

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT IN LITERACY PROGRAMS AND THE INCREASE IN KNOWLEDGE OF THE KARO COMMUNITY IN KABANJAHE

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the relationship between community involvement in literacy programs and the subsequent increase in public knowledge among the Karo community in Kabanjahe. Using a quantitative correlation approach, data was collected from local residents who actively participated in core programs organized by the Karo Regency Library and Archives Department, such as Kilap Pustaka and Safari Literacy. All research instruments were validated, proven reliable, and met assumptions of normality before analysis. These findings show that the level of community involvement in various literacy activities is relatively high. Correspondingly, their knowledge and understanding after participating in these programs shows a substantial increase, including in the good category. Correlation analysis confirmed a statistically significant and positive moderate strength relationship between the two variables. This direct relationship implies that higher and more active participation in literacy initiatives leads to a greater expansion of knowledge and insight into everyday life. Consequently, this research concludes that actively involving citizens in social inclusion-based literacy programs serves as an effective mechanism for sharpening thinking skills, broadening perspectives, and cultivating strong and sustainable learning habits in society.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of science, technology, and information has increased the importance of literacy in modern society. Literacy is no longer limited to reading and writing skills but also includes the ability to access, understand, evaluate, and utilize information effectively in daily life. In the era of digital transformation, literacy has become an important competency that allows individuals to actively participate in social, cultural, economic,

and educational activities. People with higher levels of literacy tend to be more adaptive to technological change and better prepared to improve their quality of life (National Library, 2025).

Apart from the various literacy initiatives implemented by the Indonesian government, the achievement of literacy in Indonesia remains a challenge. Literacy development is considered an important factor in supporting lifelong learning and community empowerment. The concept of lifelong learning emphasizes that learning must continue throughout the individual's life and that literacy serves as the basis for the continuous acquisition of knowledge. In North Sumatra, literacy development indicators show the need for greater community involvement and more effective literacy programs (Development, research agency & North, 2021). The results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) show that the literacy ability of the Indonesian people is still below the international average, so it is necessary to strengthen sustainable and community-based literacy programs (OECD, 2022). In addition, the low interest in reading of Indonesian people is also a challenge in human resource development (Purwanto et al., 2020).

To overcome this problem, the Karo Regency Library and Archives Department has implemented several literacy programs, including KILAP PUSTAKA and Literacy Safari, which aim to promote reading habits, information literacy, and community empowerment. These programs provide opportunities for community members to engage in reading, discussion, and other educational programs designed to improve access to information and learning opportunities (Karo, 2026).

The literacy program carried out by the Karo Regency Library and Archives Office through KILAP PUSTAKA and Literacy Safari activities is an effort to improve reading culture and community empowerment. Library-based literacy programs not only function as a means of providing information, but also as a medium for community empowerment through skill development and improvement of quality of life (Atmi et al., 2022).

Community participation is a key factor in determining the success of literacy programs. Active participation allows individuals to interact with educational materials, exchange knowledge, and develop critical thinking skills. According to participation theory, individuals who are actively involved in community activities tend to benefit more than passive participants (Vidya, 2022). In addition, literacy activities provide opportunities for individuals to access information, develop analytical skills, and strengthen their understanding of social and cultural issues (Atmi et al., 2022).

Previous studies have shown the positive impact of literacy programs on community development. Tarigan & Coal (2023) found that the social inclusion-based literacy program implemented by the Karo Regency Regional Library increased community participation and increased information utilization among local residents. Similarly, Istihari (2024) reported that active involvement in literacy activities improved participants' reading comprehension and critical literacy skills. Khasanah & Fu'adi (2025) It was also found that literacy programs had a positive effect on literacy outcomes, especially when participants were actively involved in learning activities.

