

The Role of the Kendal Book Circle Literacy Community as a Transformation of the Young Generation

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Abstract: The expansion of digital information has increased access to knowledge, yet it does not automatically develop young people's ability to interpret, evaluate, and reflect on information critically. This study examines the Kendal Book Circle (KBC) as a community-based literacy space that connects reading, dialogue, contextual experience, and writing. The study aims to analyze how literacy practices are organized, how participants construct and negotiate meaning, the changes experienced by participants, and KBC's role as a non-formal educational space. A qualitative case study was employed through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews with six informants, and documentation. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model and validated through source and technique triangulation. The findings show that KBC organizes literacy through interconnected practices involving sharing sessions, Book to Culture, Book to Nature, Book to School, and Book Venture. These activities connect texts with dialogue, cultural and environmental experiences, educational institutions, and writing. Participants reported increased confidence in communication, critical reflection, digital information evaluation, and engagement in knowledge production. KBC also complements formal education through collaboration with schools and other educational communities. The study contributes to community literacy research by proposing a series of interconnected literacy practices as a unit of analysis for understanding the transformation of young people from information consumers into more active interpreters and producers of knowledge.

Keywords: Community Literacy; Construction of Meaning; Non-Formal Education; Young Generation; Kendal Book Circle

Abstrak: Perkembangan informasi digital meningkatkan akses terhadap pengetahuan, namun tidak secara otomatis mengembangkan kemampuan generasi muda dalam menafsirkan, mengevaluasi, dan merefleksikan informasi secara kritis. Penelitian ini mengkaji Kendal Book Circle (KBC) sebagai ruang literasi berbasis komunitas yang menghubungkan aktivitas membaca, dialog, pengalaman kontekstual, dan menulis. Penelitian bertujuan menganalisis pengorganisasian praktik literasi, proses konstruksi dan negosiasi makna, perubahan yang dialami peserta, serta peran KBC sebagai ruang pendidikan nonformal.



Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara semiterstruktur terhadap enam informan, dan dokumentasi. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman serta diperkuat melalui triangulasi sumber dan teknik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa KBC mengorganisasikan literasi melalui praktik yang saling terhubung, yaitu sharing session, Book to Culture, Book to Nature, Book to School, dan Book Venture. Kegiatan tersebut menghubungkan teks dengan dialog, pengalaman budaya dan lingkungan, lembaga pendidikan, serta aktivitas menulis. Peserta melaporkan peningkatan kepercayaan diri dalam berkomunikasi, refleksi kritis, kemampuan mengevaluasi informasi digital, dan keterlibatan dalam produksi pengetahuan. KBC juga melengkapi pendidikan formal melalui kolaborasi dengan sekolah dan komunitas pendidikan lainnya. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian literasi komunitas dengan menempatkan rangkaian praktik literasi yang saling terhubung sebagai unit analisis untuk memahami transformasi generasi muda dari konsumen informasi menjadi penafsir dan produsen pengetahuan yang lebih aktif.

Kata kunci: Literasi Komunitas; Konstruksi Makna; Pendidikan Nonformal; Generasi Muda; Kendal Book Circle

Introduction

The development of digital information technology has changed the way people acquire, read, and exchange knowledge (Ari Diana Dwi Susanti, 2025; Nisa, 2025). Faster information flows open up great opportunities for the learning process, but ease of access is not always accompanied by adequate literacy skills, which poses increasingly complex challenges (Pratama et al., 2025). Husaeni and Haristiani explain that transformative change requires a systemic approach that integrates social, cultural, and ecological dimensions, rather than relying solely on technological interventions (Husaeni & Haristiani, 2025). Sayadi and Pangandaman also emphasized that 21st century learning needs to develop critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, problem-solving, and digital literacy so that the younger generation is able to respond to complex global challenges (Sayadi & Pangandaman, 2025).

The increasing flow of digital information does not automatically give birth to a critical literacy culture among young people (Ridwanulloh et al., 2025). This condition can be seen from the contrast between the increase in digital media consumption and the tendency to practice instant and entertainment-oriented information (Ntau & Sarindat, 2025; Wardhana & Laksmi, 2025). Fast and fragmented consumption patterns have the potential to make reading activities stop receiving information without adequate reflection and knowledge processing. Thus, literacy issues are related to the quality of the process of understanding, interpreting, and using information in social life.

