the need for a comprehensive approach to instilling and nurturing individual reading habits.

For example, interest in reading also requires educators, parents, and libraries to foster a love for reading, considering the need for a collaborative effort to encourage reading as a lifelong pursuit. Meanwhile, the research we conducted focused more on the role of reading gardens, and when the issue of volunteer resources came up, this became a problem. Research in Pakistan once again reminds us of the importance of multi-stakeholders in increasing literacy in society.

On the other hand, a study from Karki et al. (2024) explores the potential of UK public libraries as community hubs promoting mental and physical well-being. Libraries are seen as safe, welcoming spaces that foster community interaction and provide diverse resources. In contrast, community reading parks in Sorong publicize activities on social media without covering children's faces or getting parental consent. This indicates that these parks are still far from becoming hubs for mental and physical well-being, suggesting the need for further research.

## CONCLUSION

The study in Sorong City focuses on community reading parks like TBI Robert Fulton, EGAD Kairos Reading House, and Mansapur Community Reading Park. These places are crucial for promoting reading and improving literacy in local communities. Despite their importance,

they face many challenges, such as lack of funding, limited resources, and difficulty engaging the community. Future efforts should focus on better locations for these community reading parks, more consistent volunteer support, and more high-quality reading materials based on the needs of the community reading parks. Using social media consistently can also increase their visibility and engagement. In the future, researching the impact of these improvements on reading habits and educational outcomes can help refine and expand the support of these community reading parks, ultimately raising their standards and benefits for the community.

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