Religious Literacy and Diversity Promotion through “Ngabuburit Bersama” Programme on Forum TBM YouTube Channel

Dina Novita Tuasun

{tuasun.dina@gmail.com}

Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia

Abstract. Taman Bacaan Masyarakat (TBM) has emerged as a prominent part of grassroots literacy initiatives. One of the strategies to promote literacy is through various programs, including the YouTube channels, such as Forum TBM. Following the series of online storytelling (Muhibah Dongeng), Forum TBM organized the Ngabuburit Bersama program during Ramadan 2023. The program comprised an online storytelling session of folktales from different places in Indonesia. Hence, this paper applies the virtual ethnographic methodology to examine the promotion of religious literacy and diversity. The dataset consisted of 30 videos from Ngabuburit Bersama playlist on the Forum TBM YouTube channel. The data was collected and selected based on the thematic framework of diversity. The findings indicate that despite being conducted in the atmosphere of Muslim religious holiday, the Ngabuburit Bersama implied the values of unity, tolerance, and cultural diversity. Therefore, TBM can be a potential place and space for religious literacy and diversity promotion.

Keywords: literacy, diversity, promotion, folktales, Taman Bacaan Masyarakat.

1 Introduction

The National Literacy Movement (Gerakan Literasi Nasional), which began in 2016, encompasses six basic literacy dimensions: reading and writing, numeracy, science, digital, financial, and cultural and civic literacy. Literacy can refer to two distinct concepts: (1) the ability to write and read; and (2) knowledge or skills in a particular field or activity. Buku Panduan Gerakan Literasi Sekolah di Sekolah Dasar (Guidebook for the School Literacy Movement in Elementary Schools) clarifies that literacy is the ability to access, understand, and use something intelligently through various activities, such as reading, seeing, listening, and speaking. [1]

However, GLN is not only implemented at schools but also at homes and communities. When school buildings were closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the family environment and the local community became the main pillars for ensuring that children did not lose the chance to learn and improve their literacy. The Community Reading Garden (TBM) is one of the accessible locations for children living in the community. Literacy activists strategized and collaborated to continue fulfilling their commitments even though, at the onset of the pandemic,
many TBMs were closed and no activities were allowed to take place. Synergizing in forums or communities is one of the real efforts undertaken. After the pandemic ends, the TBM Forum continues the collaboration through various online activities utilizing social media and video-sharing platforms. Muhibah Dongeng is a program that is broadcast on the TBM Forum YouTube channel, along with other online activities. This activity commences in 2021 and continues in Ramadan 2023 under the title Ngabuburit Bersama, which is comprised of video narratives from multiple TBMs across different places in Indonesian.

The origins of TBM in Indonesia can be traced back to the establishment of book rental services in Batavia at the end of the 19th century, as evidenced by earlier studies. Subsequently, this concept underwent further development throughout the New Order era, resulting in the establishment of a dedicated reading garden that serves as both a publicly accessible library and a center for educational and interactive activities. During the Reformation era, there was a substantial increase in the number of TBM as an independent platform for the exchange of experiences, knowledge, and resources. Furthermore, these TBM's had a role in cultivating a sense of nationalism and promoting literacy, particularly in relation to religious teachings [2].

Previous studies conducted on community reading gardens have enhanced their significance in society, both related to the interest in reading [2][3][4][5][6][7][8][9] or as a source of learning [10], as well as in relation to community empowerment [11][12] and as an instrument of social transformation [13]. Additional studies have been undertaken to investigate the phenomenon of literacy culture at schools as educational institutions [14]. The investigation of the implementation, management, and efficacy of reading garden programs in several locations across Indonesia presents a compelling area of research. This includes the cities of Palembang [15], Pati [16], Lombok [17], Pandeglang [18], and Bantul [19]. In the discourse, Subhan [20] introduced the subject of establishing the conceptual framework for interpreting the act of reading within the context of a communal reading garden located in Banten.

