

# The Bontang City Library and Archives Department's Strategy to Increase Public Interest in Reading

## Hapidah<sup>1\*</sup>, Bambang Irawan<sup>2</sup>, Saipul<sup>3</sup>

<sup>123</sup>Universitas Mulawarman Samarinda, Jl. Kuaro, Gn. Kelua, Kota Samarinda Corresponding Author: <u>hapidahbr@gmail.com</u>

### **Keyword:**

Public Service Values; Literacy Promotion; Strategic Initiatives. **Abstract:** This study explores the strategic initiatives of the Bontang City Library and Archives Department in promoting reading interest, the challenges faced during program implementation, and the evaluation of their effectiveness through the lens of New Public Service (NPS) values. Using a qualitative descriptive research method, data were collected through interviews, document analysis, and field observations to uncover the dynamics of public literacy programs. The findings reveal that the library's innovative strategies—such as digital literacy initiatives, community reading campaigns, and partnerships with educational institutions—have contributed to improving public engagement with reading. However, these initiatives face constraints including limited funding, insufficient infrastructure, and cultural resistance to literacy practices. Evaluating the programs through NPS values emphasizes that effectiveness should not be judged merely by quantitative success but by the degree to which programs uphold inclusivity, participation, and accountability. The study concludes that sustainable literacy promotion depends on integrating strategic innovation with ethical public service values, fostering collaborative governance, and empowering citizens as active co-creators of a literate society.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Reading interest plays a vital role in improving the quality of a nation's human resources. Strong literacy skills always begin with an intrinsic interest in reading embedded within individuals (DESY, 2021; Syahidin, 2020). Reading interest enables individuals to access broader information, develop knowledge relevant to contemporary developments, and cultivate critical thinking skills (Putri et al., 2024). Moreover, a society with a strong reading interest is better prepared to actively participate in various aspects of development, including education, economy, social affairs, and politics. This highlights that reading is not merely an individual activity but also an instrument that supports social transformation and strengthens national competitiveness. Communities accustomed to reading tend to adapt more effectively to rapid changes, generate innovative ideas, and ultimately make significant contributions to social and economic progress.

In this context, libraries as public institutions play a central role in fostering a culture of literacy within society. According to Law Number 43 of 2007 on Libraries, these institutions function not only as providers of reading materials but also as centers for education, research, preservation, information services, and meaningful recreation (Endarti, 2022; Wahyuni & Sukri, 2023). Thus, libraries essentially bear a significant responsibility in shaping a society that is intelligent, critical, and fond of reading. A library is not merely a place to store books but an institution that actively contributes to developing the character and literacy habits of the community (Wibowo & Budi, 2025). The presence of a well-managed library will foster stronger reading interest, thereby generating long-term impacts on the improvement of human resource quality.

The linkage between reading interest, the quality of education, the capacity for innovation, and national competitiveness has been extensively examined in numerous studies (Nurlina et al., 2023; Yoni, 2020). Individuals with strong reading interest tend to possess broad insights, analytical thinking skills, and high levels of creativity. In turn, these qualities contribute to the achievement of more sustainable development. As literacy institutions, libraries play a

strategic role in fostering these abilities. Therefore, libraries are required to remain proactive in designing and implementing programs that can attract public attention and encourage reading to become a part of everyday life. Several previous studies, such as those conducted by Rohmaniyah & Sari, (2024) demonstrated that the existence of libraries has an indirect influence on improving the quality of life in society, primarily through the pathway of literacy enhancement.

At the national level, reading interest and literacy rates in Indonesia show a rather complex development. Data from the National Library of Indonesia (Perpusnas) recorded a positive trend in the Reading Interest Index (TGM). In 2017, Indonesia's TGM stood at 36.48 points, categorized as low. However, the figure continued to increase in subsequent years, reaching 52.92 in 2018, 53.48 in 2019, 55.74 in 2020, 59.52 in 2021, and 63.90 in 2022. By 2023, the TGM rose further to 66.70 percent, and in 2024 it climbed again to 72.44 percent, although it was still classified as moderate. Alongside this, the National Literacy Development Index (IPLM) also showed improvement, increasing from 69.42 in 2023 to 73.52 in 2024. These achievements even surpassed the targets set in the National Library's Strategic Plan.

