



Service Learning in Gurindam Twelve Learning at The Indera Perkasa Customary Center of Penyengat Island, Indonesia

Satriadi¹, Nefrida², Via Riani³, Risaldi⁴, Syah Ramadhani Siregar⁵, Deffran⁶

^{1,3-6} Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Pembangunan Tanjungpinang, Indonesia

² Universitas Persada Bunda Indonesia, Indonesia

*Penulis Korespondensi: satriadi@dosen.stie-pembangunan.ac.id

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Abstract: This community service program aims to implement a service learning model in Gurindam Dua Belas learning at the Indera Perkasa Traditional Hall, Penyengat Island, as an effort to strengthen cultural literacy and character education based on local wisdom. The activity was implemented through the Real Work Lecture (KKN) program with a participatory approach involving traditional leaders, traditional hall managers, and students. The service stages included planning with partners, preparing learning materials and scenarios, implementing reading-recitation sessions and value discussions, as well as joint evaluation and reflection. The results of the activity showed an increase in participant involvement in understanding, reciting, and interpreting Gurindam Dua Belas, strengthening the function of the Indera Perkasa Traditional Hall as a cultural learning space, and enriching students' pedagogical experience in designing local wisdom-based learning. The main limitations of this program were the short duration of implementation, limited participant reach, and less than optimal use of digital media.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nationally, Indonesia is known for its strong cultural, linguistic, and traditional diversity, with its ever-evolving socio-economic dynamics. The service and tourism sectors, including cultural tourism, are important pillars of economic development. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) noted that cultural tourism is growing at around 15% per year (Irwan *et al.*, 2020). Globally, tourism continues to experience segment differentiation, and culture-based tourism represents a significant market potential for the tourism industry (Destiana & Kismartini, 2020). In the context of education and cultural policy, the concepts of Freedom to Learn (Merdeka Belajar), cultural preservation, and community-based tourism encourage schools, universities, and local institutions to design programs rooted in local wisdom and community needs, rather than simply imitating a uniform and context-removed educational model. This creates space for community service activities that are not solely oriented toward fulfilling administrative obligations but also strengthening the cultural identity and character of learners through learning experiences in vibrant cultural spaces.

Malay culture holds a special place within national culture. Penyengat Island is a historic island that played a crucial role in the rise and fall of the Malay Empire, encompassing the Sultanates of Johor, Pahang, Siak, and Lingga, particularly in the southern part of the Malay

Peninsula (Mahadiansar & Romadhan, 2021). One effort to strengthen its image and appeal is represented through the tagline "Terpikat Pulau Penyengat," which promotes the island's new face, with spatial arrangements and lighting that make it appear sparkling at night (Amalia & Lubis, 2023).

It was on this island that Raja Ali Haji's classic literary work, *Gurindam Dua Belas*, was born, containing teachings about honesty, responsibility, kindness, and harmonious relationships between individuals, families, and communities. Classic Malay texts like *Gurindam Dua Belas* contain dense moral, religious, and social teachings and remain relevant for character education in schools and within community education contexts (Sirait, 2018). *Gurindam Dua Belas* can also be used to internalize the values of religiosity, honesty, responsibility, and social awareness through structured learning design, habituation, and role modeling, including at the secondary school level (Joelystiar & Alfaqi, 2024). Furthermore, *gurindam* remains relevant for Millennials and Generation Z when presented in innovative formats and linked to their life motivations and digital culture (Azizah et al., 2025).

However, the tradition of cultural literacy on Penyengat Island faces challenges. In the past, the community preserved the tradition of reciprocating *pantun*, *syair*, and *gurindam* from generation to generation, both written and oral, through a culture-based learning process that naturally grew in everyday life (Widianto et al., 2021). The cultural spaces and practices on Penyengat Island reflected the glory of the Riau-Lingga Malay Empire and played a significant role in shaping the local identity of the community (Niko et al., 2024). Currently, the younger generation's interest in classical literary works tends to decline; *Gurindam Dua Belas* is more often present as a visual backdrop and symbol of identity in tourism spaces, while in-depth understanding of its content and moral values is relatively limited. Classroom learning is often theoretical and focuses on memorization, so that the cultural context and meaning contained within the *gurindam* are less effectively internalized.