Based on an examination of multiple research pertaining to the reading garden, it becomes apparent that there is a gap that may be addressed by using the videos from the storytelling program on the Forum TBM YouTube Channel as primary source material. This study holds significance as it highlights the role and potency of TBM to go beyond geographical limitations and extend its reach across regional boundaries through the utilization of digital media. Hence, these videos can serve as an opportunity to promote religious literacy and diversity. I propose the religious literacy and diversity terminology which pertains to an individual's capacity to acknowledge and comprehend the presence of diversity in their surroundings, encompassing both cultural, social, and religious diversity.

1.2 Theoretical framework

The terminology of religious literacy and diversity initially emerged from cultural literacy. The concept was proposed by Hirsch [21] to articulate the ability to understand and engage in culture. Furthermore, this particular concept then underlies another concept of religious diversity which carries the term religious literacy. This notion was first suggested by Prothero [21] as a critique of the situation in the United States which he referred to as "a nation of religious illiterates".

However, Prothero argued that religious illiteracy is more dangerous because religion is the most unpredictable essential element and one of the greatest forces in world history, both for good and for evil. Therefore, what is needed is no longer just tolerance, but education, because we are no longer confined to the country where we were born. Prothero categorized religious
literacy into various dimensions, specifically: ritual literacy (knowing the meaning and content of different religious rituals), confessional literacy (knowing the basic understanding of religious doctrines), denominational literacy (knowing the differences in religious denominations or streams), and narrative literacy (knowing the basic narratives and main figures in different religions) [21]. Furthermore, Nocon and Cole [22] emphasized that diversity and literacy are complex phenomena that interact in a complex way. The diversity-in-literacy matrix illustrated that an afterschool program that is co-constructed with diverse children and adults is a space for literacy as a practice/tool and diversity as a resource.

The research will additionally utilize the third-generation New Literacy(ies) Studies (NLS), which conceptualize literacy as a social practice and process. The theoretical framework employed in this study is actor-network theory [23]. The major approach applied is ethnography to track material resources and human resources to understand a social process. Moreover, the units of analysis encompass a wide range of entities, such as technology and digital media, in which humans actively participate. According to Gee, different ways of using digital tools within different sorts of sociocultural practices determined by the social, cultural, historical, and institutional practices of different groups of people. [24]

Another theoretical framework employed is that of media events or media activities related to the specific context of distribution and consumption. In this particular instance, the storytelling program on the TBM Forum YouTube channel has a public dimension or involves many groups that can be categorized as public entities. In the context of digital media, events and activities develop new forms of experience and production. This phenomenon can occur at both the public and private levels [25].

This study examines the Forum TBM as a public platform where users have the ability to both see and add comments on the videos. And YouTube is one of the most crowded platforms. Based on data from We Are Social in October 2022 [26], it can be observed that YouTube holds the second position among the most widely utilized social platforms worldwide, with more than 2.5 billion active users. On average, global users allocate approximately 23.4 hours per month to using the YouTube platform, rendering it the most extensively utilized social application on the Android operating system when compared to other similar platforms. Hence, YouTube is more than just an online-video sharing platform, but serves as a potential medium for fostering (digital) literacy and facilitating the formation of identities, even among children [27].

2 Methods

This research employed a mixed methods approach which integrating quantitative data with qualitative data collection [28]. In this screen-based research, the researcher participated as a viewer of the material, visual, sensory and social environments in the videos [25]. The initial phase involves the virtual collection of data, specifically 27 videos of Ngabuburit Bersama on the TBM Forum YouTube channel. The data was collected over a period of 30 days, but there were three days (specifically, days 13th, 16th, and 25th) where no data was recorded in the Forum TBM channel. Furthermore, the data was organized and examined based on the diversity themes. Therefore this research used thematic content analysis through virtual/digital ethnography (netnography) approach, with a particular focus on the examination of events. During the final phase, videos that have been chosen according to their respective categories will be subjected to analysis. This analysis will be conducted by applying relevant theories and
concepts, which will serve to demonstrate the videos' efficacy in fostering religious literacy and promoting diversity.

