

## Service Learning in Strengthening Community Literacy Through the Penyengat Mosque Library, Indonesia

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**Abstract:** *The background of this activity is based on the low level of literacy among the community and the suboptimal use of mosque libraries as educational public spaces. This community service activity aims to strengthen the culture of literacy through the implementation of service learning at the Penyengat Mosque Library, Penyengat Island, Tanjungpinang City. The community service was carried out using a participatory approach through four main stages: needs identification, activity planning, programme implementation, and evaluation. The activities carried out included reading classes, discussions on books with Islamic and Malay cultural themes, and literacy visits to introduce the library's collection to the community. The results showed an increase in community enthusiasm for reading activities and strengthened the library's function as a centre for intellectual da'wah and community learning. For students, this activity provided contextual learning experiences and developed communication, leadership, and social empathy skills. Overall, this programme was effective in building a literacy ecosystem based on religious values and local culture.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The challenge of low literacy rates in Indonesia remains a fundamental problem, especially in small areas and rural communities. According to a report (UNESCO, 2023) Indonesia is still below the global average in terms of reading interest and community participation in literacy activities. Limited access to reading materials, a lack of public library facilities, and insufficient community-based literacy activities are the main factors contributing to the weak national literacy culture. This situation directly impacts the community's ability to access information, broaden their horizons, and improve the quality of human resources. According to (Viono et al., 2023), literacy is not only defined as the ability to read and write, but also includes critical literacy, which is the ability to understand and interpret the social and cultural world reflectively and critically.

As a solution to this problem, collaborative community service activities between educational institutions, the government, and the community are needed to strengthen the literacy culture at the local level. According to (Saputri et al., 2024) one relevant and effective approach is service learning, which is a learning method that integrates academic activities with social services to the community. This approach emphasises contextual learning based on real

social problems (Teja Prasasty & Nurhidayati, 2022). Through service learning, students not only gain theoretical knowledge but also play a direct role in social activities that benefit the community. According to (Hidayah et al., 2021) this approach can foster social empathy, communication skills, and problem-solving abilities. According to (Mauludin et al., 2025) service learning also has a double impact, namely strengthening student academic engagement while helping to improve community literacy.

Penyengat Island, located in Tanjungpinang City, Riau Islands Province, is a historic area with high cultural and religious value. In this area, there is the Penyengat Mosque Library, which houses various ancient manuscripts, religious literature, and Malay historical documents. This potential makes the library strategic for development as a community literacy centre based on religious and local cultural values. However, in practice, this potential has not been optimally utilised. Community reading activities are still low, facilities are not well organised, and there are no sustainable literacy programmes. According to (Taufik Hidayat et al., 2025) mosque libraries have the potential to become centres of intellectual da'wah that function as public spaces to increase the literacy awareness of the community. According to (Aswan, 2020) religious-based institutions such as mosques have an emotional closeness to the community, so they have the potential to become pioneers of spiritual value-based literacy movements.

Several similar community service projects have also been carried out previously. The community service project conducted by (Atmi et al., 2022) entitled 'Improving community literacy through social inclusion-based village libraries,' emphasised the importance of a social inclusion approach in managing village libraries to expand community access to information. Meanwhile, the community service project conducted by (Nurul Faiqotuz Zakyyah et al., 2025) entitled 'Improving Rural Community Literacy through QR Code-based Digital Libraries at the Penambangan Village Education House, Curahdami, Bondowoso,' successfully improved rural community literacy through technology.

Both community service projects demonstrate the success of innovation in developing literacy through digital media, village libraries, and a social inclusion-based approach. However, a gap remains in that there is no community service project that specifically integrates service learning with the strengthening of community literacy based on religious values and local culture through religious institutions such as mosques. In fact, religious institutions have emotional closeness and high trust from the community, so they have the potential to become centres for sustainable literacy movements.

Based on this description, community service activities through a service learning

approach at the Penyengat Mosque Library are a concrete effort to strengthen literacy based on religious values and local cultural wisdom. Students and lecturers collaborate with mosque administrators to revive the library's function as a participatory, inclusive, and sustainable community learning centre. This activity is expected to become a model of community service that combines academic, social, and spiritual values in building a sustainable community literacy ecosystem.

## **2. METHOD**

This community service activity utilises a participatory approach, which is a method that emphasises the active involvement of the community in every process, from planning and implementation to evaluation. According to (Satriadi et al., 2025) the participatory approach is a method that actively involves the community in the decision-making process and implementation of development programmes. This approach is considered the most appropriate because it is in line with the objectives of community service, namely to strengthen the community's literacy culture through collaboration between universities and religious institutions, while also developing students' empathy, communication, and leadership skills.

### **1. Community Needs Identification Stage**

The first stage began with field observations and interviews with the administrators of the Penyengat Mosque and local community leaders. This step aims to identify the actual literacy conditions of the community, reading habits, and the potential of the Penyengat Mosque Library as a community learning centre. The results of the identification show that the library's book collection is quite diverse, but it has not been optimally utilised due to the absence of structured and attractive literacy programmes. These findings form the basis for designing solutions that are relevant to the local social and cultural context.

### **2. Activity Planning Stage**

At this stage, the community service team, consisting of lecturers and students, collaborated with the mosque administrators to develop a community-based literacy activity plan. This plan was developed participatively through group discussions so that the community could provide input on the types of activities that suited their needs. Based on the results of the meeting, several main programmes were established, such as reading classes and book discussions on religious and Malay cultural themes. These activities were chosen because they were considered capable of fostering an interest in reading while strengthening the religious and local values of the Penyengat Island community.

