

## EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH READING LITERACY: A STUDY OF THE “IBU CERDAS BERDAYA” NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

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### Abstract

Despite Indonesia's evolving digital landscape, women, especially housewives, often face literacy gaps that make them more vulnerable to information overload and gender issues. While non-profit digital communities have emerged as alternative hubs for literacy, their role in structured empowerment remains underexplored within the field of Library and Information Science (LIS). This study aims to analyze the process of women's empowerment through literacy in the non-profit organization “Ibu Cerdas Berdaya” (commonly known as @bbbbookclub). Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through purposive sampling involving the founder and three active members, achieving data saturation through repetitive thematic dimensions. Data collection included semi-structured interviews, virtual observations, and document analysis of internal evaluation reports for triangulation. The collected data were analyzed using the Braun & Clarke's thematic model. The findings reveal that: (1) the implementation of systematic literacy programs, such as reading challenges, book discussions, and competitions, effectively transform social media into a Virtual Community of Practice (VCoP); and (2) this participation significantly shifts information behavior, enhancing critical information filtering and personal autonomy. “Ibu Cerdas Berdaya” plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life for Indonesian housewives and mitigating intellectual isolation among them by bridging the gap between digital recreation and functional literacy. This community-driven model offers a valuable framework for empowering marginalized groups through information activities in the digital age.

**Keywords:** women empowerment, reading literacy, non-profit organization, digital community, information behavior

### INTRODUCTION

Literacy remains a key challenge in developing Indonesia's human capital, especially among women. Although PISA 2022 data consistently show the country's low literacy rankings, the importance of literacy for housewives is commonly discussed in academic settings. According to Law No. 43 of 2007 on Libraries, access to information must be available to all levels of society. In a household setting, a literate mother will provide a foundation for her child's education and acts as a crucial safeguard against social vulnerabilities and the spread of digital misinformation.

Gender equality in literacy is a mandate under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified by Law No. 7 of 1984. Despite this legal framework, gender-based disparities in reading and writing skills still reflect systemic barriers to educational access. Data from the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (2019) highlight this gap, showing that only 23.63% of women aged 15 and older have completed senior high school, compared to 29.76% of men. This literacy gap is even more pronounced among vulnerable groups, including indigenous women, those in remote archipelagic regions, and women with disabilities, who face multiple obstacles in accessing information. As a result, these barriers limit their ability to access essential services, from reproductive health and legal protection to decent employment opportunities.

The correlation between low literacy levels and women's vulnerability to systemic violence is significant. According to the 2020 Annual Report of the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan, 2021), recorded cases reached an alarming 8,234 in a single year, highlighting the urgent need for literacy-focused interventions. Improving women's literacy is a vital strategy to break the cycles of poverty, marginalization, and exclusion from decision-making processes. Furthermore, literacy serves as a catalyst for social inclusion; it empowers women to effectively navigate, understand, and use information, especially in advocating for their legal rights as victims.

Within the framework of Library and Information Science (LIS), the transformation of digital spaces into alternative centers of literacy can be understood through the lens of information behavior and social inclusion theory. Traditional LIS research often limits information seeking and literacy development to formal physical institutions. However, in the digital age, marginalized demographic groups—such as housewives—often experience 'intellectual isolation' due to domestic constraints. By framing reading literacy not merely as a cognitive skill but as an active information practice, this study employs the concept of Virtual Communities of Practice (VCoP) to analyze how modern infodemics and information poverty are mitigated through community-driven digital networks.

Based on the background described above, this study aims to examine how the "Ibu Cerdas Berdaya" organization empowers women through structured digital literacy programs. The core of this empowerment is reading, as argued by Oktariani & Ekadiansyah (2020), which significantly expands an individual's cognitive horizons and promotes critical thinking. When reading becomes a culture within women's empowerment, it goes beyond basic skill development to serve as a tool for intellectual liberation. Consequently, this enables women to achieve information fluency: the ability to identify, evaluate, and communicate information to overcome their specific challenges and lead productive, empowered lives.

Women's empowerment is often actualized through participation in organizational structures that support individual potential and collective growth. A clear example is the non-profit organization "Ibu Cerdas Berdaya," which effectively uses Instagram to reach its audience. Officially registered with the Ministry of Law and Human Rights of the Republic of Indonesia (SK No. AHU-0011441.AH.01.07), the organization known as @bbbbookclub has a strong digital presence with over 42,000 followers.

