

## READING PARK FORUM: ROLE AND IMPACT ON OPTIMIZING READING PARK COMMUNITY

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### ABSTRACT

*As one of the pillars of strengthening literacy in society, reading park are not only given support but also reinforcement. Reading park must be positioned in the chain of government policies related to the community literacy movement. This study aims to explore the potential roles and impacts of reading park forums for optimizing community reading park. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were obtained using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. Various articles and other reference sources were obtained from Scopus, ScienceDirect Google Scholar, and DOAJ. From the search results, 282 articles were obtained which were then taken by some of the most relevant studies. Field observations and interviews were conducted to strengthen the data. This research resulted in findings of the role and impact of FTBM. The role of the forum includes overcoming the problem of shortage of reading resources through donation programs and book exchanges; a forum for exchanging experiences, sharing ideas, and ideas about managing reading park; and a place to advocate. Then, the impact of FTBM is the impact of resource circulation, the impact of empowerment, and the impact of advocacy for community reading park activists.*

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## **A. Introduction**

Society is a social institution that continues to develop to find a balance point following human development (Ilma & Alfian, 2020; Rohman, 2022). In the process of its development, clashes occur in society both between individuals and with groups. Normally, conflict is a process of maturing society. Whenever there is an event that shakes comfort, the organizational system in society looks for a pattern of solutions so that the same thing does not happen again in the future.

Education at the implementative level plays an important role in accelerating society to achieve an ideal order of social life or what we call civil society (Izzah, 2018). As the nature of society, heterogeneity is unavoidable. Especially now with advances in technology and transportation, the movement and assimilation of various individuals from diverse backgrounds is a necessity (Narvaez Rojas et al., 2021; Zengin et al., 2021). Even within the scope of the smallest social group, namely the family, diversity occurs (Lok & Phua, 2021; Randolph et al., 2021).

Heterogeneity and disparity in literacy between individuals under certain conditions is one of the causes of problems arising in society (Judge, 2020). Even in certain communities groups of individuals with low literacy dominate in terms of quantity. Cases that befall one village or region due to lack of literacy still occur frequently. Some of these phenomena include billionaire villages that hit several villages in Indonesia due to government projects. Low financial literacy makes the majority of rural or regional communities stutter in managing large amounts of money and in the end suffer losses.

To overcome various problems related to literacy, educated groups and social activists are moving to contribute to providing education to the community in various forms and ways, one of which is community reading park (Khoiruddin et al., 2016; Saepudin et al., 2017). A concept of providing free reading materials that can be accessed by the public with the aim of increasing interest in reading. This TBM (Community Reading Park) is an embryo of efforts to increase literacy. TBM that develops, grows and is healthy will give birth to innovation and collaboration with various parties exploring aspects of literacy other than reading and writing. Therefore, the involvement of all stakeholders is the key to increasing the role and impact of TBM on literacy in a broad sense.

Communities that contain individuals who like to read tend to be more orderly, comfortable, and safe. Then, in several studies it was found that there is a correlation between people who like to read and the progress of a nation (Pariona,

2017). That is, efforts to increase awareness of reading, especially quality sources, are the starting point for creating superior human resources which are ultimately perpendicular to the progress of a nation. Therefore, the government is necessary

The government, through the ministry of education and culture, in 2015 launched a community literacy movement (Herdiana et al., 2021; Hidayah, 2019; Johan et al., 2020; Silaen & Hasfera, 2018) which aims to grow and improve a reading culture in society. To realize this mission, the government has made various efforts including appointing 31 districts as the main target in the community literacy movement, forming literacy villages with the aim of empowering the community as subjects who practice literacy, and mobilizing and growing community reading park.

There are 4 main components of running a community reading center, namely the existence of books, readers, location, and commitment to the consistency of activists. If you pay more attention, these four aspects have one key word, namely collaboration. Without collaboration it is very difficult to create a friendly ecosystem for increasing community literacy. For example, in the book availability component, parties such as the government, book publishers, and other civil society can contribute to providing proper and quality reading materials. Then in the location component, the local government needs to increase the number of RPTRA (Child-Friendly Integrated Public Spaces) that can be used by TBM activists to serve the community.

Another component that plays a role in efforts to create a literacy-friendly climate and ecosystem is the reading park forum. Substantially the existence of this forum can act as a catalyst for the movement of TBM in the community. In general, there are functions of the TBM forum, namely advocacy, empowerment and collaboration functions. In the advocacy function, the forum can organize TBMs in an area which then bridges the aspirations of members to the government or other bureaucratic stakeholders such as regional officials for licensing purposes, library and archives services for resource support, and so on. Then in the empowerment function, the TBM forum acts as an incubator for members to improve various skills through training, seminars and workshops. Finally, in terms of the collaboration function, the TBM forum is a forum for synergy and collaboration both among members and with other parties such as practitioners and academics. Seeing the large role of the TBM forum, this research focuses on

studying its role and its impact on increasing literacy at the implementative level in society through critical literature studies.