National data show positive developments in culture and love of reading. The Literacy Culture Index increased from 54.29 in 2021 to 60.49 in 2023, while the Reading Interest Level increased from 55.74 in 2020 to 72.44 in 2024 (Perpusnas, undated). However, PISA results still show weaknesses in text comprehension, inferential comprehension, as well as evaluative and appreciative reading, especially in the ability to understand, assess, and reflect on texts (Pusmendik, undated). Increased community involvement in reading activities thus does not fully describe the ability to read critically, evaluate information, draw

conclusions, and develop ideas based on reading. This condition shows that strengthening literacy is not enough just through the distribution of reading materials or access to technology, but needs to be directed at processes that transform reading activities into understanding, reflection, communication, and knowledge production.

Literacy can be understood as a social practice that takes place in the context of culture, social relationships, institutions, and everyday life experiences. Perspective *New Literacy Studies* Treat literacy as something embedded in social relationships, cultural values, the institutional environment, and material conditions, rather than as a neutral and universal technical skill (Street, 1984; Suryaningsih, 2025). Barton and Hamilton affirm that reading and writing are part of daily activities, identities, communities, and specific social goals (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). In this perspective, literacy develops when texts are read, discussed, interpreted, and connected with experiences, so that literacy is strongly influenced by the social environment that provides space for interaction, the exchange of ideas, and the meaning of reality.

In line with this perspective, community-based literacy communities thrive as non-formal educational spaces that allow the learning process to take place through shared participation and experience. Genius points out that community-based literacy activities can serve as non-formal educational practices that empower participants through social engagement (Genius et al., 2025). Referring to Syria's social constructivism, the report emphasizes that knowledge develops through social interaction and shared experience (Dian Aditya Suryani, 2025). Wati and Rahmawati found that contextual and creative literacy activities contributed to reading interests, participation, critical thinking skills, and self-expression (Wati & Rahmawati, 2025), social literacy can drive awareness of diversity, bias, and social injustice.

Research in formal education shows findings that are in line, but occur in different institutional environments. Saomi and Azizah explained that the reading literacy of madrasah ibtidaiyah students can be developed by connecting texts with students' daily lives (Saomi & Azizah, 2026), Annisa found that contextual learning improves reading comprehension, reading interest, and learning motivation (Annisa et al., 2026). These studies primarily examine teacher-guided learning in formal education structures, so it has not explained how community-based literacy activities combine reading, dialogue, cultural experiences, environmental observation, and writing into a continuous process of cognitive and communicative development.

The existing literature is still fragmented: social literacy studies focus on the interpretation of social realities, reading community studies emphasize participation and a supportive environment, contextual learning studies examine understanding and motivation, while formal education studies analyze structured classroom practices. This research gap does not lie in the common claim that literacy communities are social spaces or that knowledge is built through interaction, as such propositions are well established in social constructivism and New Literacy Studies. A more specific gap lies in the lack of studies of how textual, dialogical, cultural, environmental, and writing literacy practices are interconnected within a single local community. It is in this connectedness that young participants negotiate meaning, build confidence to express ideas, evaluate information, and shift from consuming to

producing knowledge. This issue is important to examine because the success of literacy communities is not sufficiently seen in terms of the number of activities, attendance levels, or increased interest in reading. What is more fundamental is how the series of interdependent practices forms a learning environment that allows participants to understand the text, connect knowledge with reality, and produce writing.

The Kendal Book Circle (KBC), established in May 2025, provides relevant empirical context to examine this process. KBC brings together readers and potential readers in Kendal Regency through sharing sessions as well as the Book to Culture, Book to Nature, Book to School, and Book Venture programs, which connect texts with cultural workshops, the natural environment, schools, Islamic boarding schools, and writing practices. Based on this background, this study aims to examine (1) how collective literacy practices are organized as social and contextual activities in KBC, and how members construct and negotiate meaning through interaction, (2) how participants describe the changes they experience in critical reflection, communication confidence, digital information evaluation, and knowledge production during participation, and (3) how KBC plays a role as a non-formal education space that complements formal education, including the forms of collaboration and the barriers it faces.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. This design was chosen because the research aims to understand literacy practices in their natural social environment and examine how meaning, interactions, and changes reported by participants develop within the Kendal Book Circle (KBC) community. This case is limited to the KBC community, its literacy programs, interactions between members, and collaborations with educational institutions. KBC was chosen because it represents an active literacy community that develops collective reading practices among young people through thematic programs, with special attention to interaction patterns, meaning-construction processes, and their relationship to members' cognitive development.

