

Inspiration through Nature: Promoting Literacy among the Indigenous Suku Anak Dalam Tribe

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Abstract

Suku Anak Dalam is a isolated indigenous community that lives in Jambi. Their life depends on forest resources. Forest conditions are increasingly reduced and it has changed into human settlements and oil palm plantations. This condition forces them to change. Their understanding of how to survive has changed and they need literacy. The study was conducted to provide basic literacy skills to the Suku Anak Dalam through the Inspiring Nature class strategy, which is a learning concept that makes nature as a place and source of learning, and with due regard to the psychological conditions of the learning participants. The method used in this research is participatory action research. Subject of this research are children of the Suku Anak Dalam in Tanah Garo Village, Muara Tabir District, Tebo Regency, aged 5-13 years. The study was conducted from June to October. The research was carried out by applying several methods in the Inspiring Nature Class strategy. The results showed that the Inspiring Nature Class strategy was able to develop literacy skills of Suku Anak Dalam. This can be seen from the increased reading, writing and arithmetic skills.

Keywords: *Indigenous, SAD, Literacy*

1. Introduction

The rapid development of technology and information brings many changes to human life, including in education. Education is a necessity for all groups of people. Even with different goals, people in this world, those who live in urban areas and those who live in rural areas, need education. For those who live in the hinterland, education is required so that they can meet the needs of life, sustain for the needs of groups even access government facilities.

Based on data from Susenas (Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2007) it is known that 6.53% of Indonesian children have not been touched by

education. The influencing factors are economic, psychological, geographical, and social environment (KPP&PA, Profil Anak Indonesia 2015). The majority of these children are in remote areas including remote indigenous communities, one of which is Suku Anak Dalam (SAD) in Jambi Province. Based on data released by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS, 2018) that in 2017 there were 7.69% of the population of Jambi Province still illiterate, this number was dominated by the SAD Community.

SAD community depends their lives on the forest. The reduced forest area that that has been turned into housing residents and oil palm plantations, has forced the SAD community to change their mindset about efforts to meet their daily needs. The SAD community is begins to understand the importance of education and schools. Problems that start from food

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problems then lead to literacy problems, to survive, the SAD community needs literacy.

Literacy has a dynamic meaning. In general, literacy is an effective reading and writing ability in various contexts. Pilgrim and Martinez (2013). This understanding then extends to the use of technology in gathering and communicating information. Literacy is constantly changing according to the times, but certainly literacy is a basic ability for everyone to be able to play a productive role in society (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). Basic literacy for each individual is divided into reading literacy, numeracy literacy, scientific literacy, digital literacy, financial literacy, and cultural and citizenship literacy (Saryono, Ibrahim, Muliastuti, Akbari, Hanifah, Miftahussururi, Nento and Efgeni., 2017), the focus of this activity is literacy which is considered as initial and main capital for SAD community. In Indonesia basic literacy is obtained through formal, non-formal and informal education. This cannot be obtained by the SAD community because of the lack of facilities and infrastructure and the lack of teachers on duty. This is due to the remote geographical location so that access is difficult to reach. Furthermore on the matter of religion The Suku Anak Dalam have embraced Islam possess limited knowledge about Islam. One example can be seen in the minimal interaction between the community and the Quran, which is caused by the lack of trained personnel to teach Quran reading and writing. In line with the information researched by Alhusni, Kurniawan, and Mulyatin (2021) that conclude Islamization in SAD community has succeeded in removing animist teachings that are not in line with Islamic values. However, their understanding of fiqh al-ṣalāh is still relatively low. On the other perspectives, SAD's cultural practices, like Islamic mantras and death rituals, reflect a blend of Islamic and

indigenous traditions, known as "Islam Rimba." However, their understanding of Islam is limited (Waryono, Zuhdi, Nawawi and Elmansyah., 2021). Considering this condition, the inspiring nature class is one of the solutions to solve literacy problems for SAD. Inspiring Nature Class is a learning strategy that applies various methods and media available in nature for learning for the SAD community. This strategy uses a contextual approach to facilitate the community in learning activities.