In addition to its social media reach, @bbbbookclub serves as a virtual information hub committed to improving reading literacy and critical thinking among women, particularly those facing motherhood's challenges. By promoting a culture of ongoing learning, the organization tackles the national literacy shortfall through structured digital activities, including collaborative reading challenges, literacy contests, and live book discussions. These initiatives

turn the casual use of social media into a meaningful educational space, empowering women to regain their personal and intellectual growth in the digital era.

This study aims to explore the implementation of women's empowerment through literacy in the digital framework of the non-profit organization "Ibu Cerdas Berdaya." Literacy is defined as a mechanical skill and a comprehensive ability to communicate effectively and incorporate complex information into daily decision-making. This is in line with The National Literacy Act (1991), which describes literacy as a multidimensional skill, covering reading, writing, speaking, and problem-solving, that is essential for personal growth and societal contribution.

Furthermore, the "Literacy for All" mandate promoted by UNESCO (2014) highlights literacy as a fundamental human right and the foundation of lifelong learning. In this context, literacy acts as a catalyst for a "multiplier effect" in addressing systemic issues such as poverty, gender inequality, and social marginalization. Therefore, this study investigates how these global goals are implemented at the grassroots level through digital practices, ultimately empowering women to improve their quality of life and reclaim their agency within both family and society.

While previous research has extensively examined literacy in traditional institutional settings such as public libraries or formal education, there is a notable research gap concerning the effectiveness of social media-based non-profit organizations in promoting critical literacy among mothers. This study fills that gap by providing an empirical analysis of how @bbbbookclub implements reading literacy as a tool for women's empowerment in the digital age.

In the information age, reading literacy has evolved from a basic skill to a broader, more active ability. Literacy is no longer confined to understanding textbooks or decoding written and spoken language. According to the OECD (2009), reading literacy is defined as the ability to understand, use, evaluate, and reflect on texts as tools for achieving personal goals and enhancing one's intellectual growth.

This modern definition highlights that true literacy goes beyond just technical skills; it involves deep mental engagement with the material. This engagement includes not only learning facts but also critically applying that knowledge in real-world situations. In the context of women's empowerment, this improved form of literacy serves as a key tool for individuals to critically analyze their social surroundings and actively influence their own life paths.

The discussion of literacy as a means for women's empowerment has been widely documented in recent research. Biswas & Deb (2020), in their study of the Kanyashree Prakalpa initiative in West Bengal, showed how public libraries serve as vital centers for information literacy. Their findings suggest that participatory approaches to literacy promote not only individual growth but also enable women to actively contribute to the social and economic development of their families and communities. Similarly, Anggreni et al. (2022) examined contemporary empowerment models through the digital platform "Perempuan Berkisah." Their research emphasizes that in an age of rapid technological progress, digital platforms are crucial for fostering digital literacy among women and providing accessible empowerment programs that meet modern societal needs.

Those studies highlight the socio-economic dangers linked to literacy gaps among women. Women with limited education often encounter structural obstacles to finding good jobs, creating cycles of financial dependence that raise the chances of exploitation and systemic

violence. Additionally, a lack of literacy usually goes hand-in-hand with diminished agency, leaving women unprepared to recognize risky situations or defend their legal rights.

Therefore, enhancing reading literacy is not merely a basic educational goal but a vital intervention for survival and social justice. By fostering a more robust cognitive framework regarding their rights and potential, women can dismantle structures of marginalization. While previous research has focused on public libraries and general digital platforms, there remains a need to examine specialized non-profit organizations at the intersection of motherhood and literacy. This underscores the urgency of the research study entitled “Empowering Women Through Literacy: A Study of the ‘Ibu Cerdas Berdaya’ Non-Profit Organization,” which seeks to provide a localized, digitally focused analysis of this global mandate.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply explore women’s empowerment within a specific digital ecosystem. As Creswell & Poth (2018) note, case studies are especially effective for examining bounded systems through detailed, multi-source data collection. The research setting is the non-profit organization “Ibu Cerdas Berdaya,” a virtual community that primarily operates on Instagram under the account @bbbbbookclub. This digital environment offers a unique unit of analysis for understanding how modern information technology serves as a tool for literacy-based social intervention.

To ensure the depth and relevance of the findings, participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on information-rich individuals associated with the organization’s literacy initiatives. The research subjects include the founder (key informant) and three active members who have consistently participated in the community’s programs. Data were collected through methodological triangulation, combining virtual observation of Instagram activities, semi-structured interviews, and a comprehensive review of digital archives. This multimodal approach was designed to provide a holistic, validated view of the empowerment process, ensuring that the results are grounded in both institutional goals and lived experiences. The sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation, in which the depth of information provided by participants was sufficient to thoroughly address the research objectives.