Nevertheless, there is an interesting paradox when this quantitative data is compared with other survey findings. The 2024 survey by Statistics Indonesia (BPS) revealed that only around 10 percent of Indonesians reported genuinely enjoying reading. In addition, the results of the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) ranked Indonesia 72nd out of 77 countries in reading proficiency. This discrepancy suggests that although reading activities have quantitatively increased, the quality of reading interest has not fully developed. Many people read merely to meet certain needs, such as school assignments or work requirements, rather than out of intrinsic motivation or personal enjoyment (Hasan & Khosiah, 2025; Rodin et al., 2024). This underscores that the rise in Reading Interest Index (TGM) and Community Literacy Development Index (IPLM) does not necessarily reflect the development of a sustainable reading culture.

At the regional level, East Kalimantan Province has shown encouraging progress in literacy development. In 2022, the province's Reading Interest Index (TGM) reached 66.84 points, categorized as high and surpassing the national average. Data from the East Kalimantan Provincial Library and Archives Office also recorded a significant increase in the Community Literacy Development Index (IPLM), rising from 34.16 in 2022 to 67.57 in 2023, along with an increase in TGM from 46.27 to 55.83 during the same period. Nevertheless, East Kalimantan's 2023 TGM score remained below the national average. In 2024, the province's IPLM achievement reached 78.34, exceeding the national average of 73.52. The variations in TGM and IPLM figures, both across years and across regions, highlight the complexity of literacy dynamics. These differences may be influenced by diverse measurement methods, varying survey periods, and differing literacy aspects prioritized in assessments. Therefore, more in-depth studies at the regional level are needed to better understand the factors that shape literacy development.

On a more specific scale, the city of Bontang, as one of the regions in East Kalimantan, presents interesting data on literacy infrastructure worth analyzing. The city has nine public libraries, thirteen special libraries, and 102 school libraries. However, no officially registered university libraries are recorded in the regional information system. The number of library members in Bontang has reached 107,798 people, while data from the Library and Archives Office recorded a total of 118,122 visits, consisting of 101,500 male visitors and 16,622 female visitors.

The contrast between the high achievement of the Community Literacy Development Index (IPLM) and the relatively low daily library visitation rates highlights a gap that deserves serious attention. Adequate library infrastructure and resources have not yet been fully matched by strong public participation in utilizing these services. This indicates that reading interest is not solely determined by the availability of facilities but is also strongly influenced by social and cultural factors, as well as the strategies employed in managing and delivering library services. In other words, the success of literacy development cannot be measured merely by the presence of infrastructure but also by how effectively literacy management and promotional strategies are implemented.

This condition underscores the importance of strategies implemented by the Library and Archives Office of Bontang City in fostering increased public reading interest. The notable

disparity in visitor numbers by gender, with male visitors far outnumbering female visitors, further suggests that literacy promotion strategies may not yet be reaching all segments of society equally. This indicates the potential for participation gaps in literacy activities that must be addressed through more inclusive approaches. Therefore, analyzing the effectiveness of literacy strategies already applied in Bontang City becomes highly relevant.

### RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, chosen to gain a deep understanding and interpretation of a phenomenon within its natural context without researcher (Oktariyani et al., 2025). The case study design was employed because it enables the researcher to examine contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are difficult to distinguish. The focus of this research is on the strategies implemented by the Library and Archives Office of Bontang City to enhance public reading interest, with the study characterized as descriptive-evaluative. The descriptive aspect aims to systematically and accurately portray the strategies applied, while the evaluative aspect seeks to assess their effectiveness and examine the service orientation through the framework of New Public Service values. The research was conducted in Bontang City, East Kalimantan Province, with the main locus being the Library and Archives Office of Bontang City, a public institution responsible for formulating and implementing literacy strategies. The selection of this site was based on a unique phenomenon: the city's achievement of the highest Community Literacy Development Index (IPLM) in East Kalimantan, supported by adequate infrastructure and resources, yet coupled with relatively low library visitation rates and noticeable disparities in community participation across groups. These conditions position Bontang City as a critical case for understanding the dynamics between the availability of literacy resources and the level of community participation in reading activities.