2. Methods

This research applied Participatory Action Research (PAR). The process of PAR is cyclical, from identify an issue or situation, initiate research, action, and reflection. Both researcher and participants reflect on and then proceed to a new cycle (Kendon, Pain & Kesby, 2007). In this reasearch, The strategies to be implemented are as follows:

Formulating the Community Action Plan (CAP)

In preparing the Community Action Plan (CAP), the steps to be taken include: first, identifying the various desires and needs of the target subjects related to improving the quality of life within the Anak Dalam Indigenous Community to ensure that the plan is relevant and aligned with their aspirations. Second, conducting an in-depth observation of the various potentials possessed by the Anak Dalam Indigenous Community to effectively utilize existing resources. Third, identifying and formulating concrete steps required to achieve the objectives within the mentoring process, ensuring that the implementation of the plan is clear and directed

Situation Analysis

A comprehensive analysis of the conditions within the Anak Dalam Indigenous Community will be conducted, including an

inventory of factors that facilitate or impede the objectives of the mentoring program. This approach will elucidate available resources, barriers, and deficiencies, thereby providing a detailed and accurate assessment of the community's current status. The supporting and hindering factors for this mentoring program can be outlined as follows:

Doing with the community

Several actions that can be undertaken collaboratively with the target community to achieve the goals and expectations of this mentoring program are outlined in the action program

No	Action Program	Goals/Expectations
1	Formation of the Mentored Community	Establishment of a platform as a basis for implementing the mentoring program
2	Providing education on the significance of foundational understanding and knowledge of Islamic principles.	Cultivating an awareness aimed at improving the quality of understanding and knowledge principles.
3	TQ Training (Reading and Writing the Qur'an): Fostering the ability to read and write the Qur'an among all individuals in the Anak Dalam Indigenous Community	Development of Qur'anic Literacy for each member of the Anak Dalam Indigenous Community, with a particular focus on children who acquires the skills to read and write the Qur'an.
4	Training in Literacy and Numeracy (Calistung): Providing instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic skills	Development of Literacy and Numeracy Skills. Ensuring that each Reading and Writing in the Anak Dalam Indigenous Community acquires the abilities to read, write, and perform basic arithmetic

Further more, the mentoring design employs the concept of "inspirational nature classes," which utilizes the natural environment as both the setting and source of learning while considering the psychological conditions of the learners. The BTQ mentoring

program will be implemented with the following design:

Mentoring Programs		
No	Programs	Activities
1	Collective Training	Sessions will be conducted collectively, organized into several groups based on specific criteria (such as age or foundational skills).
2	Group Tutoring	Each group will be supported by one tutor.
3	Nature-Based Activities	Learning will begin with nature-based games.
4	Core Activities	The core content of the program will include: 1. Islamic Training: Articles of Faith (<i>Rukun iman</i>), Pillars of Islam (<i>Rukun Islam</i>), Purification (<i>Taharah</i>), Pledge of Islamic Faith, Reading basic Arabic letters (<i>Huruf Hijaiyah</i>), Writing basic Arabic letters (<i>Huruf Hijaiyah</i>), 2. Literacy and Numeracy Skills for children (<i>Calistung</i>): Reading and writing basic Latin letters, and Basic arithmetic
5	Literacy and Numeracy Method	The methods used for teaching Arabic reading and writing especially for children will be nature-based, where Arabic letters are analogized with elements found in nature that learners frequently encounter or interact with.
6	Literacy and Numeracy Method	The method for teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic (Calistung) will

		also be nature-based, utilizing natural resources as learning tools.
7	Program Objectives	The implementation of this program aims to develop a model for mentoring Remote Indigenous Communities (KAT) and identify a suitable BTQ learning method that aligns with the characteristics of KAT

The inner resources approach,

This model involves activities designed to stimulate the community to identify various desires and needs, while striving to establish cooperative partnerships with relevant stakeholders to enhance the quality of religious life within the Anak Dalam Indigenous Community

Check (Evaluating and controlling)

We check and evaluate our action to make a reflection and better plan for next action.

Subject of this research are children of SAD community, aged 5-13 years. This research was conducted from June until October 2019. Data was collected by observation and interview and analysis in qualitative.