The informants were selected purposively because they had direct knowledge of community organizations and activities. "Active members" in this study refer to members who have regularly participated in *KBC sharing sessions* and programs (such as *Book to Culture*, *Book to Nature*, *Book to School*, or *Book Venture*) in recent months, so that they have direct experience of the literacy practices studied. A total of six informants participated in this study, namely the chairman as the main informant, one administrator, and four active members (Table 1). These six informants were chosen because they together represent three different positions in the community of program designers, activity implementers, and program participants so that the study compares institutional explanations (from the chair and administrator) with the participants' direct experiences (from active members) regarding the literacy process, the construction of meaning, and perceived change, according to the three research questions. Each informant is coded to maintain reporting consistency, identity confidentiality, and data traceability during the analysis process.

Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Participatory observations were conducted in April–June 2026 and focused on the routine of literacy activities, interaction between members, and the dynamics

of discussions in sharing sessions, cultural activities, environmental activities, and collaborative learning. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the six informants, one time each, with a duration of approximately 60 minutes per session. The interviews were recorded with an audio recorder and transcribed verbatim for analysis purposes. The interview material explored the origins and objectives of KBC, the design of literacy programs, member participation, the role of discussions and contextual activities, changes in trust and critical engagement, digital information practices, and community relations with formal educational institutions. The interview transcript was then encoded and analyzed along with observation and documentation data using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, as described in the data analysis section. Documentation in the form of activity logs, photographs, internal membership information, and collaboration records was used as supporting data. Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model that included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions drawn. Data from interviews, observations, and documentation were transcribed, encoded, and grouped into four analytical categories: literacy as a social practice, construction of collective meaning, cognitive and communicative development, and the role of KBC in the educational ecosystem. Data were then presented descriptively and thematically to identify patterns, relationships, and themes that consistently emerged in KBC activities, and conclusions were developed through repeated comparisons between empirical data and research questions.

The credibility of the findings is strengthened through triangulation of sources and techniques, i.e., comparing the chair's statements with management and active members and examining interview data with observational records and community archives. This process is used to distinguish claims directly supported by participant testimony from the researcher's interpretation. Because the research is qualitative and case-based, phrases such as "participant report", "findings indicate", and "practice related to" are used in place of deterministic causal claims.

Table 1. Research Informant

Code	Status	Informants
KBC-LR-01	Leader	Syafiq Yunesa
KBC-MN-01	Manager	Shofi Asfika
KBC-AM-01	Active Member	Nur Laela Masruroh
KBC-AM-02	Active Member	Sholeh Arifudin
KBC-AM-03	Active Member	Masruroh
KBC-AM-04	Active Member	Ira Rosmilawati

Source: Field Data, 2026

Results and Discussion

Results

Literacy Practices and Participant Interaction at Kendal Book Circle

The results of the interviews show that KBC was established in May 2025 in response to a digital culture that tends to make some young generations less accustomed to reading and thinking deeply. The ease of access to information and the existence of artificial

intelligence (AI) accelerate the acquisition of knowledge, but it also strengthens instant culture and encourages the need for a space where information can be read more slowly, discussed, questioned, and connected with experience. This condition encourages KBC to focus on strengthening the literacy of young people, especially in understanding and processing information critically, by placing literacy as a social movement and collective activity, rather than an individual obligation limited to reading books (KBC-LR-01, Interview, 29 April 2026).

KBC targets active readers while opening access for individuals who want to start building reading habits in a relaxed and supportive atmosphere. The vision of making Kendal a literacy city is realized through the principles of inclusivity, sustainability, and involvement of the younger generation. The community does not limit participation based on educational background or type of reading; fiction, nonfiction, cultural texts, and other forms of reading can be the subject of discussion and reflection (KBC-LR-01, Interview, April 29, 2026; KBC-MN-01, Interview, April 30, 2026).

KBC organizes its activities according to the character of the younger generation. This community runs sharing sessions with four programs, namely Book to Culture, Book to Nature, Book to School, and Book Venture. The sharing sessions become relatively structured discussion spaces, where members present and discuss their readings. The other four programs bring literacy out of the discussion room to the cultural, natural, educational, and social environments. With this arrangement, literacy feels more contextual and close to daily life, because participants gain knowledge through various ways: reading, listening, observing, discussing, experiencing directly, and writing (KBC-LR-01, Interview, April 29, 2026; KBC-MN-01, Interview, April 30, 2026).