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS**

The results and discussion section in this study presents a comprehensive exploration of the strategies, challenges, and evaluative outcomes of the Bontang City Library and Archives Department's efforts to enhance public reading interest. Through a qualitative case study approach, the analysis highlights how the institution has positioned itself as a key agent in fostering literacy culture amid evolving social and technological dynamics. This section provides an in-depth understanding of the department's strategic initiatives, the contextual factors that shape their implementation, and the degree to which these efforts align with the principles of New Public Service, which emphasize community involvement, inclusivity, and collaboration (Ellis-Robinson & Coles, 2021; Garcia et al., 2022).

The discussion begins by identifying the range of strategic initiatives undertaken by the department to stimulate public engagement in reading activities. These initiatives include literacy campaigns, outreach programs, mobile library services, and digital-based reading platforms designed to reach diverse demographic groups across Bontang City. By examining the formulation and execution of these strategies, the study seeks to understand how they address the multifaceted issue of low reading motivation despite the city's strong literacy infrastructure. The findings reveal that the department's proactive stance in designing community-centered programs has contributed to greater visibility and accessibility of library services, thus creating opportunities for broader participation (Delaney & Bates, 2015; Gibson et al., 2017; Tewell, 2018).

Following this, the discussion turns to the challenges and constraints that hinder the full realization of these literacy goals. Despite numerous programs and infrastructural support, several barriers persist, including disparities in participation between men and women, limited staff capacity, and varying levels of literacy awareness among different community groups (Gottlieb, 2016; Psaki et al., 2022). Cultural perceptions about reading as an obligation rather than a pleasure also remain a significant obstacle. These challenges underscore the complexity of

transforming reading interest into a sustained cultural practice, suggesting that infrastructural adequacy must be complemented by social and behavioral engagement strategies.

Lastly, the evaluation of the department's strategies is framed within the values of New Public Service (NPS), which stress public participation, democratic accountability, and collaborative governance. The analysis assesses the extent to which literacy initiatives in Bontang embody these principles, particularly in terms of inclusivity, responsiveness, and citizen empowerment. The discussion emphasizes that the success of literacy programs should not only be measured through quantitative indicators, such as visitor numbers or index scores, but also through the quality of public interaction and shared ownership in literacy development. This integrative perspective provides a foundation for understanding how public institutions can strengthen community trust and engagement in promoting reading culture (Castelnovo et al., 2016; Ellis & Dietz, 2017; Sein et al., 2019).

# Strategic Initiatives of the Bontang City Library and Archives Department in Promoting Reading Interest

The Bontang City Library and Archives Department has implemented a series of strategic initiatives aimed at cultivating a stronger reading culture and increasing public engagement with literacy activities. Recognizing that reading interest is not solely influenced by the availability of facilities but also by social interaction, accessibility, and relevance, the department has sought to design innovative and community-centered programs (Akter & Bhattacharjee, 2025; Kranich, 2020). These initiatives include organizing literacy campaigns, promoting library outreach activities, integrating digital technology into library services, and collaborating with schools, community groups, and local organizations (Bakhtiar, 2024; Bangani, 2024; Wang & Si, 2024). Through these efforts, the department strives to transform libraries into dynamic public spaces that encourage learning, creativity, and civic participation rather than being perceived merely as book repositories (Audunson et al., 2019; Bertello et al., 2022; Choy & Goh, 2016).

In addition, the department's strategies are grounded in an understanding of Bontang's unique socio-demographic characteristics and the disparities observed in public participation. The approach emphasizes inclusivity and adaptability, ensuring that programs cater to various age groups, genders, and social backgrounds (Corsino & Fuller, 2021; Kunwar & Adhikari, 2023; Waitoller & King Thorius, 2016). By integrating traditional reading promotion with modern technological tools such as online catalogues, mobile reading applications, and social media engagement, the department seeks to bridge generational gaps and make reading a more appealing and accessible activity. These strategic efforts reflect a shift in public service orientation—from simply providing library resources to actively nurturing a culture of literacy that aligns with the broader goals of human resource development and social transformation .