The problem of low youth engagement in understanding, reciting, and interpreting *Gurindam Dua Belas* (Two-Four Verses) demands a community service model that reconnects the teachings of *Gurindam Dua Belas* with everyday life. The service learning approach is considered relevant because it combines academic objectives with concrete service to the community. Various studies have shown that service learning in higher education can develop students' character, civic responsibility, social awareness, and professional skills through the integration of course material, community service, and structured reflection (Handoyo et al., 2020). The integration of educational science with local wisdom values has also proven to be an innovative strategy for increasing the relevance of education and character development in

students (Yusuf & Kamariah, 2024). This approach aligns with the view that service learning can integrate academic objectives and character education through community service that emphasizes direct experience, reflection, and reciprocal relationships between students and the community (Setyowati & Permata, 2018).

Various previous programs on Penyengat Island and its surroundings have focused on developing cultural and heritage tourism, such as introducing cultural and heritage tourism to the younger generation through virtual tours, as well as developing halal tourism and destination branding strategies (Irwan *et al.*, 2020). These activities are important for strengthening tourist attractions, but they have not specifically focused on developing a participatory learning model based on the *Gurindam Dua Belas* (Two-Four Verse) that positions traditional halls as non-formal learning spaces and "living classrooms" of Malay-Islamic character. This gap lies within the community service program, which aims to shift the position of the *Gurindam Dua Belas* from mere artifacts and tourist attractions to pedagogical tools brought to life through direct interactions between students, youth, and traditional leaders.

Based on these contexts and gaps, this community service activity was implemented through the Real Work Lecture (KKN) program at the Indera Perkasa Traditional Hall on Penyengat Island as a concrete form of university engagement with local communities (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). This activity was designed using a service learning approach based on local wisdom, by placing *Gurindam Dua Belas* as the center of character learning and cultural literacy, considering that local wisdom-based education is effective in strengthening moral values and cultural identity (Suyanto & Widodo, 2019). The purpose of this service is to implement a service-based learning model in *Gurindam Dua Belas* learning at the Indera Perkasa Traditional Hall to strengthen community cultural literacy and increase youth involvement in the moral and religious values contained therein (Tilaar, 2015), while simultaneously reinforcing the function of the traditional hall as a space for cross-generational learning that aligns with the mandate of the Tri Dharma of higher education, particularly education, research, and community service (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi, 2020).

2. METHOD

This discussion of community service activities uses a participatory-descriptive approach, where the community is not merely an object but also an active partner in every stage of the activity. This approach aligns with the concept put forward by (Satriadi *et al.*, 2025), which emphasizes the importance of direct community involvement in every stage of the activity so that the implemented solutions truly align with the community's real needs.

The Indera Perkasa Traditional Hall on Penyengat Island was chosen as the location for the activity because it serves as a center for Malay-Islamic customs and culture, where social, cultural, and educational activities take place. This community service program aims to revitalize the values of Gurindam Dua Belas through a service-based learning model that integrates student learning experiences with the community's cultural needs. The activity implementation stages include:

a. Initial Planning and Coordination

At this stage, needs were identified through participatory discussions with traditional leaders, the Traditional Hall management, and youth representatives. The identification results indicated the need for educational activities that connect the values of Gurindam Dua Belas to the community's daily lives. This stage aligns with the needs assessment concept in participatory community service (Satriadi et al., 2025), where implementers, together with the community, determine the focus of activities and appropriate forms of intervention.

b. Material Preparation and Activity Design

Students, along with the center management, prepared learning materials in the form of reading and pronunciation sheets for Gurindam Dua Belas, a guide to the meaning of moral and religious values, and visual media such as cultural value posters. The materials were developed based on local wisdom-based learning models (Widianto et al., 2021) and service learning (Setyowati & Permata, 2018) to enable participants to understand the content of Gurindam contextually and practically.

c. Implementation of Field Activities

The core activities were conducted at the Indera Perkasa Traditional Hall through an introduction session, joint reading, value discussions, and reflection. Students acted as facilitators, while traditional leaders provided in-depth explanations of the moral meaning and history of gurindam. This implementation phase served as a concrete manifestation of the solution, namely the revitalization of cultural literacy practices in a participatory format.

d. Joint Evaluation and Reflection

The final phase focused on evaluating the benefits and effectiveness of the activity through feedback from participants and the traditional hall management. The reflection process was conducted with students, the community, and traditional leaders to assess the extent to which the activity contributed to increasing cultural literacy and awareness of moral values. The results of this reflection were used as the basis for developing

improvements and recommendations for implementing similar activities at the Indera Perkasa Traditional Hall in the following period.