Demographic and Geogrpahic Condition

Tanah Garo located in Jambi Province which has protected forests and the biosphere reserve of Bukit Duabelas National Park, covering an area of 54,780.41 hectares, which spans across three districts: Tebo, Sarolangun, and Batang Hari. Tanah Garo is a rural region in the southern part of Jambi Province. It has a tropical rainforest climate with abundant rainfall, and its landscape consists of lowlands and hilly terrain, influenced by nearby rivers like the Batanghari.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Literacy of Suku Anak Dalam in Tanah Garo Village, Muara Tabir District, Tebo Regency

Suku Anak Dalam (SAD) or also known as the jungle people (Urang rimbo in Jambi) is an indigenous community in Jambi Province with a population of 2,951 family heads or 12,909 people spread in Batang Hari Regency, Bungo Regency, Tebo Regency, Sarolangun Regency, and Merangin Regency. The SAD community has an uncertain history and origins. Some theories that emerged were known from word of mouth that was told from generation to generation (Basri, 2015). Although its origin is unknown, the SAD community has unique culture and characteristics.

At present, the SAD Community consists of two groups: nomadic groups and settled groups. Nomadic groups are SAD groups that live in one location and then move if there are group members who die or become sick, which are known as “*melangun*”. (Tarib, 2014). This group lives in simple tents covered only by roofs made of leaves or from tarpaulins. The settled group has a semi-permanent to permanent houses. They are familiar with the economic, educational, health, social, political, and religious systems (Basri, 2015).

On June 29-30, 2019, the team visited Tanah Garo Village, accompanied by local officials and volunteers. They met with the SAD community to understand their needs and challenges, discovering that food insecurity due to deforestation and lack of skills was a major issue. The community desired educational support, having faced inconsistent help from NGOs and barriers to formal schooling. The team planned a literacy program to address these needs and conducted further interviews and observations for analysis.

After engaging in discussions with the SAD community, including Tumenggung and other adults, several key supporting factors for the mentoring program emerged. The community's strong awareness of the value of education is crucial, driven by their current challenges such as food insecurity and environmental changes. As traditional resources from the forest diminish due to deforestation and palm oil plantations, the SAD community recognizes the necessity of education for survival beyond physical means. They are increasingly focused on their children's future, hoping they will develop skills for various professions such as health workers, teachers, technicians, or entrepreneurs. This includes a desire for healthcare providers within the community to address local health service gaps, as well as aspirations for careers in agriculture, security, and other fields. Basic literacy and numeracy are also seen as essential for better integration with the broader society



Figure 1. Discussion with the Male Group of the SAD Community



Figure 2. Discussion with the female Group of the SAD Community

The dialogue and observation continued into the evening to obtain valid conditions of the SAD community in Tanah Garo Village, as shown in Figure 3. The evening discussions were conducted because more community members could attend, as some were away fishing or farming during the day

The SAD community has lived in the forests in Jambi Province for a long time. Forests as their main source of livelihood are highly preserved in the form of rules and prohibitions regulated in customs (Ibrahim, kamil Pasya and Nur, 2013). The values of environmental preservation arise from the values of harmony, balance, sustainability, and mutual cooperation (Sinaga and Rustaman, 2015). The current condition of forests continues to diminish because it is used as residential areas and oil palm plantations. The expansion of oil palm plantations has caused the SAD community to lose living areas to develop their social systems (Pujiriyani and Puri, 2013). This condition is found in almost all SAD communities in Jambi Province, including SAD communities in Muara Tabir Subdistrict, Tebo Regency. Life that is increasingly recessive forces the SAD community to change their mindset about the various activities carried out, SAD communists need life skills education to practice their abilities and skills in

order to gain a proper and dignified life. The meaning of the SAD (Hidayat, 2013).