## 3 Result and Discussion

### 2.1 The significance of literacy as a pathway

The present section begins with an exposition of the quantitative research study conducted on a total of 27 videos of Ngabuburit Bareng on the Forum TBM Muhibah Dongeng playlists. According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), the term 'muhibah' can be defined as follows: (1) an expression of love, 'mahabah'; (2) feelings of friendship and affection. The Muhibah Dongeng programme was initiated on March 10, 2021, as evidenced by the earliest available data. The initiation of this virtual program occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The TBM Forum YouTube Channel has existed since 2013, as recorded. In the context of the Forum TBM, this digital activity has increased in 2020, since the pandemic outbreak, with various video webinars, trainings, discussions, and talkshows on literacy. According to the official page of the Forum TBM, it has been declared that

> Forum Taman Bacaan Masyarakat (Forum TBM) hadir sebagai wadah berhimpun dan berorganisasi bagi para pendiri dan pengelola Taman Bacaan Masyarakat (TBM), pegiat literasi, komunitas dan masyarakat untuk bersama-sama melakukan ikhtiar mengembangkan gerakan literasi di tanah air. Bagaikan Jalur Sutra atau Jalur Rempah, kehadiran Forum TBM di semua provinsi di Indonesia dan juga di negara lain kiranya menjadi jalan bagi kita untuk meniti dan membangun jalur literasi yang menjadi jalan untuk menciptakan masyarakat yang berdaya, tangguh, mandiri, sejahtera dan bahagia serta memberi warna dan inspirasi bagi dunia. [29]

Based on the statement above, it appears that the goal behind establishing this TBM forum is "to be a way for us to explore and build literacy pathways". The primary objective of the establishment of the "literacy pathway" is to foster community resilience. Literacy is a pathway in fostering an "empowered, resilient, independent, prosperous and happy" community and giving inspiration on the global landscape.

### 2.2 Religious literacy and diversity in the Ngabuburit Bersama Forum TBM storytelling videos

While the TBM Forum profile does not explicitly address religious and diversity matters, it is worth noting that these themes are included in the Ngabuburit Bersama program held during the month of Ramadan. The etymology of 'ngabuburit' can be traced back to its Sundanese origin, specifically derived from the root word 'burit' which denotes the period of time corresponding to the Maghreb prayer. According to Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia Edition V, the term "ngabuburit" is defined in the lemma "mengabuburit" as a verb denoting the act of waiting for the call to prayer before breaking the fast during the holy month of Ramadan. The ngabuburit term appears to incorporate elements of Sundanese culture and Islam. The presence of religious elements can be observed through the imagery and musical compositions used in the opening (bumper) of each video in the Ngabuburit Bersama playlist [30].
The image depicted in the electronic pamphlet consistently appears in the opening (bumper) section of all videos with a representation of a boy positioned on the left side and a girl positioned on the right side. Both individuals are shown gesturing towards a book placed in the center of the image. The book is shown in an open position, revealing its contents which prominently include illustrations depicting castles, princes, dragons, and trees. These depictions evoke imagery reminiscent of a fantastical realm, akin to that of a fairyland. In the depicted scene, the two children are portrayed without identifiable facial features, donning attire adorned with Islamic symbols and characteristics. Specifically, they are seen wearing loose garments that adhere to the principles of modesty by covering the aurat, with the boy wearing peci (headwear for males) and the girl wearing a veil. In the bumper of each video, the visual representation is shown in conjunction with desert-themed music, lasting for a duration of 10 seconds. Meanwhile, the duration of each video varies, ranging from 3 minutes to 5 minutes. Hence, the duration of the bumper including the image is relatively short. At the end of each video, a cover featuring the identical musical composition as the beginning is presented. However, the visual display on the screen shows the Forum TBM Forum, the year of production, the motto “TBM sebagai Ruang Pemulihan Pembelajaran” (“TBM as a Learning Recovery Space”), and the web URL of the Forum TBM official.