## **B. Method**

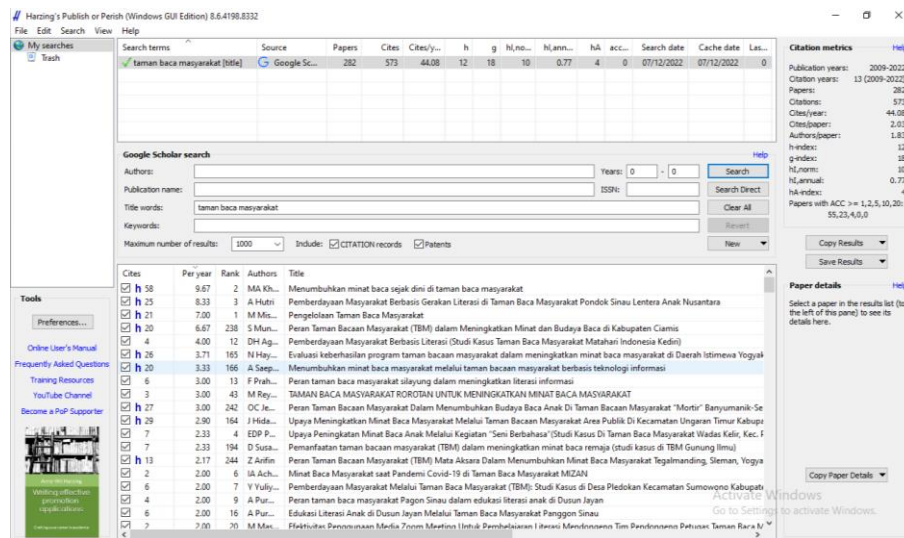
The process for conducting a literature study follows the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) standard recommended by (Jesson & Lacey, 2011) with the stages (1) collecting various references relevant to the title; (2) to select the literature that has been collected; (3) choosing the main reference that will be used as the main reference in dissecting the problem of the role and impact of community reading gs. Data were obtained from search results on search engines and indexing portals of reputable journals such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, and DOAJ. To make it easier to retrieve metadata from article indexers, authors use publish or perish.

The initial electronic data search process (step 0) found 282 documents related to literacy. The process of identifying relevant references (step 1) based on the title criteria. Subsequent searches are then narrowed down to keywords only (step 2). Topics of research that often arise include community reading park, reading literacy, literacy levels, the role of reading park, management of reading park, utilization of reading park, and the reading park movement. The finding data is then analyzed as the main reference (step 3).

To sharpen and get the reality in the field, the author also adds sources from observations and interviews with reading park activists. Then, the theory of community-based organizations by (Rothman, 1975) which states that the role and impact of community organizations will determine the existence and sustainability of the organization.

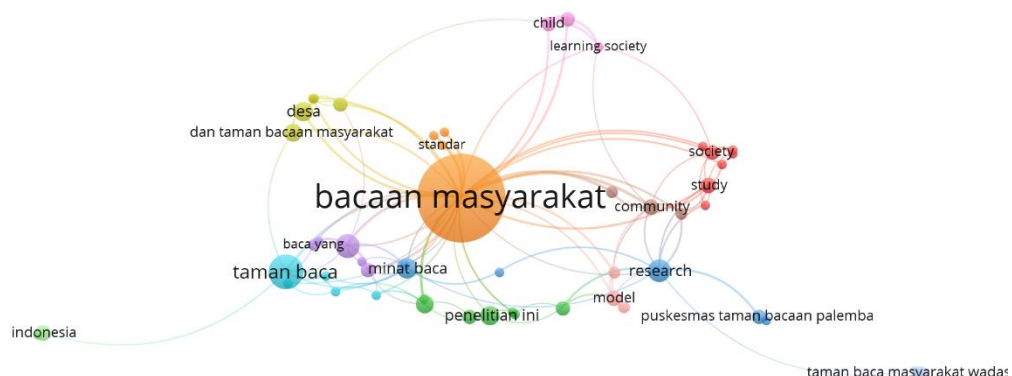
## **C. Result and Discussion**

Based on the withdrawal of meta data using the publish or perish application, it was found that there were 282 studies related to community reading park. From this data, researchers grouped based on the dominant topic and research focus. There are several keywords that appear more often than the others, namely, management, empowerment, role, improvement, innovation, and mentoring