# Figure 1 Stetegic Initiatives of Bontang City Library Source data processed by the author

Figure 1 shows the strategic initiatives implemented by the Bontang City Library and Archives Office in its mission to increase reading interest among the community. Each segment of the diagram represents a specific program designed to encourage literacy engagement through various approaches. The most prominent segment, "Digital Library Access," demonstrates the Office's significant investment in digital transformation as a means to reach a wider audience. This initiative, with 200 recorded sessions and an average reading interest score of 7.5, reflects the public's increasing reliance on technology and online platforms to improve accessibility and ease of reading. The focus on digital services highlights the library's adaptive response to modern reading habits and the evolving needs of the community, especially the younger generation who prefer digital media.

Another important segment, "Reading Club," demonstrates the library's ongoing commitment to traditional yet highly interactive forms of literacy promotion. With 150 sessions and an average interest score of 6.3, this initiative fosters a sense of community and social engagement among readers. It creates a space where participants can share insights, exchange book recommendations, and develop critical thinking through discussion. Similar "Storytelling" sessions, with 110 sessions and similar levels of engagement, serve as a gateway for children and young readers to develop early literacy skills and emotional connections through reading. This interpersonal initiative reflects the department's emphasis on human interaction as the foundation of a reading culture, ensuring literacy remains a social and personal experience (Chee et al., 2025; Levin-Zamir et al., 2017).

Other initiatives—"Workshops" and "Community Outreach"—further strengthen the department's multifaceted approach. Workshops, which recorded 130 sessions and an average engagement rate of 6.2, focused on skill-building activities such as creative writing, digital literacy, and educational seminars, expanding reading into practical and creative realms. Meanwhile, Community Outreach extends the library's influence beyond its walls, targeting underserved populations and promoting inclusivity in literacy development (Strover, 2019; Strover et al., 2020). Collectively, these strategic initiatives demonstrate an integrated framework that blends traditional methods and technological innovation to maximize reading participation (Bidarra & Rusman, 2017). A doughnut chart effectively visualizes this balance, demonstrating how the Bontang City Library not only adapts to digital advancements but also preserves the cultural and educational values of shared reading experiences (Asriadi et al., 2024).

### **Challenges and Constraints in Implementing Literacy Promotion Programs**

The implementation of literacy promotion programs often faces significant challenges that stem from structural, social, and technological limitations (Leu et al., 2017; Mourtzis et al., 2022). One of the primary obstacles lies in the uneven access to educational resources and reading materials across different community groups (Ferri et al., 2020; Yadav et al., 2016). In many cases, libraries and literacy institutions struggle with limited budgets, insufficient infrastructure, and a lack of digital tools necessary to reach wider audiences (Martzoukou, 2021; Rahmanova, 2025). This is particularly evident in local contexts where internet connectivity and digital literacy remain low, hindering the effectiveness of online reading platforms or digital library initiatives (Mamabolo & Durodolu, 2023; McDougall et al., 2018). Furthermore, bureaucratic procedures and fragmented coordination between government departments can slow program implementation, reducing efficiency and innovation. These structural barriers often limit the scalability of literacy campaigns and impede their ability to adapt to rapidly changing social and technological environments (Bamidele Micheal Omowole et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2024).

Beyond structural limitations, social and cultural factors also constrain the success of literacy promotion efforts. A declining reading culture, especially among younger generations, presents a serious challenge as entertainment preferences shift toward visual and interactive media. Many literacy programs also face difficulties engaging communities with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, where standardized content fails to resonate with local values or reading habits. Additionally, the lack of trained human resources—such as literacy facilitators,

librarians, and community educators—undermines the consistency and quality of program delivery. Without sustained motivation, community participation tends to wane over time, making long-term literacy engagement difficult to maintain. Consequently, literacy promotion programs must navigate not only material and institutional constraints but also the deeper social dynamics that shape people's relationships with reading and learning.