Picture 1. Kendal Book Circle Open Dialogue Activity



Source: KBC Field Data, 2026

Interaction within the community takes place in an open dialogue space. In the sharing session, each member has the opportunity to explain his or her reading and respond to the views of other members, resulting in an exchange of ideas that connects the text with social reality. This community has also begun to produce new writers, which marks a shift from consuming to producing knowledge. Regarding the development of participants, some members who were initially passive in discussions reportedly became more active in conveying ideas as their involvement continued. Participants also reported improved ability to filter digital information, especially in the face of the flow of instant information on social

media. In response to this, KBC provides an offline interaction space that is designed to be more interesting and interactive, so that participants can be actively involved without the interference of digital devices. (KBC-LR-01, Interview, April 29, 2026; KBC-MN-01, Interview, April 30, 2026; KBC-AM-01, Interview, May 1, 2026).

As a non-formal education space, KBC plays a role in complementing formal education by emphasizing dialogue-based, experiential, and reflection-based learning. This community collaborates with various educational institutions, including Islamic schools and dormitories, through literacy activities, writing classes, and the publication of written works. The challenges faced, such as limited human resources and low reading culture in the formal environment, are responded with an approach that emphasizes learning flexibility and independence in accessing knowledge. KBC collaborates with SMK Darul Fikri Tamangede Gemuh, the Kisda reading community at the Darul Amanah Sukorejo Islamic Dormitory School, and SMK Negeri Boja, through routine literacy activities typical of KBC, writing classes, and publication of written works. These various forms of collaboration show that KBC positions itself as a link between community-based learning and institutional education, not as a stand-alone alternative. This position is in line with the understanding of non-formal education as a complement to the formal system, not a substitute for it. The collaboration also shows that KBC plays a role not only as a literacy consumer community (readers), but also as a literacy producer (writers and publishers) (KBC-LR-01, Interview, April 29, 2026).

The Process of Interpretation and Evaluation in Collective Literacy Practice

Literacy practice in KBC cannot be understood as a reading activity in a purely technical sense, but rather as a social practice that involves interaction, dialogue, and exchanging experiences between members. The community implements engagement strategies that adapt to the characteristics of the current generation as an effort to transform the younger generation. The Book to Culture, Book to Nature, Book to School, and Book Venture programs show a paradigm shift in literacy from textual to contextual based on experience (KBC-LR-01, Interview, April 29, 2026).

Picture 2. Book to Culture Activity "Gerabah Kunden Raya"



Source: KBC Field Data, 2026

Book to Culture places reading and discussion activities in cultural production spaces such as pottery/pottery workshops and batik studios. This approach presents a process of

decontextualization and recontextualization: participants not only encounter culture as objects described in the text, but read it directly through experience and witness the culture created before them. Texts transform their function from a single source of information into an interpretive tool for living and sustainable cultural practices, allowing participants to compare text descriptions with direct observation (KBC-LR-01, Interview, April 29, 2026).

The presence of artisans and cultural actors in the same space opens up a dimension that cannot be offered by text alone, namely intergenerational dialogue. The exchange between participants and local knowledge owners brings knowledge inherent in the body, movements, and habits, which is easier to feel directly than just reading. For KBC, which targets the younger generation as the main focus, intergenerational dialogue is an important aspect, as the generation that grows up in the rapid consumption of digital information requires experience in handling knowledge that cannot be summarized by algorithms and is present through direct encounters between humans (KBC-LR-01, Interview, 29 April 2026).

Book To Nature Integrates literacy activities with direct observation of the ecosystem. Participants are invited to see, hear, and feel the environment firsthand, and this sensory experience can form an emotional bond that encourages attention to environmental issues. This practice can support ecological awareness as participants interpret environmental issues through information and experience (KBC-MN-01, Interview, April 30, 2026). What distinguishes *Book to Nature* from a mere visit to nature lies in its critical literacy dimension. When participants discuss the destruction of ecosystems they witnessed for themselves, they not only read a text about environmental degradation, but also confront the text with empirical evidence before them. This process strengthens critical thinking skills as participants are encouraged to connect textual narratives with realities that can be verified directly (KBC-LR-01, Interview, April 29, 2026).