The collected data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis, following the six-phase model proposed by Braun & Clarke (2013). This thorough analytical process involved familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, developing themes, reviewing and defining those themes, and finalizing the report. Using this structured framework, the study systematically identified patterns of meaning (themes) in how reading literacy is used as an empowerment tool. This method ensures that data interpretation, including quantitative scores from the organization’s internal assessments, is analyzed within the broader qualitative context of the members’ intellectual and social development.

This research aims to explore the landscape of lived experiences and organizational structures, deliberately bypassing statistical inferences. A strict qualitative approach was used despite the organization’s substantial social media following of over 42,000. A purposive sample of four key informants—the founder and three current members—was judged adequate based on the data saturation principle. When repeated interviews and virtual observations produced no new information or differences about the empowering process, data saturation was reached.

Consequently, this narrow but deep sample offered the exact depth needed for a comprehensive, data-rich analysis of internal virtual interactions.

The study also utilized secondary descriptive data to complement the qualitative data. The secondary data were collected through document analysis from internal evaluation reports and organizational survey metrics. The statistical data derived from the document analysis were used to support the qualitative findings and were not used to test hypotheses. The data is used as a documentary triangulation tool, to cross-validate and enrich the qualitative data obtained directly from the interviews with key informants.

We ensured that this entire research process was conducted in strict compliance with ethical standards. All participants provided their informed consent prior to data collection. Furthermore, to safeguard data confidentiality and security within the digital framework, the personal identities and real names of active members were consistently obscured through the use of pseudonyms, such as Informant A and Informant B.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis of the collected data reveals two interconnected primary themes that shape the pathway of empowerment within “Ibu Cerdas Berdaya.” These themes demonstrate a dynamic synergy, in which the first theme, “Operationalization of Literacy-Based Empowerment Programs,” serves as the primary driver of the second theme, “Multidimensional Impact of Program Participation.” This connection shows that the structured implementation of reading literacy initiatives directly sparks positive, transformative results for participants. While the first theme outlines the strategic steps and specific interventions aimed at fostering empowerment, the second assesses the resulting changes in members’ literacy skills and personal agency. Together, these themes offer a comprehensive framework for understanding how digital reading cultures translate into real empowerment outcomes.

The study findings indicate that empowerment initiatives within “Ibu Cerdas Berdaya” are strategically operationalized through a reading-based literacy curriculum. These interventions, comprising structured reading challenges, literacy competitions, and collaborative book discussions, serve as the primary vehicles for member engagement. This model is in line with Akbar and Sulistiani (2019), who noted that empowerment frameworks frequently employ targeted training to cultivate agency among women.

Furthermore, the data indicate that these literacy-focused programs have a transformative impact on participants’ cognitive and social skills. Going beyond basic literacy, these initiatives have shown measurable gains in key areas, including advanced reading comprehension, analytical writing, and structured problem-solving. Importantly, members reported an improved ability to synthesize complex information and to express reasoned opinions, implying that the organization’s digital ecosystem successfully translates theoretical literacy objectives into practical empowerment outcomes.

The organization's internal metrics offer concrete proof of the structural changes brought about by the literacy initiative. Data from the latest annual review confirms this shift; participants did not merely express satisfaction but demonstrated measurable behavioral adjustments across a variety of established benchmarks.

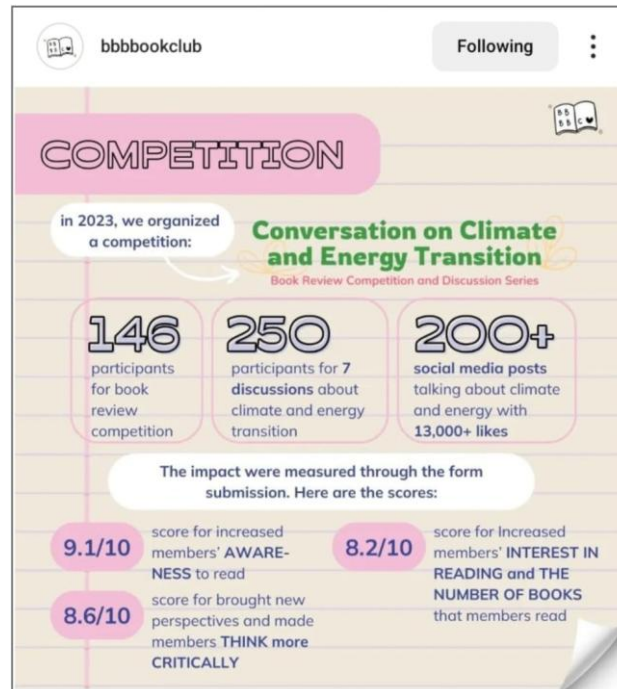


Figure 1. Competition Report  
(Source: Buibu Baca Buku, 2025)