This paper focuses on the examination of diversity in the Ngabuburit Bersama videos. The data presented below pertains to a compilation of 27 videos from the Ngabuburit Bersama Forum TBM.
Table 1. Diversities in the videos of Ngabuburit Bersama Forum TBM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
<th>Quantities</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender of the storyteller</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>62.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>37.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre of stories</td>
<td>Legends/origin of places</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>66.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contemporary fiction</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>22.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religious stories</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Myth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greetings</td>
<td>Religious and general greetings</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>51.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religious greetings only</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>25.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General greetings only</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Without greetings</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background/Setting</td>
<td>Wall</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library/bookshelf (ves)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>25.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Natural scenery</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Window/door</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bedroom</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patterned fabrics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.4 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the statistics mentioned above, it is clear that there is an array of diversities in various aspects, including the gender of the storytellers, the genre of the stories, the language employed, and the portrayed environment. In the video, a notable observation is the prevalence of female storytellers, comprising 63% of the total individuals included. This number equals 22 out of 35 individuals, with certain videos showcasing multiple storytellers simultaneously. One of the videos features the engagement of children who were the audience of a teacher-storyteller. In this particular video, they were situated in a classroom with cabinets, teachers' desks, and a blackboard on the wall. The teacher stands at the front, while the children in uniform sit below (day 6th). In another video (day 15th) there is a girl who appears to perform a story. These two videos provide a vivid depiction of the diverse roles of children in storytelling activities: as the audience who were listening and watching the storyteller; and as a storyteller who was telling the story. Both the act of listening and the act of visually seeing and presenting stories are essential literacy skills that require intentional exercises, namely listening and speaking [1].

Based on the analysis of the content (Table 1), it can be observed that out of the total 27 stories presented, a significant majority, accounting for around 66.7%, may be classified as legends. There exist just two narratives explicitly titled "Dongeng Ramadan" (day 12th) and "Muhibah Dongeng Spesial Menyambut Lebaran" (day 30th). According to Bascom (1986) and Brunvand [31], folklore can be categorized into three distinct types: 1) mite/myth; 2) legends; and 3) fairy tales. There exists a singular narrative, specifically pertaining to Ni Pohaci from the region of West Java, which is discussed on the ninth day. Mite, as a form of folk literature, is widely regarded as a religious narrative that transpires within an alternate reality. The primary protagonists in the narrative are depicted as deities or entities of mixed lineage. The presence of gods and goddesses in a faraway place is evident from the introductory narrative provided by the storyteller: "Alkisah, di tempat yang sangat jauh, hiduplah para dewa dan dewi…" (Once
upon a time, in a very distant place, there lived gods and goddesses...). Meanwhile, legends tell
the history or origin of a place, nation, person, event, or other. Legends frequently incorporate
mythical elements, so establishing a close association with myth.

The majority of the stories featured in the Ngabuburit Bersama videos are folktales originating
from different places of Indonesia. Not all storytellers explicitly mentioned certain regions, e.g.
the tales of the origin of Surabaya, the history of the name Lampung, the tale of Beru Karo Basukum,
the origin of Lake Malawen Island South Barito, legends from Poso, and the
occurrence of saltwater in Yiwika, in their stories or in the title of the video. The wide range of
stories also reflected the variety of geographical locations, cultural traditions, and origin myths
or beliefs. One of the stories regarding bokor Kuningan (the 11th day) which is intricately
intertwined with religious components, namely pertaining to Syarif Hidayatullah, also
recognised as Sunan Gunung Jati, a prominent figure among the Walisongo who played a
pivotal role in disseminating the Islamic faith throughout the island of Java. Furthermore, there
is a story from Ende that was presented in the local language, although unfortunately there was
no translation available in bahasa Indonesia. Whereas the inclusion of folktales in multiple
languages can contribute to a deeper understanding of diversity.

The linguistic components employed in religious greetings or other religious attributes and
symbols are also part of consideration in this content analysis. According to tabel 1, the
combination of the religious greeting "Assalamualaikum" and the general greetings such as
"Halo (Hello)," "Hai (Hi)," and "Selamat pagi (Good morning)," are the most commonly used
greeting, accounting for around 52% of the total. It is worth noting that this general greeting
does not exclusively belong to any certain faith. It is noteworthy that in the storytelling video
on the 9th day, religious greetings
were combined with greetings that refer to the local culture
(sampurasun, the greetings in Sundanese language). While approximately 26% of the
storytellers only use religious greetings.