Picture 3. Opening of KBC Book to Nature Activities



Source: KBC Field Data, 2026

Book Venture expands literacy activities from formal discussion spaces to social spaces such as nature, cultural environments, and educational institutions. The book serves more as an organizing principle that expands learning locations than as a single program. One implication is the dedecreatization of formal spaces: libraries and classrooms are no longer the only "legitimate" places to read and discuss. Workshops, fields, markets, and rivers have the potential to become literacy spaces, provided there is proper facilitation. KBC's

distinctive contribution is not only to move activities outside the classroom, but to connect the various environments into a continuous process: reading, observing, discussing, and reflecting. (KBC-LR-01, Interview, April 29, 2026; (KBC-MN-01, Interview, April 30, 2026).

The literacy method also shows a flexible and interest-oriented approach to the participants. The absence of restrictions on the type of reading, both fiction and nonfiction, as well as the presence of joint reading sessions, story-sharing, and creative activities show that literacy is developed as a fun and meaningful process (KBC-AM-01, Interview, May 1, 2026). KBC serves as a living social literacy space. By 2026, around 400 people will be registered as members based on internal membership data, and this community will begin to produce new writers. Members no longer only act as readers, but also as speakers, organizers, and writers, so that a shift from consumers of information to producers of knowledge is seen. In discussion sessions, members do not stop at explaining the content of the reading. They relate it to personal experiences and the social realities around them, thus creating dynamic dialogue and constructive exchange of ideas (KBC-MN-01, Interview, 30 April 2026).

Reflection-based activities, especially in the Book to Nature program, seem to affect the way participants interpret their experiences. At the beginning of the engagement, some participants tended to be passive and did not dare to express their opinions. As the engagement continued, they began to see that literacy did not stop at reading and writing, but also had practical meaning in life, for example in caring for the environment and self-development. This pattern shows the beginning of the growth of the habit of contemplating and questioning information among members. However, this finding does not mean that all participants experienced the same changes or at the same level (KBC-AM-02, Interview, 20 May 2026). In the sharing session, participants not only present the content of the reading in one direction, but respond to each other and question each other's views, so that understanding of a reading is gradually formed through the exchange. . Discussions in the community serve as a collaborative space where individuals expand understanding through the exchange of perspectives. This process not only enriches knowledge, but also forms communication skills and the courage to convey ideas (KBC-AM-03, Interview, May 21, 2026; KBC-AM-04, Interview, May 21, 2026).

Participant Development and the Role of KBC as a Non-Formal Learning Space

The changes reported by KBC members are most noticeable in communicative confidence, critical reflection, digital information evaluation, and movements towards writing. Involvement in KBC activities provides a learning experience that does not stop at Activities reading. In the joint activity, participants get a space to convey questions, opinions, and experiences while listening to the thoughts of other members. One of the members explained that through this activity he gained knowledge not only from books, but also from the experiences and thoughts of other members. Joint discussions also helped him find things that he had not previously realized while reading so that the contents of the book became easier to understand and relate to daily life. (KBC-AM-01, Interview, May 1, 2026; KBC-AM-02, Interview, 20 May 2026).

Picture 4. Kendal Book Circle Discussion Activities



Source: KBC Field Data, 2026

This experience can also be seen in the way participants face problems and form opinions. In discussions, a problem can be seen from several possible solutions so that participants do not rush to find one answer. The informant explains that he is used to considering relevant information and several options before determining a solution. Similar habits are seen when confronting arguments: he questions the reasons used, examines sources, considers the logic of opinions, and opens up the possibility of other viewpoints before drawing conclusions (KBC-AM-03, Interview, May 21, 2026).

How to respond to digital information is also part of the literacy experience that participants bring to their daily lives. The informant explains that interesting or popular information is not always trusted or shared. The source of information is examined, the information is compared with other sources, and the context is considered first. This attitude is summarized in the phrase "Filter before sharing", which describes the habit of filtering before making a decision on the information received (KBC-AM-03, Interview, May 21, 2026).

On the other hand, KBC is seen by participants as a learning space that can go hand in hand with formal education. Reading, discussing, and sharing experiences provides a more flexible learning space because discussions can move away from problems faced in social life. Informants see community as a bridge between knowledge acquired in school or college and problems that develop in society. Expectations for the sustainability of KBC are also directed at the development of writing activities, digital literacy, literacy activities for children and communities, as well as collaboration with schools, campuses, and other communities. (KBC-AM-03, Interview, May 21, 2026; KBC-AM-04, Interview, May 21, 2026).