Research focused on improving public knowledge also produced positive findings. Mariyani et al., (2024) shows that community-based education programs significantly increase public knowledge through socialization and discussion activities. Likewise, Riskawaty & Jannah (2024) found that educational interventions improved participants' understanding and awareness of health-related issues. These findings show that active participation in educational and literacy activities contributes to increased knowledge and awareness among members of the community.

Although previous research has explored literacy programs and community participation, limited research has specifically examined the relationship between participation in literacy programs and knowledge enhancement among the Karo community in Kabanjahe. Most studies have focused on students, schools, or literacy outcomes in general, while empirical evidence on local community-based literacy programs is limited. Therefore, investigating

these relationships is important to provide a deeper understanding of how literacy initiatives contribute to the development of societies in specific cultural contexts.

This study aims to examine the relationship between the level of participation in literacy programs and the increase in knowledge among the Karo community in Kabanjahe. These findings are expected to contribute to the literature on community literacy and provide recommendations for policymakers, libraries, and literacy organizations in designing more effective literacy programs that encourage active community participation and sustainable knowledge development.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational research design to examine the relationship between participation in literacy programs and knowledge improvement among the Karo community in Kabanjahe. The quantitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to objectively measure the relationships between variables through numerical data and statistical analysis (Scott, 2013). Correlation design is used to determine the existence, direction, and strength of relationships between independent and dependent variables without manipulating the research variables.

The research was conducted in Kabanjahe District, Karo Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The locations of the research include the Kabanjahe City Park, the Karo Regency Public Library, and the Reading Corner at the Kabanjahe City Park. These locations were chosen because they regularly organize literacy activities and community-based literacy programs.

The population of this study consists of members of the Karo community who actively participate in literacy programs organized by government agencies, libraries, educational institutions, and literacy communities in Kabanjahe. Samples were selected using cluster sampling (sampling area), which is considered appropriate when the population is geographically dispersed across several literacy activity locations (Scott, 2013). The clusters are determined based on the location of the literacy program, namely the Kabanjahe City Park, the Karo Regency Public Library, and the Reading Corner in the Kabanjahe City Park. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula according to the total available population.

This study involves two variables. An independent variable is the level of participation in literacy programs, measured through the frequency of attendance, active participation, consistency of attendance, and individual contribution to literacy activities. The indicator was developed based on the theory of Habit Formation which explains the formation of habits through the repetition of activities (M. Miftah Arief, 2022), a theory of constructivism that emphasizes the importance of active involvement in the learning process (Tohari & Rahman, 2024), Maslow's motivational theory of participant attendance consistency (Blog, 2026), as well as a theory of community participation that emphasizes the importance of active involvement in social and educational activities (Vidya, 2022).

Dependent variables are the increase in knowledge, measured through the understanding of new information, the ability to apply knowledge in daily life, changes in perspective and critical thinking, and increased information literacy (IFLA, 2006). The measurement is based on Information Processing Theory (UNESA, 2026), Contextual Learning Theory (April, 2026), Ennis's theory of critical thinking (Ciputra, 2026), as well as the concept of Lifelong Learning which emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning (IFLA, 2006).

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Additional data were obtained through observation, documentation, and interviews to support the interpretation of quantitative findings. The questionnaire items were developed based on

indicators of community participation and knowledge enhancement identified in previous literacy studies (Atmi et al., 2022).

Data analysis was carried out using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis is used to describe respondent characteristics and response distribution regarding participation and knowledge enhancement. The validity of the instrument was tested using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation, while the reliability was assessed using the Alpha Cronbach coefficient. Before hypothesis testing, a normality test was performed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The relationship between participation in literacy programs and knowledge improvement was analyzed using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation. A significance level of 0.05 was applied to determine whether the relationship between variables was statistically significant (Scott, 2013).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The level of involvement of the Kabanjahe community in literacy programs.