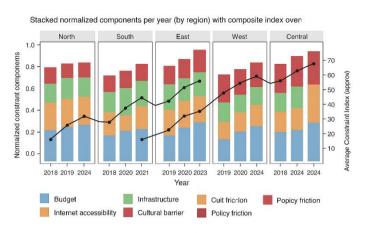


Figure 2 Diagnosis Complex Source data processed by the author

Figure 2, an analysis of "Challenges and Constraints – Complex Diagnostics," provides a representation of the various difficulties faced in implementing literacy promotion programs across regions from 2018 to 2024. Each aspect in the figure represents a specific region—North, South, East, West, and Central—where the various constraint components are visualized as stacked colored bars. These components include budget constraints, infrastructure weaknesses, internet accessibility gaps, cultural barriers, and policy frictions. Collectively, these components illustrate how these challenges interact and evolve over time, with the overall height of each stack reflecting the total intensity of the constraints experienced in a given year. This layered composition effectively conveys how no single factor dominates universally; instead, the challenges fluctuate and intersect dynamically.

The overlapping lines, representing the composite constraint index, offer a holistic measure of how these constraints collectively impact the effectiveness of literacy program implementation. It can be observed that the index tends to increase in most regions toward 2024, indicating a gradual accumulation of challenges or a lack of mitigation efforts (Afsari et al., 2024; Graus et al., 2024; Li et al., 2024). The Northern and Eastern regions show a marked upward trend, indicating increasing complexity and possibly systemic issues such as underfunding or persistent policy barriers. The black line serves as a visual indicator that while incremental improvements may have occurred in specific constraint areas, the aggregate burden of constraints has increased over time (Filippi et al., 2019; Javed et al., 2018). This upward trend suggests that program planners may need to reevaluate their strategic approaches to ensure that constraints are addressed comprehensively, rather than individually.

A closer examination of the stacked bar chart reveals that the proportion of specific constraint types varies significantly across regions. In some regions, budgetary and infrastructure factors account for the largest share, indicating resource and capacity shortages as key barriers. Meanwhile, regions such as the Western and Central regions show an increasing proportion of cultural and policy issues, which may reflect difficulties in aligning literacy initiatives with local governance structures and social norms. Internet accessibility appears to be distributed inconsistently, highlighting the digital divide that limits equal participation in literacy programs. This visual gap highlights the need for differentiated policy interventions, with regional strategies tailored to the unique socioeconomic and cultural contexts of each region (Oppido et al., 2023).

Taken together, the figure summarizes the complexity of managing literacy promotion in a diverse and evolving environment. The combination of stacked components and the constraint index line provides a multi-layered analytical perspective, combining quantitative and qualitative

insights into a cohesive visual narrative. The increasing trajectory of the composite index, combined with the fluctuating weights of each component, signals the persistent and multifactorial nature of literacy program challenges. This visualization underscores the importance of integrated solutions—solutions that rely not solely on financial or infrastructure inputs but also address deeper systemic issues such as cultural attitudes and policy coherence (Almulhim & Yigitcanlar, 2025; Das, 2024; Van Woensel, 2024). As such, the graph serves as both a diagnostic and strategic tool, guiding policymakers and educators toward a more nuanced understanding of the barriers to effective literacy promotion.

## **Evaluation of Strategy Effectiveness through the Lens of New Public Service Values**

The evaluation of strategy effectiveness through the lens of New Public Service (NPS) values emphasizes a shift from traditional bureaucratic and managerial paradigms toward a more citizen-centered governance framework. Under NPS, effectiveness is not merely measured by quantitative outcomes such as service output or cost efficiency but by the extent to which strategies uphold democratic values, inclusivity, and public engagement. In the context of literacy promotion initiatives—such as those implemented by the Bontang City Library and Archives Department—this perspective focuses on how strategic programs foster collaboration between government institutions, civil society, and local communities. Effectiveness is seen in the ability of these programs to empower citizens as active participants in shaping literacy culture rather than passive recipients of government services. Transparency, responsiveness, and ethical commitment become crucial evaluative dimensions, indicating how well strategies align with the public interest and collective well-being.