The SAD community's awareness of the importance of education plays the biggest role in the implementation of this assistance program. After discussions with the SAD community, it was found that the SAD Community in Tanah Garo Village had a high desire to obtain education. This is inseparable from the main problem faced by the SAD community today, namely food shortages. The SAD community survives by making use of all the resources in the forest. These resources are used to meet the needs of clothing, food, and shelter. Forest areas that have been turned into human settlements and oil palm plantations have led to the loss of livelihoods of the SAD community. This change has forced the SAD community to change their perspective on how to survive. Surviving not only requires physical capital but also knowledge and skills gained through the education process. This change in perspective is caused by the community's new experience after mingling with the general public (Hidayat, 2013). This community has begun to think about the future of their children who are expected to have the knowledge and skills that can be useful to facilitate their lives in the future. In the future, children from the SAD community are expected to become health workers, teachers, soldiers, technicians, or other professions to overcome the difficulties they face. One SAD member said that they hoped that one of the children in the SAD community could become a health worker either as a doctor, midwife or nurse. During this time they have difficulty getting health services because of the far access. Difficulties in accessing health services are not only caused by the lack of health center facilities and experts, but also due to the habits

of the SAD community who move where there are dead and sick people and the customary prohibition for unmarried women to interact with a man outside the home. (Ridwan and Lesmana, 2018) This makes it difficult for health workers to provide health services and it will be easier if health workers come from the SAD community itself. During this time they have difficulty getting learning, especially reading, writing, and arithmetic because of various factors, including their habits to live in different places, access to distant schools, and the absence of teaching staff at their place.

3.2. Inspiring Nature Class for SAD's Literacy

Inspiring nature class is a learning strategy that has the concept of nature as a place and source of learning. This strategy was chosen because of the psychological condition of the SAD community that lives and is close to nature. The team gave instruction on how to count numbers 1-10 using cards, limbs, and natural objects such as stones, trees and other objects. The team tried to provide a contextual approach to teaching. This is based on the concept of learning that should be done using certain materials, tools, techniques, and environments (Gafur, 2015). Contextual approach is expected to be more effective because students experience first hand the concepts being taught (Yenti, 2009). The use of natural objects was chosen so that SAD community children became more interested in participating in learning. The use of natural objects is also more effective to improve the ability to recognize numbers as a symbol for children (Rejeki, 2015)

In addition to teaching numeracy, the team also gave Latin alphabet introduction lessons to children of the SAD community. The introduction was started from the pronunciation of the alphabet and how to write

the Latin alphabet. In this activity, SAD children were taught how to write their own names. Furthermore, to the introduction of numbers and the Latin alphabet, the team also used electronic media to increase enthusiasm in learning. In addition, the use of technology is also known to help stimulate brain growth, stimulate imagination, creativity, improve alphabet letter recognition, and increase children's verbal abilities (Basri, 2015). After the action, we continued to discuss with the SAD community. The discussion showed the enthusiasm and needed of the SAD community in reading, writing and arithmetic skills, to accommodate this need a "Shelter House" would be formed. This shelter is planned to be built independently by the residents of Garo Land and is located near the SAD community. This shelter was established with the aim of becoming a joint learning place for the SAD community. The Shelter House is considered to be a solution to the problems of the SAD community, as well as of course considering the ability for existing human and financial resources. Furthermore, after evaluating through joint discussions, several suggestions for follow-up action are obtained, i.e. (1) Advanced teaching for SAD children can use the tale / storytelling method by involving Jambi storytellers such as storytellers from Kampung Seloko Jambi. The method of storytelling / storytelling is known to improve children's speaking skills and is also able to improve children's language skills, (2) The Tanah Garo Village, both village officials as well as volunteer teams and villagers can continue the SAD community coaching activities

Furthermore, in the term of Islamic literacy

4. Conclusion

The results show that the Inspiring Nature Class strategy was able to provide literacy skills of Suku Anak Dalam. This can be seen from the increased reading, writing and arithmetic skills. This "Inspiring Nature Class" is conducted to enhance the literacy skill of SAD community as it shows this strategy was successful in developing their skills of reading, writing and arithmetic skills of SAD children. By implementing the contextual approach and utilizing the nature as media. The children are not merely improving their skills but also to gain a better understanding of the importance of education for their future. Overall, this activity demonstrates that the relevant approach, education is beneficial and accessible for marginalized communities like the Suku Anak Dalam in facing modern challenges.

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