The impact of @bbbbookclub's initiatives is demonstrated by internal assessment data (Figure 1), which shows high levels of participant satisfaction and perceived growth. Members reported significant increases in reading awareness (9.1/10) and the acquisition of new perspectives (8.6/10), along with a notable rise in reading frequency (8.2/10). These metrics align with the National Literacy Act (1991), indicating that the organization effectively fosters the diverse skills needed for personal and societal contributions. Additionally, this change in engagement reflects a fundamental shift in public information behavior, in which digital platforms are no longer just recreational tools but serve as structured environments for knowledge acquisition, as highlighted in recent studies on digital literacy campaigns (Anggraeni et al., 2025).

As shown in Figure 1, the high ratings (such as the satisfaction score of 9.1/10) align with the qualitative interview statements, confirming that the digital model implemented by the organization effectively addresses the practical needs of the members.

The practical application of 'information literacy' and problem-solving skills among participants is evident in their daily decision-making and communication. Participation in structured book discussions and literacy challenges has shifted members' information behaviors from passive consumption to active expression. This empowerment is clearly evident in the way members utilize social media platforms to articulate critical insights. As Informant A stated:

*"...because those programs [the reading challenges] require us to continuously share on our own social media, it helps me convey ideas, thoughts, and opinions. It makes me braver to do so." (Informant A, personal communication, February 17, 2024).*

According to Informant A, participation in public digital sharing helps members overcome domestic constraints and boosts their confidence in showcasing their intellectual abilities to a wider audience. This aligns with the experiences of other members who have found

the courage to introduce complex social issues into their domestic environments. As Informant B stated:

*"It helps a lot. For example, regarding the climate issue in this competition, I became more confident in subtly bringing it up in conversations with those closest to me without worrying about being perceived as strange. It trains me to be braver in speaking up about what I want to convey." (Informant B, personal communication, February 20, 2024).*

This shift from internal processing to external advocacy demonstrates that reading literacy within the @bbbbookclub ecosystem serves as a functional tool. It effectively addresses information isolation, enabling housewives to confidently engage in modern discourse—such as environmental issues—and navigate their social circles without fear of stigma.

Research findings further indicate that reading literacy within "Ibu Cerdas Berdaya" acts as a strategic "multiplier effect" for social inclusion. Beyond basic reading skills, participants apply their knowledge to manage key areas of life, such as maternal health, family planning, and economic participation. This outcome aligns with the UNESCO (2014) mandate, which views literacy as a driver of poverty reduction and gender equality. By strengthening their cognitive frameworks, members report increased confidence in decision-making and greater awareness of systemic violence. This is in line with the goals of Komnas Perempuan (2021) and supports Padang's (2025) claim in JIPi UINSU that digital spaces provide essential environments for women to negotiate identity and reclaim their socio-political power.

The success of @bbbbookclub's initiatives is fundamentally based on cultivating Digital Social Capital. Unlike traditional libraries, where reading is often a solitary activity, this community uses the "social" aspect of Instagram to create a peer-supported learning environment. Findings indicate that for mothers, literacy is not just a cognitive goal but a social need to overcome the "intellectual isolation" often experienced in domestic roles. Participants reported that encouragement from fellow mothers in the community is a key motivator for completing reading challenges. This aligns with the Social Inclusion approach in library science, where information services are most effective when they provide a sense of belonging. By promoting high-trust interactions, @bbbbookclub turns the digital platform into a "third space," an informal gathering place that balances domestic demands with the need for intellectual fulfillment.

The key to the empowerment process is the transformation of the members' mindset. Participants experienced a profound shift in self-perception and intellectual potential after engaging with the community curriculum. This finding supports the OECD (2009) definition of literacy as a reflective process that enables individuals to achieve personal goals and expand their horizons. Within the @bbbbookclub digital ecosystem, this cognitive evolution is facilitated by social support and community branding, mirroring the library branding strategies discussed by Atmi et al. (2025) to increase public interest in reading. The discrepancy in personal insights "before and after" participation confirms that literacy, when nurtured in a supportive digital environment, serves as a primary tool for intellectual liberation.