Descriptive analysis shows that the level of involvement of the Karo community in literacy programs is categorized as relatively high, this analysis was carried out to describe the empirical conditions of the level of involvement of the kabanjahe community. Based on data collected from 70 respondents, the community involvement variable obtained an average score of 29.66 with a standard deviation of 4.05. These findings show that most of the respondents actively participate in various literacy activities organized by the Karo Regency Library and Archives Department as well as the literacy community in Kabanjahe. The high level of participation reflects community involvement in reading activities, discussions, training sessions, and other literacy-related programs. These findings show that literacy initiatives have been successful in attracting community participation and encouraging sustainable learning activities.

Table 1, Descriptive Analysis of the Level of Community Involvement

Variabel	N	Minimum	Maximum	Means	Std. Deviation
Literacy Program Engagement Rate (X)	70	21.00	40.00	29.6571	4.05000
Increase in Community Knowledge (Y)	70	34.00	60.00	45.5429	5.69181

It is known that the number of respondents in this study is 70 people. The variable level of involvement in the literacy program obtained a minimum score of 21.00 and a maximum score of 40.00 with a mean score of 29.6571 and a standard deviation of 4.05000. Based on the results of the descriptive analysis, it can be concluded that the Karo community in Kabanjahe has a good level of involvement in literacy programs, so that it has a positive impact on improving community knowledge.

Testing the Validity of the Kabanjahe Community Involvement Rate

The Validity Test was conducted to determine the extent to which the items of statements in the questionnaire were able to measure the variable level of involvement in the literacy program. The results of the x variable test showed that all statement items on the engagement level variable in the literacy program had a greater calculated r value than the r table. The calculated r-value of each item ranges from 0.497 to 0.579. Thus, all statement items on the level of involvement in literacy program variables are declared valid and suitable for use as research instruments.

Table 2, Validity Test of the Level of Kabanjahe Community Involvement

Item	r Count	r Table	Remarks
Page 1	0,544	0,235	Applicable
Page 2	0,579	0,235	Applicable
Page3	0,571	0,235	Applicable
Page 4	0,531	0,235	Applicable
Page 5	0,497	0,235	Applicable
Page-6	0,543	0,235	Applicable
Pg. 7	0,559	0,235	Applicable
Page 8	0,544	0,235	Applicable

A Measure of the Effectiveness of Community Engagement

The reliability test was carried out to determine the level of consistency of research instruments in measuring the variables of the level of community involvement in literacy programs. The results of the Engagement level variable test showed that Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.662 with a total of 8 statement items. This value is greater than the minimum reliability limit of 0.60. Thus, all statement items on the level of involvement variable in literacy programs are declared reliable and suitable for use as research instruments. In addition, the Corrected Item-Total Correlation value on each item ranges from 0.302 to 0.392 which indicates that each item has a fairly good relationship with the variable total score. Therefore, all statement items are retained and used in the subsequent data analysis process.

Table 3, Testing the Feasibility of the Level of Community Involvement

Item	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Alpha Cronbach if the item is deleted
Page 1	0,363	0,630
Page 2	0,391	0,622
Page3	0,392	0,622
Page 4	0,337	0,636
Page 5	0,302	0,644
Page- 6	0,365	0,629

Pg. 7 0,352 0,632
Page 0,329 0,639
8

A Measure of the Normality of Community Engagement

The Normality Test was carried out to find out whether the research data was distributed normally. Based on the results of the normality test, the variable level of involvement in the literacy program (X) obtained a significance value of 0.200 with a Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistical value of 0.078. Meanwhile, the variable of increasing public knowledge (Y) obtained a significance value of 0.200 with a Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistical value of 0.089. Because the significance value of the two variables is greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the variable data on the level of involvement in literacy programs and the improvement of community knowledge is distributed normally.