Discussion

Construction of Meaning in Collective Literacy Practice

The implementation of literacy activities at KBC based on collective literacy shows that understanding does not stop at the text but continues to be constructed through social processes among community members. This is reflected in the informants' experiences, who described community activities as involving reading, discussion, exchange of ideas, and opportunities to encounter different perspectives. In this context, literacy functions as a social practice through which individuals interact, exchange knowledge, and develop shared

experiences within a community (Anwar et al., 2025; Marlini et al., 2026). In practice, sharing sessions give each participant the opportunity to explain the content of the reading and respond to the views of other participants. This dialogical process allows participants to develop understanding through interaction and the exchange of perspectives (Dewi, 2026). Thus, literacy practices within KBC are dialogical and participatory, with members acting as both readers and active participants in knowledge exchange. Rather than treating texts as having a single predetermined meaning, members negotiate interpretations through conversation, comparison, and the exchange of perspectives (Selvy Fitriyani, Ila Rosmilawati, 2025).

Group reading is understood as the process of negotiating a shared meaning through open conversation, with diverse interpretations and shared testing. This process is in harmony with the concept Proximal Development Zone Vygotsky explains that individual understanding develops through interactions with others who bring different perspectives and knowledge (Imam Tabroni, 2022; Suryani & Fauzi, 2025): Participants can understand the text better when faced with questions, explanations, or interpretations that they would not have generated independently (Suci et al., 2023). But the construction of collective meaning is not understood as a process that automatically results in valid interpretations, as it also involves individual questions, comparisons, evidence, evaluation, and reflection. Discussions in the community make participants realize that what is considered right is not always the only truth. This statement suggests that literacy practices encourage open thinking and the ability to accept other perspectives, so that literacy does not stop at understanding the text, but forms a more flexible and critical way of thinking (Rini & Nabhan, 2023a; Ulu-Aslan & Baş, 2023).

The practice of dialogue at KBC bears similarities to Freire's dialogical education, which views dialogue not as just an exchange of opinions, but as a process of building critical awareness and going beyond passive acceptance of dominant meanings (Norvaizi et al., 2025). In the sharing sessions, dialogue took the form of explanations of reading by members, other members' responses to these views, and attempts to relate the content of the text to personal experiences and social realities. Members also reported that they became more courageous in conveying ideas and were more selective towards digital information. These findings show early signs of critical attitudes towards texts and information. However, the available data are not enough to conclude that dialogue in KBC has formed a critical consciousness in Freire's sense, which includes critical readings of social structures. Freire's framework here serves as a lens for understanding the direction of the dialogue's practice, rather than as a claim to the outcome (Freire, 1970; Freire & Macedo, 1987). The KBC dialogue opens up opportunities for participants to reconsider assumptions, relate texts to personal experiences, and identify the relationship between reading materials and social conditions. This approach is in line with the principles of constructivism which places the individual as an active subject in building knowledge through experience and social interaction (Nurjamillah, Salsabila Alfiatur Rizki, M.Tizani Nawa Bik, 2025).

Construct meaning occurs when group members use the language of discussion to connect the content of the text, personal experiences and knowledge, as well as broader contexts outside the text, resulting in richer and more critical understanding. Construct

meaning is formed through the simultaneous interpretation of texts in social contexts (Nirwana & Yulianto, 2025). The practice of collective literacy also develops through programs that connect texts with real-life experiences in the field. Lauren Alex O'Hagan explains that meaning in the practice of social semiotics is contextual and multimodal because it arises from the relationship between text, social interaction, and material experience (Lauren Alex O'Hagan, 2024). KBC's cultural and environmental activities illustrate this process in which participants do not simply apply the text to reality after reading it, but face reality as an additional resource for interpreting and questioning the text, so that the text becomes more meaningful when it is associated with real-world conditions.

Contextualization in discussions directs the reading of the text to issues relevant to social life. Structured collective literacy not only improves reading comprehension, but also forms reflective attitudes and critical thinking. Participants learn to interpret texts as an entrance to understanding social reality while developing the courage to convey ideas. This condition is different from information consumption patterns in the digital age which tend to be instant and do not provide space for reflection; the practice of collective literacy in the community becomes a space that allows for more critical and reflective meaning (Ihsan & Artika, 2025; Rini & Nabhan, 2023b).