Figure 1. Steps of Community-University Partnership Program.

3. RESULT

The implementation of the service learning program at the Indera Perkasa Traditional Hall resulted in a number of changes and outcomes felt by both the local community and the student participants of the Community Service Program (KKN). The results of this study are presented in four main aspects: (1) increasing cultural literacy through participant involvement in Gurindam Dua Belas, (2) developing learning media and scenarios, (3) strengthening the institutional function of the Traditional Hall, and (4) students' reflective experiences in local wisdom-based learning. In general, activities designed to strengthen Gurindam Dua Belas literacy, develop learning media, and optimize the function of the traditional hall as a cultural learning space can be implemented according to plan with the active support of traditional stakeholders and the traditional hall managers. Student-facilitated learning sessions, such as an introduction to the contents of Gurindam Dua Belas, reading and pronunciation exercises for selected articles, and value discussions, encourage youth and visitors to interact more closely with the Gurindam text.

Participants no longer simply viewed the gurindam as writing on the wall, but also read, repeated, and attempted to explain its meaning in their own words. During the activity, several young people who had previously only “heard of it” began to be able to recite certain verses and their main meanings, and critical questions emerged regarding the relevance of the gurindam's advice to the lives of today's generation, including in the context of social media use and interpersonal relationships. This indicates a shift in the form of engagement from mere visual appreciation to a more reflective engagement with the content and values contained in

Gurindam Dua Belas.



Figure 2. Visit of KKN Participants to the Indera Perkasa Traditional Hall.

Along with the in-person activities, the program also produced a number of learning materials and scenarios developed in collaboration with the management of the Indera Perkasa Traditional Hall. Students designed summary sheets containing selected Gurindam verses along with brief paraphrases of their meanings, basic pronunciation guidelines with pauses and intonation markers, and a list of questions to stimulate value discussions. Furthermore, a session flow for "Introducing Gurindam" was developed, combining observation of the traditional hall space, reading the text, and guided discussions. These materials and flow were piloted in several meetings and then revised based on input from traditional leaders regarding language choice, duration, and how to connect the Gurindam to the historical narrative of Penyengat Island. At the conclusion of the program, the traditional hall management retained the materials as a tool for reuse in subsequent educational visits, both for student groups and youth groups.

From an institutional perspective, this activity also strengthened the function of the Indera Perkasa Traditional Hall as a "living classroom" of Malay culture. The visit pattern, previously dominated by sightseeing, listening to brief explanations, and taking photographs, was now enriched with active learning components. Traditional figures not only convey historical information but also relate the verses of the gurindam to traditional practices and religious values in Malay-Islamic society. Visitors are invited to sit, read, and discuss in the hall, which is functionally used for deliberations and traditional ceremonies. The traditional hall management stated that this format opens up opportunities for developing more structured educational visit packages and has raised further ideas such as establishing a dedicated "Gurindam corner" as a self-directed learning area for visitors.

For students, participating in this service learning program provided hands-on

experience in applying the concepts of community service-based learning and education based on local wisdom. Students learned to design activities sensitive to cultural contexts, adapt language and facilitation methods to the characteristics of participants, and build equitable working relationships with traditional leaders and traditional hall managers. Through observation, facilitation, and reflection, students realized that strengthening character and cultural literacy cannot be achieved through one-way explanations alone, but rather requires a space for dialogue, role models, and shared experiences. The final reflection demonstrated that the program helped students understand Gurindam Dua Belas not merely as a literary text, but as a source of values that can be operationalized in learning activities, while also broadening their perspectives on the role of higher education institutions in community partnerships and cultural heritage preservation.

Overall, the program's implementation results demonstrate that the collaboration between KKN students and the Indera Perkasa Traditional Hall increased youth and visitor engagement with Gurindam Dua Belas, produced learning media that can be used sustainably, strengthened the traditional hall's orientation as a cultural learning space, and enriched students' learning experiences within the framework of local wisdom-based service learning on Penyengat Island.

4. DISCUSSION

The service learning program at the Indera Perkasa Traditional Hall demonstrates how partnerships between local communities and universities can contribute to strengthening cultural literacy, character education, and the development of cultural tourism based on local wisdom. Service learning is understood as an educational process in which students not only study course material but also apply the knowledge gained on campus in the form of real services to the surrounding community (Nugroho et al., 2023). Various studies on service learning indicate that this model generally contains several key elements: starting from the real needs of the community, connecting field experiences with a structured reflection process, and building reciprocal partnerships between universities and the community (Setyowati & Permata, 2018). These elements are evident in the program at the Indera Perkasa Traditional Hall, where the need to revive the learning of Gurindam Dua Belas is used as the starting point for activities, student interactions with traditional leaders and participants are used as a space for shared reflection, and collaboration between traditional institutions and universities is built on an equal footing.