Furthermore, the environmental setting/background of the location of the storyteller can be a
signifier. The majority of storytellers tend to utilize the wall as a background (37.1%), while
25.9% used the bookshelf (ves) or library. Nevertheless, none of the videos showed religious
attributes as the setting background. Some attributes were only worn (e.g. veil) or shown (book,
ketupat). The storytellers also employ various features, including cultural elements, such as hats
or head coverings, for example in a folktale from Papua. among the stories, there are also some
contemporary fiction stories, e.g. a read-aloud activity based on a book about Dayak culture
titled Topi Jena (day 19th). Two other contemporary fictions related to religion are Dongeng
Ramadhan (day 12th) and Muhibah Dongeng Welcoming Eid 1444 H (day 30th). Both videos
have religious themes, specifically the observance of Ramadan fasting and the celebration of
Idul Fitr/Eid al-Fitr, together with the customary practice of making ketupat (the rice cake
woven in palm leaf with diamond shape).

The final day of the storytelling video exhibits a difference from the previous days, as it has a
diverse ensemble of seven storytellers coming from distinct regions around Indonesia. The
storytellers engaged in collaborative digital storytelling, with each individual making
contributions to the narrative. They were taking turns and weaving their parts of the story. The
story is about ketupat, a traditional food that carries considerable religious and cultural
significance. Based on the cultural philosophy of the Javanese, an abbreviation of two words
can be observed. namely "Ngaku Lepat" (denoting the act of confessing wrongdoing) and "Laku
Papat" (signifying the acknowledgment of four specific actions). The four acts mentioned are
"Lebaran," which symbolizes the conclusion of the fasting period of Ramadan and the
opportunity for forgiveness; "Luberan," which emphasizes the importance of sharing and abundance; "Leburan," which involves the act of forgiving one another; and "Laburan," which represents the restoration of purity to the heart [32]. Hence, this observation demonstrates the inseparability of cultural elements from the religious concept of Idul Fitri/Eid al-Fitr. The variation can be observed across different geographical locations, including in various regions in Indonesia.

4 Conclusion

*The Ngabuburit Bersama* videos in Muhibah Dongeng playlist on Forum TBM YouTube channel has shown the wide arrays of diversity, particularly related to religious events and cultural phenomenon. Upon examining these videos, it becomes apparent that the initiative aims to foster literacy by presenting storytellers with various stories. Although the initiative's title has religious elements and the programme took place during the holy month for Muslims, it is important to acknowledge the presence of diversity. The religious elements can be observed in certain aspects, such as the inclusion of Islamic children in the electronic pamphlet and the incorporation of Arabian music in the bumper video. However, the storytelling content has predominantly depicted the legends and origins of various locations in Indonesia. Likewise, there are storytellers who did not employ religious greetings or incorporate religious elements.

Therefore, Forum TBM Youtube channel not only educates and disseminates messages related to literacy, but specifically the religious literacy and diversity during the Muhibah Dongeng program. Lange stated that it is through discourse in videos, commentary, and ongoing collective participation that community is created and maintained [33]. Thus, the TBM Forum which consists of various reading gardens from various regions in Indonesia can jointly celebrate diversity through digital platforms.

The videos also introduces parts of religious literacy, such as ritual literacy pertaining to practices like fasting during Ramadhan and the celebration of Eid al-Fitr. Additionally, it incorporates narrative literacy by highlighting the figure who played a significant role in the dissemination of Islam in Indonesia, particularly Java. Nevertheless, this phenomenon is inherently intertwined with the cultural context in which it exists. The concept being discussed can be referred to as diverse literacy, encompassing aspects such as religion and culture. The concept of literacy has undergone a transformation in terms of its definition and scope. It now encompasses literacy as a social practise, where its application is influenced by the surrounding context. Additionally, literacy is viewed as a learning process that involves engaging in reading and writing activities as a means to reflect, explore, question, and evaluate acquired knowledge and ideas [34]. The community can fulfil the responsibility of promoting religious literacy and diversity, exemplified through initiatives such as the establishment of reading garden. Therefore, with the utilization of digital technology, this religious literacy and diversity initiative is not confined solely in the neighborhood, but rather has the potential to transcend spatial and temporal limitations by using YouTube as digital platform.
References


[29] TBM Forum Website. https://forumtbm.or.id/


