

Improving Literacy and *Minahasan* Cultural Values through Folklore Reading to *Paniki Bawah's* Children Residents

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Abstract– The project of public service implemented for this study aimed to improve literacy and *Minahasan* cultural values through folklore reading. The participants of this public service were 20 poverty-stricken children who lived in *Paniki Bawah* sub-district located in Manado, North Sulawesi. Before the public service project was implemented, the majority of them were only in the Word Level of literacy level and had zero knowledge about *Minahasa* folklore. However, after the public service implementation, most of the participants reached the highest level of literacy level, which is called Story 2 Level where they could rewrite their stories by paraphrasing them into their own words but did not eliminate any content of the folklores. This public service project was considered a successful movement and able to improve the participants' literacy as well as their *Minahasan* cultural values.

Keywords: Literacy, *Minahasa*, Folklore, Culture

1. INTRODUCTION

Literacy skills are crucial since they have become the basic knowledge to pursue higher education (Castillo, 2017). By referring to this belief, a company operating in the online mass media field (digital news) called Manadones.co.id has decided to care about children's education, especially those who live in slum areas that are not only full of poverty but have minimal learning facilities, for example, children who live in *Paniki Bawah* (one of the sub-districts which is located in Manado, North Sulawesi). Shockingly, some children who live there have even dropped out of school. Manadones.co.id carries out a program called "*Karema Project*" to train young children to read and write. They focus on the improvement of children's literacy. Despite having noble intentions, Manadones.co.id is constrained by costs and human resources in carrying out the "*Karema Project*".

By looking at the data gained from Manadones.co.id, it is reported that around 25 children aged 6 to 11 years dropped out of school in *Paniki Bawah* sub-district. They cannot even use Indonesian (*Bahasa*) properly and have minimum literacy skills. Therefore, Manadones.co.id intends to hold a folklore reading group. This is a good idea for the children who live in *Paniki Bawah* sub-district to improve their literacy as well as boosting their love for *Minahasan* culture. Reading folklore is very interesting because it presents stories and pictures (Silalahi et al., 2021). Apart from that, by reading folklore, children can learn about culture and appreciate it (Maukar et al., 2018). These days, the era of globalization and modernization has begun to erode local culture. Therefore, many parties have tried to preserve folklore or sometimes referred as oral tradition, including the process of digitalizing it (Fakhrurozi et al., 2021). Recognition and respect toward the culture are crucial because a culture symbolizes national identity. Children aged 5 to 11 years are easy to remember something. Usually, the materials that have been taught to the children around those ages are going to be ingrained until they grow up (Nursanti, 2021). Thus, it is important to educate young children to know the culture of their origin.

The public service team initiated by Universitas Sam Ratulangi (started from this point will be abbreviated as UNSRAT) through the program of “*Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat Kluster 2*” which has been sponsored by DIPA UNSRAT decided to collaborate with Manadones.co.id to improve children’s literacy in *Paniki Bawah* sub-district by teaching them to read folklore. The team bought *Minahasan* folklore books from the North Sulawesi Language Center, stationery, and coloring books where the objects are also full of *Minahasan* culture. This program has helped the children in *Paniki Bawah* sub-district in the process of improving their literacy, and their knowledge about *Minahasan* culture. Significantly, they even started to grow their love of their own culture.



Figure 1.

The Office of Manadones.co.id and *Karema Project* (Children’s Literacy Improvement)

2. IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

This section contains the stages carried out in the implementation of the public service that had focused on improving literacy skills (reading and writing) as well as improving the knowledge regarding *Minahasan* cultural values.

2.1 Students’ Recruitment

There are 20 children that had been successfully recruited by the public service team of UNSRAT through the help of the CEO of Manadones.co.id, Ms. Gracey Wakari. These children are considerably poor by reviewing their parents’ jobs and incomes. Some of them have dropped out of school but still have a willingness to improve their literacy (the ability to read and write properly). The data of the students can be seen in the table below. However, the names displayed in this study used pseudonyms through abbreviation. This is done to protect the privacy of the participants and due to the concerns of their parents.