Furthermore, evaluating strategies through NPS values requires an understanding of the qualitative impacts of public actions on trust, participation, and social capital. Instead of prioritizing managerial control or rigid performance targets, NPS-based assessment recognizes the dynamic relationship between administrators and citizens as co-creators of value. In literacy programs, this means examining whether implemented initiatives genuinely enhance community ownership, sustain local networks of learning, and adapt to citizens' evolving needs (Singh, 2018). The effectiveness of a strategy, therefore, is reflected in its capacity to nurture mutual trust, encourage shared responsibility, and strengthen the moral foundations of public service (Favoreu et al., 2016). Through this interpretive lens, strategy evaluation becomes a process of democratic reflection—one that measures success not only by efficiency but by the degree to which public institutions embody empathy, equity, and participatory governance.

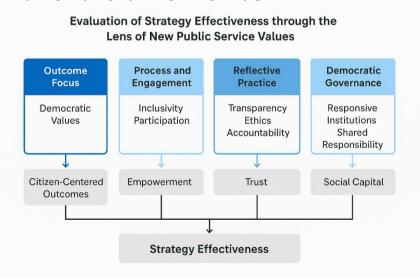


Figure 3 Evaluation of Stategy Effectiveness Through the Lens of New Public Service Values
Source processed by the author

Figure 3, "Evaluating Strategy Effectiveness through the Lens of New Public Service Values," illustrates a comprehensive framework for assessing the success of public strategies based on democratic, ethical, and participatory principles. This framework goes beyond

traditional performance metrics and highlights the multidimensional nature of effectiveness in public service organizations. At the highest level, the framework identifies four key domains: Results Focus, Process and Engagement, Reflective Practice, and Democratic Governance. Each of these domains represents a key pillar of the New Public Service (NPS) paradigm, which emphasizes that true effectiveness must balance efficiency with the creation of public value. Together, they form an integrated model that demonstrates how institutional processes and values translate into tangible social outcomes.

The Results Focus segment underscores the importance of aligning strategies with democratic values and citizen-centered goals. Rather than measuring success solely based on quantitative indicators such as speed of service delivery or financial savings, this domain emphasizes qualitative dimensions such as equity, inclusion, and community well-being. The idea is that policies and programs should produce outcomes that truly reflect the needs and aspirations of the public (Harrison, 2018; Head & Alford, 2015). In the context of libraries and literacy promotion, this might mean evaluating how initiatives promote lifelong learning, accessibility, and equal opportunity for marginalized populations. Thus, output-oriented evaluation in the context of NPS is not just about outputs—it is about the legitimacy and ethical justification of those outputs in a democratic society.

The Process and Engagement and Reflective Practice sections represent the internal mechanisms used by public organizations to achieve these democratic outcomes. Process and Engagement focuses on inclusivity and participation, affirming that the public should not be treated solely as consumers of services, but as co-creators in governance. This includes fostering empowerment through participatory planning, open dialogue, and responsive administration. Reflective Practice complements this by embedding transparency, ethics, and accountability in every stage of decision-making. These practices encourage learning from both successes and failures, ensuring that institutional trust is built through honesty and moral responsibility (Bachmann et al., 2015; Dzimińska et al., 2018). Together, these domains foster a culture of governance that values human interaction, mutual respect, and ethical awareness as essential components of effectiveness.

Finally, Democratic Governance remains the framework, ensuring that institutions are responsive, collaborative, and grounded in shared responsibility. This domain highlights the importance of the interdependence between public institutions, citizens, and civil society in building social capital—the collective trust and cooperation necessary to sustain democratic institutions. The culmination of all these dimensions—citizen-centered outcomes, empowerment, trust, and social capital—leads to true Strategic Effectiveness, not as a static measure but as an evolving and dynamic governance process. Therefore, the diagram demonstrates that evaluating strategy through the lens of NPS means understanding effectiveness as a holistic integration of moral purpose, participatory engagement, and institutional integrity, redefining success as the collective progress of both the government and the communities it serves.