Dynamics of Cognitive Transformation of the Young Generation

Cognitive transformation occurs gradually through active involvement in literacy practices. In KBC, this change can be seen in the shift of some members who were initially hesitant to become more confident in conveying their ideas. Community leaders revealed that members who were initially reluctant to speak in sharing sessions gradually became more fluent in expressing their opinions. This development is consistent with previous research showing that literacy-based learning practices can strengthen students' metacognitive skills, critical thinking, and ability to express opinions (Kurniawati et al., 2020; Sangaji et al., 2023). In the context of KBC, participation in discussions requires members to organize their ideas, provide relevant reasons or evidence, and respond to alternative perspectives. These practices indicate an emerging development in communicative and cognitive capacities, although the present study does not directly measure participants' metacognitive skills.

The development of critical thinking and digital literacy of active KBC members shows that there is a synergy between textual literacy culture and digital competence in the community ecosystem. KBC members tend to be critical and actively convey ideas, ideas, and discuss academically, including the ability to develop and defend argument-based ideas. In the perspective of 21st century competencies, critical thinking falls into four main competencies, namely *Critical Thinking*, *Communication*, *Collaboration*, and *Creativity* (Partono et al., 2021). KBC's activities incorporate these competencies through group discussions, contextual projects, cultural and environmental engagement, and writing. However, these competencies emerge as trends that are reported and observed in cases, rather than as outcomes measured through standardized tests.

As in previous research, community literacy practices serve as a stimulus for the development of higher-level thinking skills. Intensive interaction in discussions introduces members to a variety of perspectives to broaden perspectives and deepen understanding. ((Pendidikan Yang Menginspirasi Mengasah Potensi Individu, 2024) In addition, members

are reported to be more selective in filtering digital information, are not easily influenced by unverified content, and are accustomed to verifying before trusting or disseminating information. This habit is important for the digital literacy and digital communication ethics of the younger generation because the ability to evaluate information depends not only on technical access, but also on habits of reflection and judgment.

In that era *Post-Truth*, when emotions, personal beliefs, and persuasive narratives can influence public opinion more powerfully than objective facts and inaccurate digital information flooding the public space (Pebrianto & Mulyono, 2024), the critical thinking skills developed at KBC are valuable assets. The habit of analyzing texts and brainstorming on KBC forums can form a skeptical-constructive attitude, that is, the habit of asking for sources, arguments, context, and evidence without rejecting all information. The community discussion format also allows participants to confront differences of opinion without treating differences as conflicts. The habit of questioning and evaluating arguments provides an epistemological foundation that helps members be more cautious of hoaxes on social media, and this is KBC's contribution in preparing young people for an increasingly complex digital information ecology.

Based on the results of the interviews, KBC has produced new writers in a span of about one year. This achievement reflects a shift from consumptive literacy (reading) to productive literacy (writing). In Freire's framework, this process is in line with the concept of *Awareness*, when the individual not only absorbs knowledge but is also able to produce and disseminate ideas; Bethari connects critical consciousness with the individual's ability to be an active subject, rather than a passive recipient (Bethari, 2024). Writing demands the systematic synthesis, analysis, organization, and articulation of ideas, so that members transform the experience of reading and discussing into written ideas that can be shared with a wider audience and, in turn, strengthen their critical thinking capacity.

In the perspective of social constructivism, these findings are in line with Vygotsky's view that cognitive development is influenced by social interaction, whereas in the perspective of critical education, these findings reflect the formation of critical consciousness as stated by Freire. These findings should not be interpreted as evidence that every participant undergoes the same transformation, and this study does not claim a total personality transformation or an increase in universal intelligence. The evidence suggests that sustained participation creates conditions that can support more active engagement, with more specific literacy capacity changes: organizing arguments, interpreting texts, articulating opinions, reflecting experiences, and evaluating information. Thus, the dynamics of cognitive transformation within these communities suggest that community literacy can form a more critical, reflective, and adaptive mindset to social dynamics.

Implications of Community Literacy on the Education Ecosystem

The implications of community literacy on the education ecosystem can be seen from its role in expanding learning spaces beyond formal education by providing a more flexible, participatory, and social-interaction-based experience. Through reading, discussion, and collective reflection, participants develop critical thinking and communication skills. This shows that educational ecosystems are not only formed in formal institutions, but also through social networks that grow in society. Learning in formal schools includes dialogues

such as listening, asking questions, and discussing, but is limited by time, curriculum, class size, and variety of interactions. Non-formal education offers a more flexible space, where participants can engage voluntarily and continue learning through social interaction. In this context, KBC serves as a complement to formal education by bringing the principle of "All teachers, my school universe." This principle reflects a progressive educational view that places learning as an activity that can take place in a variety of spaces and involves many parties outside the boundaries of the formal classroom, such as artisans, neighborhoods, peers, writers, community organizers, and local institutions (Fatkurochman et al., n.d.).