Table 1. Data of the Participants

Name	Gender	Age
SI	Female	12
AR	Female	12
RM	Female	11
VIM	Female	10
VAM	Female	10
MS	Female	9
NA	Female	8
FK	Male	10
XCM	Male	10
EB	Male	10
TASW	Male	9
JM	Male	9
TU	Male	8
IK	Male	8
LN	Male	8
OP	Male	7
JK	Male	7
CW	Male	7
EK	Male	5
MT	Male	5

By looking at the table, it can be seen that there are 7 females and 13 males who joined this public service as participants. 2 girls were 12 years old, 2 girls were 10 years while there were 3 boys with the same age. The other 2 girls were 9 and 8 years old respectively. There were 2 boys who were 9 years old and 3 boys who were 8 years old and 7 years old respectively, while the rest 2 boys were 5 years old identified as two youngest participants.

2.2 Pre-Test

The children were given pre-tests to test their literacy level. The literacy level was measured by referring to six levels of literacy (Erfan et al., 2021; Nuranjani et al., 2022). The literacy levels are described below:

1. Beginner Level: children who do not know letters at all.
2. Letters Level: children who have memorized and recognized letters.
3. Word Level: children who can read and write the collection of some words (sentences) accurately and properly.
4. Paragraph Level: children who can read and write a whole paragraph accurately and properly.
5. Story 1 Level: children who can read and write a simple story that consists of some paragraphs accurately and properly.
6. Story 2 Level: children who can understand the content of the story that has been read and rewrite it.

2.3 Learning to Read and Write as well as *Minahasan* Cultural Values

The children were taught to read and write by following several learning steps as proposed by (Habibullah, 2012). The steps are:

1. The teacher instructed the children to read two reading passages (*Minahasan* folklores entitled: *Burung Moopo* and *Perbatasan Minahasa-Mongondow*). This task was done in two types of environment. The first one is on the spot (at the classroom), and the other one was given as homework and should be done at home.
2. The children read the text (the folklore).
3. The children answered the comprehension questions given by the teacher (whether direct question or assigned homework).
4. The teacher graded the children's answers.

2.4 Post-Test

On this session, the students were given the same question as pre-test and they were given extra task that they never did on the pre-test. The extra task was rewriting the stories of two *Minahasan* folklores that they studied during the learning period.

2.5 Time and Place of Public Service

The public service with the theme of improving children’s literacy and *Minahasan* cultural values at *Paniki Bawah* sub-district was done for 1 month with one meeting was initiated every Sunday from 14.00 WITA to 18.00 WITA. All members of UNSRAT’s public service team came at the first and fourth meeting (June 9th, 2024 and June 30th, 2024), while the second and third meetings were handled by the partner, Manadones.co.id. In this process, Ms. Gracey Wakari as the CEO of Manadones.co.id took in charge and managed every mean necessary for the learning process. On the second and third, the head of this public service team, Dewi Christa Kobis monitored the learning progress of the children via online and checked every homework given to the children. The learning process happened at one of the regular residents’ home located at *Paniki Bawah* sub-district.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section contains the results and discussion of the topic regarding the public service implementation. Activities and results explained as followed:

3.1 Pre-Test Result

In order to check the participants’ ability of reading and writing, they were given paper with questions in it. All instructions and questions were written in *Bahasa* (Indonesian language), so the children who acted as participants could understand them well. The data that can be seen on the paper are:

Table 2. Pre-Test Result

No	Questions	Participants who successfully completed the task (answered the question correctly)	Participants who did NOT complete the task
1	Please write your full name!	SI, AR, RM, VIM, VAM, MS, FK, XCM, EB, TASW, TU, IK, LN, OP, JK, CW.	NA, JM, EK, MT.
2	Please write your age!	SI, AR, RM, VIM, VAM, MS, FK, XCM, EB, TASW, TU, IK, LN, OP, JK, CW.	NA, JM, EK, MT.
3	What is the name of the capital city of North Sulawesi?	SI, AR, RM, VIM, VAM, MS, FK, XCM, EB, TASW, TU, IK, LN, OP, JK, CW.	NA, JM, EK, MT.
4	Do you know any folklore from <i>Minahasa</i> or North Sulawesi?	-	SI, AR, RM, VIM, VAM, MS, NA, FK, XCM, EB, TASW, JM, TU, IK, LN, OP, JK, CW, EK, MT.
5	If your answer on the previous question is “Yes”, please write down the moral lessons that you can learn from the folklore!	-	SI, AR, RM, VIM, VAM, MS, NA, FK, XCM, EB, TASW, JM, TU, IK, LN, OP, JK, CW, EK, MT.