The discussion of the three subtopics—The Bontang City Library and Archives Service's Strategic Initiatives in Promoting Reading Interest, Challenges and Obstacles in Implementing Literacy Promotion Programs, and Evaluating Strategy Effectiveness through the Lens of New Public Service Values—unveils the complexity of literacy promotion as a public governance process that intertwines innovation, institutional performance, and ethical responsibility. Literacy is no longer confined to the educational domain but has evolved into a crucial pillar of social development and civic empowerment. Within this context, the Bontang City Library emerges as a significant institutional actor that seeks to strengthen reading culture through integrated and community-oriented strategies. The library's initiatives illustrate a progressive model of public service delivery that emphasizes inclusivity, innovation, and sustainability (Chisita & Fombad, 2021; Haryanto et al., 2024; Okechukwu et al., 2024). Its approach aligns with the broader global discourse on literacy as a multidimensional asset—one that enables economic growth, nurtures democratic participation, and promotes social cohesion. Thus, literacy is not only about the ability to read and write but also about cultivating an informed, participatory, and empowered citizenry.

The Bontang City Library's strategic initiatives represent a proactive and multifaceted approach to literacy development. The institution has moved beyond traditional library functions

by introducing digital access programs, reading clubs, mobile library services, and literacy campaigns that reach diverse segments of society (Begum et al., 2022). These initiatives are designed to accommodate the rapidly changing information landscape while addressing the needs of different social groups. For example, the integration of digital platforms allows the library to connect with younger generations who are more engaged with technology, while community-based reading clubs help strengthen social bonds and encourage lifelong learning habits (Kelly et al., 2023). The library's programs are not merely service-oriented but also transformative in nature, seeking to shape attitudes toward reading as an essential component of personal and collective progress. In doing so, the library positions itself as an agent of social innovation, bridging the gap between formal education systems and informal community learning environments.

Moreover, the library's initiatives demonstrate a clear understanding of the interdependence between education, culture, and governance. Promoting reading interest requires more than the provision of books or facilities; it demands an enabling environment that encourages curiosity, critical thinking, and social participation. The Bontang City Library's strategies reflect this understanding through initiatives that blend literacy promotion with cultural development and public engagement. By collaborating with schools, community organizations, and local leaders, the library seeks to embed literacy within the broader framework of community development. This approach echoes the principles of participatory governance, where public institutions act not as top-down administrators but as facilitators of collective action (Holahan & Lubell, 2022; Thaler & Seebauer, 2019; Villamayor-Tomas et al., 2019). In this sense, the library's programs illustrate a shift from service delivery to co-creation, where citizens are viewed as active partners in sustaining the culture of reading and knowledge sharing.

However, despite the innovative design and ambitious goals of these initiatives, the implementation process remains challenged by multiple structural and social constraints. Budget limitations, inadequate infrastructure, and unequal digital access continue to restrict the reach and impact of literacy programs. These challenges are further exacerbated by disparities in socioeconomic conditions across different communities, which affect both participation rates and program outcomes. The availability of digital resources, for instance, remains uneven, leading to a persistent digital divide that undermines the inclusivity of the library's digital literacy initiatives. Furthermore, cultural attitudes toward reading present another obstacle, as certain community groups may not yet view reading as a daily or communal activity. This suggests that literacy promotion cannot be understood merely as an administrative or educational challenge but as a cultural and behavioral transformation process that requires sustained engagement, patience, and adaptability (Anurogo et al., 2023; Yardley et al., 2016).

In addition to socio-cultural barriers, institutional and policy-related challenges also hinder effective program implementation. Misalignment between literacy policies at the local and national levels often leads to fragmentation and duplication of efforts. The lack of consistent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms makes it difficult to assess program performance comprehensively, while limited human resource capacity weakens institutional sustainability. Librarians and facilitators play a pivotal role in driving literacy programs, yet many of them face constraints related to workload, training, and professional recognition. The absence of systematic capacity-building initiatives limits their ability to innovate, engage communities, and adapt to technological developments. Consequently, the gap between strategic planning and practical outcomes remains a recurring issue. Overcoming these challenges requires a holistic strategy that integrates financial investment, capacity enhancement, and inter-organizational coordination to ensure that literacy initiatives are not only well-conceived but also effectively implemented.