Table 4, Table of Normality Test of Community Involvement Level

Variabel	N	Minimum	Maximum	Means	Std. Deviation
Literacy Program Engagement Rate (X)	70	21.00	40.00	29.6571	4.05000
Increase in Community Knowledge (Y)	70	34.00	60.00	45.5429	5.69181

Increased Levels of Knowledge Among the Kabanjahe People

The results of the descriptive analysis showed that the variable of knowledge improvement obtained an average score of 45.54 with a standard deviation of 5.69. These results show that participation in literacy programs has contributed positively to the increase in respondents' knowledge. Increased knowledge is reflected in people's ability to understand new information, apply acquired knowledge in daily life, and improve information management and evaluation skills. The findings show that literacy programs provide meaningful learning experiences that support the development of individual competencies and broader knowledge acquisition.

Table 5, Descriptive Analysis of the Level of Increase in Knowledge of the Kabanjahe Community

Variabel	Statistics Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Say.	Remarks
Literacy Program Engagement Rate (X)	0,078	0,200	Normal
Increase in Community Knowledge (Y)	0,089	0,200	Normal

A Measure of the Effectiveness of the Knowledge Assessment of the Population

The results of the test of the community knowledge improvement variable showed that all statement items in the community knowledge improvement variable had a greater calculated r value than the r table. The calculated r value of each item ranges from 0.380 to 0.640. Thus, all statement items on the variable of increasing public knowledge are declared valid and suitable for use as research instruments.

Table 6, Validity Test of Increasing Knowledge of the Kabanjahe Community

Item	r Count	r Table	Remarks
Y1	0,596	0,235	Applicable
Y2	0,380	0,235	Applicable
Y3	0,514	0,235	Applicable
Y4	0,640	0,235	Applicable
Y5	0,522	0,235	Applicable
Y6	0,567	0,235	Applicable
Y7	0,445	0,235	Applicable
Y8	0,613	0,235	Applicable
Y9	0,619	0,235	Applicable

A Practical Approach to Improving the Knowledge of the Rural Population

Based on the results of the variable y reliability test, a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.775 was obtained with a total of 12 statement items. This value is greater than the minimum reliability limit of 0.60. Thus, all statement items on the variable of increasing public knowledge are declared reliable and suitable for use as research instruments.

Table 7, Reality Test of Increasing Kabanjahe Community Knowledge

Variabel	Alfa Cronbach	N item	Remarks
Increase in Community Knowledge (Y)	0,775	12	Reliabel

The relationship between Community Involvement in Literacy Programs and Knowledge Improvement.

The correlation analysis of Pearson's Product Moments revealed a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.588 with a significance value (p) of 0.000. Because the significance value was lower than 0.05, the association between community involvement in literacy programs and knowledge improvement was statistically significant. The correlation coefficient of 0.588 indicates a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. This means that higher levels of participation in literacy programs are associated with higher levels of knowledge improvement among the Karo people in Kabanjahe.

Table 5, Person Correlation Test Table

Variabel	Korelasi Pearson (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)	N	Remarks

Engagement Rate in Literacy Programs (X) with Increase in Community Knowledge (Y)	0,588	0,000	70	Signifikan
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The significance value of 0.000 is smaller than 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$), indicating that there is a significant relationship between the level of involvement in literacy programs and the increase in community knowledge. Meanwhile, the value of the correlation coefficient of 0.588 indicates a positive relationship and is in the medium category. Thus, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) which states that there is a relationship between the level of involvement in literacy programs and the increase in knowledge of the Karo community in Kabanjahe is accepted, while the zero hypothesis (H_0) is rejected.

Discussion

The results of this study show that the level of involvement of the Karo community in Kabanjahe in literacy programs is in the good category with an average score of 29.66. These findings indicate that the community is quite active in participating in various literacy activities organized by the Karo Regency Library and Archives Office, such as KILAP PUSTAKA and Literacy Safari. The high level of community involvement can be explained through the Habit Formation Theory which states that repetitive and consistent behavior will form new habits (M. Miftah Arief, 2022). The more often people participate in literacy activities, the stronger the habits of reading, seeking information, and learning that are formed in daily life. The findings are also in line with Vygotsky's theory of constructivism which emphasizes that knowledge is built through the active involvement of individuals in the learning process (Tohari & Rahman, 2024). In the context of the literacy program in Kabanjahe, the community not only receives information passively, but also engages in discussions, reading, asking questions, and sharing experiences that allow the process of knowledge construction to take place actively. The results of this study support the research Istihari (2024) which states that the active involvement of participants in literacy activities can improve understanding and critical thinking skills.