By referring to the data in the Table 2, it is clear that the 16 participants except of NA, JM, EK and MT were able to read and to write simple phrases. These were proven by their abilities to read the questions and wrote their answers of No. 1 to 3 correctly in the given paper. By judging on the Pre-Test Result, the 16 participants were categorized as Word Level participants. However, NA (8-year-old girl), JM (9-year-old boy), EK, and MT (both were 5-year-old boys) were labelled as Beginner Level participants since they could not answer any question. It is also clear that none of the participants had knowledge of *Minahasan* folklore at this phase.



Figure 2. Documentation of Pre-Test and First Meeting

3.2 Implementation of Learning Process

The learning process that had been implemented since the June 9th to June 30th of 2024 in order to improve the participants' literacy and the knowledge of *Minahasan* cultural value could be described as followed:

a. First Week:

1. The Pre-Test was done on June 9th of 2024. After that, the students were exposed to a *Minahasan* folklore entitled "*Burung Moopo*" (Djakaria et al., 2019). The public service team gave the story telling to the participants regarding the folklore while the text of *Burung Moopo* was distributed to each participant. The story telling was implemented in order to gain their interest, so they could learn faster and happily (Amelia & Nurmaily, 2021).

2. The participants were asked to read the text (the folklore) loudly together. During this process, four students who faced difficulties in reading and writing were accompanied by some members of the public service team.
3. The next process was asking several questions to the participants regarding the content of the stories. What have been asked to the participants regarding *Burung Moopo* folklore are:
 - a. Who are the characters depicted in the story?
 - b. What is the relationship between the characters?
 - c. Where did the grandfather and his grandson go?
 - d. What happened to grandson?
 - e. Why did the grandson turned to be a bird?
4. The participants who wanted to answer the questions needed to raise their hands before delivering their answers. Each student who gave the right answer was given reward.

b. Second Week:

During this week, the participants were given task (homework) to memorize the whole story of *Burung Moopo*. They were able to paraphrase the text based on their memorization and understanding as long as the main content of the story is still the same. The activities for this week were monitored by Ms. Gracey Wakari as the CEO of Manadones.co.id and the partner of UNSRAT’s public service team.

c. Third Week:

The participants were given new folklore for this week. The folklore is entitled “*Perbatasan Minahasa-Mongondow*”. As had been implemented on the first meeting, the participants were asked to read the folklore together loudly and answered the questions regarding the folklore.

d. Fourth Week:

The fourth week, which was also the last week of the public service implementation had become the implementation of post-test. During this process, students did their evaluation tests and the public service team measured their literacy level as well as their knowledge regarding *Minahasa* through two folklores given to them so far.

3.3 Post-Test Result

Describe and describe the documentation of the activities carried out

Table 3. Post-Test Result

No	Questions	Participants who successfully completed the task (answered the question correctly)	Participants who did NOT complete the task
1	Please write your full name!	SI, AR, RM, VIM, VAM, MS, FK, XCM, EB, TASW, TU, IK, LN, OP, JK, CW, NA, JM, EK, MT.	-
2	Please write your age!	SI, AR, RM, VIM, VAM, MS, FK, XCM, EB, TASW, TU, IK, LN, OP, JK, CW, NA, JM, EK, MT.	-
3	What is the name of the capital city of North Sulawesi?	SI, AR, RM, VIM, VAM, MS, FK, XCM, EB, TASW, TU, IK, LN, OP, JK, CW, NA, JM, EK, MT.	-
4	Do you know any folklore from <i>Minahasa</i> or North Sulawesi?	SI, AR, RM, VIM, VAM, MS, FK, XCM, EB, TASW, TU, IK, LN, OP, JK, CW, NA, JM, EK, MT.	-
5	If your answer on the previous question is “Yes”, please write down the moral lessons that you can learn from the folklore!	SI, AR, RM, VIM, VAM, MS, FK, XCM, EB, TASW, TU, IK, LN, OP, JK, CW, NA, JM, EK, MT.	-

By looking at the data stated in Table 3, it is clear that after the public service implementation, all participants were able to complete the tasks given to them. By judging on this finding, all participants reached at least Story 1 Level of literacy level. It means, the 16 participants improved from the Word Level to Story 1 Level while the other four participants who were once in Beginner Level significantly leveled up to Story 1 Level.