Figure 3. Service Learning Discussion with the local community.

Within the context of this activity, students participating in the Community Service Program (KKN) play a dual role as both participants and implementers. As participants, they are directly involved in reading and pronunciation sessions, value discussions, and an introduction to the cultural context facilitated by traditional leaders at the Indera Perkasa Traditional Hall. This involvement allows students to experience firsthand how Gurindam Dua Belas is not merely read as a literary text but is brought to life as a source of moral, religious, and social values. Through repeated readings, explanations of the meaning of the verses, and dialogues with traditional leaders, students learn to reinterpret the Gurindam in their own words and relate it to everyday life experiences, including social etiquette, personal responsibility, and relationships within the community. The impact for participants is an enhanced understanding of the content of Gurindam Dua Belas and a heightened awareness of the relevance of Malay-Islamic values to their lives as young people.

As implementers, KKN students are responsible for designing, preparing, and facilitating a series of community service programs in collaboration with the management of the traditional hall and traditional leaders. Students develop supporting materials, organize the flow of activities, manage technical implementation, and ensure effective communication with local partners. This role strengthens students' academic and social competencies, including the ability to understand partner needs, develop activities appropriate to the local cultural context, and build equitable working relationships with traditional stakeholders. The hands-on experience of planning and implementing programs encourages students to reflect on the knowledge they bring from campus and how it can be translated into tangible contributions within the community.

For the local community, particularly traditional leaders and the management of the Indera Perkasa Traditional Hall, this activity helped strengthen the traditional hall's function as a living cultural learning space. Traditional leaders were not only asked to recount the history and background of the Gurindam Dua Belas (Dua Belas) but were also involved as value facilitators, connecting the verses of the Gurindam with the community's traditional and religious practices. This collaboration demonstrated that community service can be an effective medium for integrating the interests of local cultural preservation with student learning objectives. The traditional hall was no longer positioned simply as a tourist attraction and selfie backdrop, but as a "living classroom" where local knowledge, student experiences, and shared reflections converged in one space.

Conceptually, these findings support the literature emphasizing that integrating local wisdom values into the educational process can more holistically shape students' attitudes, values, and skills (Yusuf & Kamariah, 2024). This service learning program also aligns with the view that community-based learning integrates academic objectives with character education through hands-on experience, dialogue, and reciprocal relationships between students and the community (Setyowati & Permata, 2018). From an institutional perspective, universities are not merely present as external parties "bringing programs," but as partners who participate in learning, designing, implementing, and reflecting on activities with local cultural institutions.

5. CONCLUSION

The implementation of a service learning program for Gurindam Dua Belas (The Two-Twelve Holy Scriptures) at the Indera Perkasa Traditional Hall on Penyengat Island demonstrated that a participatory, community-based learning model can connect students' academic goals with the real needs of the community.

Gurindam Dua Belas serves not only as a literary artifact and symbol of cultural identity, but can also be operationalized as a living pedagogical tool for character education and cultural literacy based on local wisdom.

The main results of this service program indicate that (1) student community service participants gained direct learning experience about the moral, religious, and social values within Gurindam Dua Belas while developing social, reflective, and collaborative competencies; (2) the Indera Perkasa Traditional Hall strengthened its role as a cultural learning space that involves traditional leaders as facilitators of values, not merely narrators of history; and (3) a more equal partnership was established between universities and traditional

institutions through the design and implementation of joint activities oriented towards strengthening the cultural literacy of the younger generation.

This service activity has several limitations. The implementation duration was relatively short and the reach of participants was still limited to the group present during the KKN period, so the long-term impact on learning patterns at the traditional hall cannot yet be fully measured. The use of digital media and expansion of the target audience to schools or other communities outside the Indera Perkasa Traditional Hall has also not been optimal. Going forward, a sustainable follow-up program is needed, involving more stakeholders, and accompanied by long-term monitoring and evaluation so that this Gurindam Dua Belas-based service learning model can develop into a good practice that can be replicated in other cultural heritage contexts.

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