KBC has three roles that focus on making its members aware, adding insight, and empowering its members. In theory, this role is in line with Coombs and Ahmed's concept of non-formal education, which is an organized educational activity outside of the formal system that serves specific groups and needs (Coombs, P. H., & Ahmed, 1974). KBC fills the space that formal institutions have not fully reached: the development of a reading culture, critical awareness, and literacy-based empowerment that is voluntary and participatory. KBC's maturity in building bridges with formal educational institutions can be seen from real collaboration. This shows that KBC contributes to the local literacy ecosystem in three ways. First, KBC creates a voluntary and inclusive space for reading and discussion. Second, KBC connects literacy with institutions and social environments outside the community itself. Third, KBC supports the production and circulation of written works. These three functions show that the literacy ecosystem is not just a network of facilities, but a series of relationships where reading, writing, learning, and participation activities can be sustainably maintained.

In an effort to improve the literacy of the younger generation, KBC cannot be separated from obstacles. The education system makes students lazy to learn and lazy to read, as well as making reading just a formality. The lack of a reading ecosystem in schools also worsens this condition so that communities like KBC have to work extra hard to encourage interest in reading outside the school environment. Limited human resources and uneven reading habits are also obstacles. KBC responds to the limited human resources and low reading culture in the formal environment with a flexible approach, contextual programs, and the principle of "All teachers, my school universe" shows that this community does not place schools as the only source of knowledge and the formation of reading habits. This pattern can be read through two frameworks. First, this pattern is in line with the spirit of lifelong learning as one of the pillars of UNESCO's education, which views learning as a process that takes place in various spaces and throughout life. Second, this pattern is in line with Ki Hajar Dewantara's idea that education takes place in three environments, namely family, school, and community so that KBC can be understood as part of the community environment that contributes to education (Maftuhah, L., & Yani, 2025; Sihab & Achmad, 2025).

These findings contribute three to the study of literacy as a social practice. First, the perspective of the New Literacy Study places literacy as a practice embedded in a social context, but generally examines literacy practices separately. This study shows that in KBC textual practices, dialogue, contextual experiences, and writing are interconnected: texts become dialogue material, dialogue is brought to field experiences, and that experience

returns to writing (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1984). Thus a series of practices, rather than a single practice, can be used as a unit of analysis to understand how participants move from consuming to producing knowledge. Second, within the framework of Vygotsky's social constructivism, the negotiation of meaning is often understood to occur between participants and peers or educators. In KBC, the dialogue partners extend to artisans, cultural actors, and the natural environment that are the comparators for the text, so these findings propose that the "other side" in the construction of meaning can include local knowledge and material reality, in line with the social semiotic view of meaning that is contextual and multimodal. Third, for the study of nonformal education, this study adds an overview of how local communities organize the movement from reading to writing in a series, beyond the activities of reading and book discussion. These three contributions are conceptual and come from a single case, so they are put forward as propositions that need to be tested in other literacy communities, rather than as generalizations.

Conclusion

This study shows that KBC organizes literacy as a series of interconnected practices, rather than as a single reading activity. The sharing sessions become discussion spaces where each member explains the reading and responds to the views of other members, while the Book to Culture, Book to Nature, Book to School, and Book Venture programs bring texts to cultural workshops, environmental observations, schools, and writing practices. In this series, meaning is negotiated through discussions between members that open up space for differences of opinion, meetings with artisans and cultural actors, and hands-on experience in the field, so that the text is read alongside the participants' experiences and social realities. From these practices, participants describe the changes they experienced in four aspects. Members who were originally passive reported becoming more active in conveying ideas, accustomed to considering multiple points of view and examining sources, not automatically trusting or sharing popular digital information, and playing the role not only of readers but also as speakers, organizers, and writers, with the birth of new authors in about a year. These practices take place in a non-formal education space that complements formal education. This role can be seen from collaboration through routine literacy activities, writing classes, and publication of written works, as well as from its voluntary and flexible learning spaces. KBC carries out its role in the midst of obstacles in the form of limited human resources, low reading culture in formal environments, and uneven reading habits, which are faced with a flexible and contextual approach. Thus, KBC can be understood as a space where young people not only receive information, but also interpret, question, and generate knowledge through involvement in the community.

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