3.4 Additional Test

An additional test was given to the participants to check whether they were able to reach the highest literacy level, which is the Story 2 Level. On this level, they were expected to master to master the whole content of a structural story which consists of several paragraphs, and they also should be able to rewrite the story while paraphrasing it. For additional test, the participants were instructed to rewrite the two *Minahasan* folklores that they studied during the public service implementation. They were just given a blank paper and they should construct by themselves the stories of *Burung Moopo* and *Perbatasan Minahasa-Mongondow* in the black paper. The teachers checked their additional tests and counted the number of words that they successfully wrote. After that, the teachers evaluated the content of the participants' writings to check whether the content of the stories that they rewrote was correct or not. Each student was given 2 hours to rewrite the two folklores that they had learn during the public service implementation. The result of their additional test can be seen in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Post-Test Result

Name	Total of Words Successfully Written	Appropriateness (Accuracy) of the Content
SI	BM*=300	100%
	PMM**=302	100%
AR	BM*=298	100%
	PMM**=300	100%
RM	BM*=250	100%
	PMM**=210	100%
VIM	BM*=300	100%
	PMM**=280	100%
VAM	BM*=298	100%
	PMM**=295	100%
MS	BM*=230	100%
	PMM**=218	100%
NA	BM*=60	50%
	PMM**=59	50%
FK	BM*=112	100%
	PMM**=110	100%
XCM	BM*=300	100%
	PMM**=290	100%
EB	BM*=280	100%
	PMM**=285	100%
TASW	BM*=232	100%
	PMM**=249	100%
JM	BM*=119	100%
	PMM**=138	100%
TU	BM*=100	100%
	PMM**=80	100%
IK	BM*=195	100%
	PMM**=124	100%
LN	BM*=101	100%
	PMM**=102	100%
OP	BM*=98	100%
	PMM**=97	100%

JK	BM*=88	92%
	PMM**=90	92%
CW	BM*=84	92%
	PMM**=82	92%
EK	BM*=67	50%
	PMM**=65	50%
MT	BM*=40	40%
	PMM**=22	20%

Notes: * is the abbreviation for *Burung Moopo*

* is the abbreviation for *Perbatasan Minahasa-Mongondow*

By looking at the data provided in Table 4, it is clear that the majority of the participants successfully mastered the content of the whole story of two *Minahasan* folklores (*Burung Moopo* and *Perbatasan Minahasa-Mongondow*). It means they reached Story 2 level of literacy level. The content of the story that was checked by the teachers included a plot of the story, a list of the characters, the story setting (where the story happened/location), and the climax of the story. Although each participant got various number of words in rewriting the two folklores, most of them were successful in paraphrasing the two folklores with their own words but still stayed true to the content of the folklores. There were two participants who reached 92% (JK and CW) since they were unable to mention all climaxes of the two folklores. Two participants (NA and EK) only reached 50% by not mentioning the correct setting and lack of plots, and there was a participant named MT only reached 40% for *Burung Moopo* and 20% for *Perbatasan Minahasa-Mongondow*. This participant was not able to complete each story of both folklores.

Interestingly, there were two participants (SI and AR) who did perfectly in rewriting the stories of *Burung Moopo* and *Perbatasan Minahasa-Mongondow* and even successfully writing around 300 words in total for each folklore. The results of SI and AR are considerably outstanding. 18 participants reported that there were two *Minahasan* cultural values that they learned from *Burung Moopo* and *Perbatasan Minahasa-Mongondow*. The first one is that children need to obey their parents, and the second one is if we make a promise, we need to try our best to keep it.



Figure 3. Documentation of Post-Test and Additional Test

3.5 Structural Plan for Post-Service Implementation

This public service was implemented onsite by teaching and monitoring on the spot. Despite the successful implementation of this project, the team members still desired to create a website designed to teach reading and writing by inputting every local *Minahasan* folklore on the website. A website is such an appropriate and convenient medium to store useful data that can be accessed publicly and to learn everything anywhere and anytime, especially in this modern era (Kalua et al., 2023; Pongantung et al., 2023; Rompis & Kalua, 2023). Therefore, if there will be a learning website created in the future, it would be easier for the teachers, children, and even parents to accommodate learning materials to improve literacy and to know various interesting *Minahasan* folklore.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of this study that have been reported in the previous section clarified that the public service with the title "Improving Literacy and *Minahasan* Cultural Value through Folklore Reading to *Paniki Bawah's* Children Residents" is useful and eventually boosted the literacy level of the majority of the students from World Level to Story 2 Level. In addition, participants could learn the moral values that can be gained from the *Minahasan* folklores entitled *Burung Moopo* and *Perbatasan Minahasa-Mongondow*.

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