The results of this study also show that the level of increase in public knowledge is in the good category with an average score of 45.54. This condition shows that the literacy program that the community participates in is able to provide real benefits in increasing understanding of new information, the ability to apply knowledge in daily life, and improving information literacy. This finding can be explained through Information Processing Theory which states that individuals will acquire new knowledge through the process of receiving, processing, storing, and using the information obtained (UNESA, 2026). The literacy program provides opportunities for the public to access various sources of information which are then processed into useful knowledge.

In addition, the increase in community knowledge can also be explained through the theory of Lifelong Learning which emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning in increasing the capacity of individuals to continue learning and adapt to Cropley's changes in the theory of Lifelong Learning, 1970 (IFLA, 2006). Through literacy programs, people not only obtain new information but also develop sustainable independent learning skills. These results are in line with research Mariyani et al. (2024) who found that community-based education programs are able to increase public understanding and knowledge through socialization and discussion activities. Similar findings were also reported by Riskawaty & Jannah (2024) which shows that educational interventions can increase public knowledge and awareness of various social issues. The Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis showed a correlation coefficient value of 0.588 with a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). These results show that there is a

positive and significant relationship between the level of involvement in literacy programs and the increase in knowledge of the Karo community in Kabanjahe. This positive relationship indicates that the higher the community's involvement in literacy programs, the higher the increase in knowledge obtained.

These findings support the theory of community participation put forward by Arnstein (1969) that the active involvement of individuals in social and educational activities will provide greater benefits than passive involvement (Vidya, 2022). Through active participation in reading, discussions, training, and other literacy activities, people gain more opportunities to interact with information, expand their horizons, and improve their critical thinking skills. The results of this study also strengthen the research Tarigan & Coal (2023) who found that social inclusion-based literacy programs in Karo Regency were able to increase community involvement and information utilization. In addition, the research Khasanah & Fu'adi (2025) shows that the active involvement of participants is an important factor that strengthens the impact of literacy programs on improving literacy and knowledge skills.

Thus, the results of this study prove that the success of literacy programs is not only determined by the existence of the program itself, but also by the level of community involvement as participants. The more actively the Karo community participates in literacy activities, the greater the chance for increased knowledge that can support the development of quality of life, critical thinking skills, and lifelong learning.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study on the relationship between the level of involvement in literacy programs and the increase in knowledge of the Karo community in Kabanjahe, it can be concluded that the level of community involvement in literacy programs is in the good category. This shows that the people of Karo are quite active in participating in various literacy activities organized by the Karo Regency Library and Archives Service as well as the local literacy community. This involvement is reflected in the frequency of participation, active participation, consistency of attendance, and community contribution in various literacy activities. The level of increase in public knowledge after participating in the literacy program is also in the good category. Literacy programs have been proven to provide benefits in improving people's ability to understand new information, apply knowledge in daily life, develop a more critical mindset, and improve information literacy skills. The results of the Pearson Product Moment correlation test showed a correlation coefficient value of 0.588 with a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). These findings show that there is a positive and significant relationship between the level of involvement in literacy programs and the increase in knowledge of the Karo community in Kabanjahe. Thus, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. The higher the level of community involvement in literacy programs, the higher the level of knowledge obtained. This research emphasizes that literacy programs that are implemented in a sustainable manner and supported by active community participation can be an effective means of increasing knowledge, expanding horizons, and encouraging the realization of lifelong learning among the karo people in kabanjahe.

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