**Picture 1.** Screenshot of community reading park metadata search results on the publish or perish application (2009-2022)

While research on reading park forums only found 1 article. One of the reasons is that not many community reading park have united themselves in the form of associations or forums, namely that carried out by (Amalia et al., 2022) which discusses youth innovation through the Sinjai district community reading park forum (FTBM) in realizing sustainable quality education. This research resulted in a conclusion that the community reading park forum has a vital role in educating the public, especially in terms of media literacy and preventing the spread of fake news or hoaxes. In addition, the researchers also looked at research maps related to reading park in Indonesia using the VOS viewer application, the results of which found that research on reading park was still not varied. So that there is still ample room for exploration in this field of reading park:



**Picture 2.** Visualization of community reading park research positions through the VOS Viewer

To enrich and deepen the analysis of the role and impact of the reading park forum on community literacy, the author also takes direct pictures of FTBM actualization

through observations and interviews with the Depok city FTBM chairperson, reading park activists, and the community. This is necessary to obtain facts on the ground regarding the existence of this FTBM. The combination of bibliometric data and field observations resulted in several findings.

### **1. The role of the Reading Park Forum**

Referring to the process of establishing FTBM in the city of Depok where the author was one of the initiators, this forum was formed with a purpose:

- a. Addressing the problem of shortage of reading resources through donation and book exchange programs;
- b. As a forum for exchanging experiences, sharing ideas, and ideas regarding the management of reading park to efforts to increase community literacy in the areas served;
- c. As a forum for advocating reading park activists with the government and other stakeholders.

From this goal, we translate it into programs and activities such as book donations, book exchanges, literacy gatherings, literacy festivals, competitions, and advocacy functions to make reading park empowered both in terms of programs, book sources, and funding. Broadly speaking, the role of FTBM includes 3 functions, namely, empowerment functions, organizational functions, and advocacy functions:

#### **a. Empowerment Function**

At this level, FTBM can become a facilitator for reading park administrators to improve their abilities both individually and in the management of reading park. The FTBM management actively conducts sharing sessions, seminars and training that are relevant to the interests and needs of members

#### **b. Organizational Functions**

As a communal organization whose members are reading park activists, FTBM must be managed professionally and independently with the aim of providing maximum benefits for members.

#### **c. Advocacy Function**

As one of the important pillars in growing and increasing basic literacy in society, reading park must be supported and given reinforcement. FTBM as an umbrella for reading park has the role of advocating for stakeholders such as the government, the business world, academics, and other parties who can substantively support the sustainability of community reading park. Based on

the results of the narrative of the informants, the success of FTBM in carrying out its role is influenced by 2 factors, namely the commitment of members in advancing reading park and the consistency of both the management and members in carrying out the programs that have been planned.

## **2. Impact of Reading Park Forum**

Usually an organization or association, a reading park forum has the main focus on its members, namely reading park activists. Therefore, the author conducted information digging to several FTBM members in the city of Depok to get a real picture of the impact of this forum's existence. From the results of the interviews, the authors were able to draw several findings, namely, the impact of circulating and refreshing reading sources, the impact of empowerment, and the impact of advocacy.

### **a. Impact of Circulation and Refreshing of Reading Materials**

Through book donation and book exchange programs, reading park can provide alternative reading to a diverse and up-to-date community according to readers' interests.

### **b. Empowerment Impact**

Literacy kongkow programs, sharing sessions, and training can bring benefits to members. As a form of actualization, forum members are also encouraged to be active in writing.

### **c. Impact of Advocacy**

One important element in efforts to increase literacy in society is collaboration. Synergy between stakeholders is a must as an orchestration to grow and increase literacy at the wider community level.

Reading park activists are just one element in the community literacy ecosystem that cannot play an optimal role if they do not have an adequate support system. Therefore, government intervention at the administrative level, business actors through community empowerment activities, as well as academics with theoretical and managerial concepts is needed.

The presence of FTBM in the city of Depok is able to actively become a bridge for members with other stakeholders to succeed in efforts to serve the community by providing free and quality reading sources to increase knowledge and a love of reading.

#### **D. Conclusion**

From the description of the discussion above, the author can draw conclusions, including:

- a. There is still ample room for research on the topic of reading park forums. This is due to the lack of reading park in the regions to form forums or associations.
- b. b. Broadly speaking, the community reading park forum has three roles, namely empowerment, organization, and advocacy.
- c. c. At the level of impact, FTBM is significantly capable of having an impact on three aspects, namely the impact of circulation & refreshing of reading resources, the impact of empowerment, and the impact of advocacy.

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