It is within this complex landscape that the New Public Service (NPS) framework becomes a valuable lens for evaluating strategy effectiveness. The NPS paradigm shifts the focus of public administration from efficiency-driven management to value-driven governance that prioritizes democracy, participation, and ethics. Unlike the New Public Management model, which measures success through output indicators such as service volume or cost reduction, the NPS approach emphasizes the quality of relationships between government institutions and citizens. It argues that public value is created through collaboration, trust-building, and citizen empowerment. Applying this framework to the Bontang City Library's literacy initiatives reveals that program

success should not only be measured by numerical outcomes—such as the number of participants or books distributed—but also by qualitative indicators such as inclusiveness, responsiveness, and community trust. The library's efforts, therefore, should be evaluated based on how well they embody the principles of equity, transparency, and shared responsibility.

The application of NPS values in the Bontang case encourages a deeper understanding of effectiveness as a moral and participatory construct. It reframes literacy promotion as a public endeavor grounded in ethical accountability and civic partnership. This perspective calls for an evaluative process that goes beyond assessing program outputs to examining how initiatives enhance social capital and foster long-term community engagement. For instance, when citizens perceive the library as a space for dialogue, learning, and empowerment, they become more likely to participate actively and sustain the culture of reading within their communities. In this context, the library's role extends beyond providing services to becoming a platform for civic engagement and social trust-building. Evaluating effectiveness through the NPS lens thus involves analyzing the extent to which literacy programs nurture co-production between citizens and the state, enabling both to jointly pursue social development objectives.

Integrating the three dimensions—strategic innovation, implementation challenges, and ethical evaluation—offers a comprehensive view of literacy promotion as a dynamic governance system. Within this system, the Bontang City Library's initiatives constitute the operational layer that translates policy intentions into tangible actions. The challenges and obstacles represent contextual realities that shape and sometimes constrain these operations. Meanwhile, the evaluative framework based on NPS values functions as the normative compass that ensures these efforts remain anchored in public interest and democratic ethics. This multidimensional approach emphasizes that sustainable literacy development cannot rely solely on administrative efficiency or technological advancement. Instead, it requires reflective governance that balances innovation with inclusivity, performance with participation, and efficiency with equity. In such a system, governance becomes not just a technical process of managing resources but also a moral process of nurturing social trust and shared responsibility.

Achieving literacy progress in Bontang, therefore, depends on the government's ability to integrate strategic innovation with participatory governance. Public institutions must adopt flexible models of collaboration that empower communities to co-create solutions rather than passively receive services. Strengthening partnerships among government agencies, civil society organizations, educational institutions, and the private sector can enhance both resource mobilization and program legitimacy. At the same time, it is essential to institutionalize mechanisms for accountability and citizen feedback to ensure that policies remain responsive to local needs. Training and professional development for librarians and facilitators should also be prioritized to enhance institutional capacity and sustain innovation. By embedding these reforms within the NPS framework, the Bontang City Library can transform its literacy initiatives into an exemplar of ethical and inclusive public service.

Ultimately, literacy promotion in Bontang encapsulates the broader challenges of governance in the contemporary public sector—how to reconcile innovation with equity, and performance with values. It demonstrates that public institutions can achieve legitimacy and effectiveness not merely through efficient service delivery but through their ability to embody ethical principles and foster civic engagement. Literacy, in this sense, becomes both a developmental goal and a moral project—one that reflects the government's commitment to human empowerment and social justice. The Bontang City Library's experience reveals that the pursuit of a reading culture is, at its essence, a reflection of society's pursuit of knowledge, dignity, and participatory democracy. By aligning innovation, inclusivity, and ethics, Bontang's literacy movement exemplifies how local governance can become a driving force for sustainable social transformation, shaping not only what citizens read, but also how they learn, engage, and contribute to the collective progress of their communities.

#### CONCLUSSION

The overall analysis concludes that the effectiveness of the Bontang City Library and Archives Department's literacy initiatives is shaped by the synergy between innovative strategies, contextual challenges, and adherence to democratic public service values. The department's multifaceted programs demonstrate a strong commitment to fostering reading culture, yet their success is constrained by structural, cultural, and policy-related barriers. Evaluating these efforts through the principles of the New Public Service highlights that true strategic effectiveness lies not only in measurable outputs but also in how these initiatives promote inclusivity, trust, and citizen participation. Therefore, sustainable literacy promotion requires a governance approach that harmonizes efficiency with empathy, integrates ethical reflection into strategic design, and positions the community as an essential partner in achieving long-term social transformation.

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