### **3. Program Implementation Stage**

The implementation stage is the core of the community service programme. Students act as facilitators who guide the reading and book discussion activities, while the mosque administrators function as providers of facilities and motivators of community participation. The activities were carried out in the library and mosque courtyard in an interactive and open manner. According to (Hidayah et al., 2021) student involvement in social activities such as this can improve their communication skills, empathy, and social responsibility. At this stage, the participatory approach was clearly applied, whereby the community was not only the beneficiary but also an active partner in the implementation of literacy activities.

#### 4. Evaluation and Reflection Stage

The final stage was carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation to assess the effectiveness of the activities. The evaluation focused on changes in the level of community participation in reading activities and library utilisation. The results of the reflection showed an increase in community enthusiasm in participating in reading classes and an increased awareness of the importance of literacy based on religious values and local culture. Students also reflect on the social learning experiences gained during their community service.

Overall, the participatory method has proven effective in integrating academic and social approaches through service learning activities in a religious environment. This collaboration not only strengthens the community's literacy culture but also builds synergy between higher education and the community in realising sustainable community-based learning.

### **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The implementation of service learning activities at the Penyengat Mosque Library has shown positive results in strengthening the community's literacy culture and optimising the library's function as a learning centre based on religious values and local culture. This activity has become a means of collaboration between students, supervising lecturers, mosque administrators, and the local community in creating an open, interactive, and sustainable learning space.

#### **Library Visits and Overview**

The Penyengat Mosque Library is located in the Sultan Riau Grand Mosque complex on Penyengat Island, which is known as a historic area with strong religious and cultural values. The library has a diverse collection, including religious books, Malay historical literature, and

local manuscripts on the development of Islam in the Riau Islands. Before the implementation of the programme, the library functioned mainly as a book storage facility, and reading was not yet a regular activity among the community.



**Figure 1.** Mosque and Library Penyengat.

Students conducted an initial visit to observe the condition of the library and understand the reading habits of the surrounding community. The results of the observation showed the need for activities that could enliven the atmosphere of the library and make it more relevant to the needs of the community. Based on these findings, the community service team designed participatory literacy activities that directly involved the community in order to create a dynamic and inclusive learning atmosphere.

### **Implementation of Student Activities and Learning**

The activities were carried out through two main activities, namely reading classes and book discussions on religious and Malay cultural themes. Students acted as facilitators who helped participants understand the content of the readings, encouraged reflection, and facilitated dialogue between participants. Mosque administrators also played an active role as providers of facilities, participant coordinators, and supporters of the activities.



**Figure 2.** Student Visits and Observations.

In addition, literacy visits were also conducted to reintroduce the functions of the library to the community. In this activity, students accompanied participants in exploring the library's collection, explaining the history of several ancient manuscripts, and introducing the Islamic values and Malay culture contained therein. This activity not only increased the community's

appreciation of literacy, but also strengthened the bond between knowledge, religion, and local traditions.

For students, this service learning activity is a real learning process that fosters empathy, social communication, and leadership skills. They learn to work with various parties, understand the social context of the community, and adapt communication approaches that are appropriate to the character of the community. Service learning plays an important role in shaping students' social skills and increasing moral awareness and social responsibility through direct involvement in the field.



**Figure 3.** Student Activities.

### **Impact of Activities on the Community and Implementers**

This activity has had a positive impact on the community, students, and religious institutions. The community has become more active in reading activities and has shown greater interest in the library's collection. The library has begun to function as a place for educational interaction, discussion, and knowledge exchange in the mosque environment.

For students and supervising lecturers, this activity strengthens their understanding of the importance of community-based literacy and serves as a means of applying the concept of service learning in a concrete way. This collaboration also strengthens the relationship between educational institutions and the community as partners in the development of literate human resources.



**Figure 4.** Students and lecturers in front of Penyengat Mosque.

Overall, the service learning activities at the Penyengat Mosque Library have succeeded in creating positive social change. The library is now seen as a vibrant and meaningful public space, a meeting place for religious values, knowledge and culture. The collaboration between universities and religious institutions is a concrete example of how literacy can be strengthened in a participatory manner by fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the importance of reading and lifelong learning.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The service learning activities at the Penyengat Mosque Library prove that collaboration between universities, religious institutions, and the community is an effective strategy in strengthening literacy culture at the local level. The implementation of these activities shows that literacy can be developed not only through improving reading skills, but also through a process of community empowerment that involves religious values and local culture as its main foundation. Reading classes and book discussions on Islamic and Malay culture have successfully revived the function of the mosque library as an educational, religious, and inclusive public space. The community has begun to show enthusiasm for reading and discussion activities, while mosque administrators have played an active role in managing activities, providing facilities, and encouraging community participation. This collaboration created a participatory learning atmosphere, strengthened a sense of togetherness, and fostered spiritual and social awareness in the community.

For students, service learning activities became a meaningful contextual learning experience outside the classroom. They learned to manage social activities, interact with the community, and develop communication, leadership, and social empathy skills. Through direct involvement, students not only understand academic theory but are also able to apply it in a real context to provide sustainable social benefits. However, these activities have several

limitations. The short implementation period means that the activities have not been able to optimally involve all levels of society. In addition, the limited library facilities pose a challenge to the development of a broader and more sustainable literacy programme. A comprehensive evaluation of the long-term impact on the community's reading habits has also not been possible.

Overall, the service learning activities at the Penyengat Mosque Library have succeeded in building a participatory literacy ecosystem rooted in religious values and local culture. This programme can serve as an effective model of community service in strengthening community literacy based on collaboration and sustainable social learning.

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