Additionally, the community acts as a crucial filter in the age of Information Overload and digital misinformation. Mothers are often primary targets for health and parenting-related hoaxes spreading on platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook. The research shows that @bbbbookclub members use their enhanced critical thinking skills (scoring 8.6/10) to verify information before sharing it within their family circles. This suggests that the organization functions as a Digital Gatekeeper, providing members with the information literacy needed to distinguish evidence-based parenting advice from pseudoscientific claims. These findings offer

important insights for the field of Information Behavior, demonstrating that community-based literacy programs can effectively build “digital resilience” among vulnerable groups, ultimately protecting the family unit from the negative effects of an infodemic.

While previous research by Biswas & Deb (2020) emphasized the role of physical public libraries in Murshidabad, this study highlights a paradigm shift toward community-based digital services. Unlike traditional institutional models, the @bbbbookclub model is driven by founder vision and peer-to-peer engagement, making it a more agile and accessible “virtual library” for the modern mother. This localized, digital-centric approach reflects the growing importance of community-based local digital library services (Hazan, 2025) in meeting the information needs of specific demographics who may face barriers in accessing formal institutions.

The main novelty of this study is the identification of a “Digital Micro-Learning” model that operates outside traditional institutions. While earlier research by Biswas & Deb (2020) and Anggreni et al. (2022) focused on physical libraries or general digital platforms, this study shows that @bbbbookclub forms a specialized Community of Practice (CoP) tailored to the daily and intellectual routines of mothers. The study answers the key research question by showing that women’s empowerment is not just about reading but also about real-time social interaction and peer-validated knowledge sharing within the Instagram ecosystem. This “bottom-up” approach marks a move away from formal information delivery toward organic knowledge co-creation, where mothers are active participants rather than passive receivers.

From a Knowledge Management (KM) perspective, @bbbbookclub acts as a sophisticated system for converting tacit knowledge (personal parenting experiences and struggles) into explicit knowledge (shared reading insights and evidence-based health information). This study adds new insights to the KM field by introducing the concept of “Domestic Knowledge Capital.” Through structured reading challenges, information is filtered, processed, and stored in accessible digital archives. The research shows that KM processes, usually linked to corporate environments, are highly effective in non-profit settings for boosting the “absorptive capacity” of women. By treating literacy as a strategic knowledge asset, @bbbbookclub helps mothers build a strong intellectual foundation that supports better household decision-making and professional goals.

Finally, the research concludes that the intersection of literacy and digital community building leads to Information Sovereignty for women. The study found that the empowerment process is achieved through three ongoing stages: Information Access (reading), Knowledge Internalization (discussion), and Empowerment Action (decision-making). These results add a new layer to existing literature by demonstrating that digital reading literacy can eliminate “information poverty” among housewives. By fostering a high-trust digital environment, @bbbbookclub ensures that the knowledge shared within the community is not only informative but transformative. These findings provide an essential roadmap for future non-profit organizations and libraries to adopt more agile, community-focused, and digital-first strategies in their efforts to promote gender equality and social inclusion.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the non-profit organization “Ibu Cerdas Berdaya” (@bbbbookclub) has successfully built a strong digital ecosystem for women’s empowerment through structured reading literacy programs. The research findings show that the organization’s Instagram-based interventions, ranging from reading challenges to collaborative

discussions, serve not just as information-sharing tools but also as a Virtual Community of Practice (VCoP). By combining the reach of social media with academic literacy goals, the organization effectively bridges the gap between digital engagement and real empowerment for mothers.

The empowerment process described in this study demonstrates a threefold impact: cognitive growth, social inclusion, and information sovereignty. Quantitative data showing high scores in reading awareness (9.1) and critical thinking (8.6) are supported by qualitative evidence of increased personal agency and decisive decision-making among members. This suggests that reading literacy, when fostered within a supportive and peer-validated digital environment, serves as a powerful “multiplier effect” in breaking cycles of marginalization and domestic vulnerability.

Finally, the novelty of this research lies in its exploration of “Domestic Knowledge Management” within a non-institutional setting. While earlier studies mainly focused on formal libraries, this research emphasizes the agility of digital-first non-profit organizations in reaching niche demographics. By transforming the everyday routines of motherhood into opportunities for intellectual growth, @bbbbookclub offers a scalable and replicable model for leveraging social media as a strategic knowledge resource. These results reinforce that the future of women’s empowerment in the digital age is deeply linked to the synergy between access to information and community-driven knowledge sharing.

## **SUGGESTION**

The findings of this study show several strategic recommendations are suggested for future progress in the field of Library and Information Science (LIS): Institutional-Community Collaboration: Formal information institutions, such as public and academic libraries, are encouraged to develop formal partnerships with grassroots digital communities like @bbbbookclub. This “hybrid” approach could expand the reach of library services to marginalized groups who face barriers in accessing physical institutional spaces; Standardization of Digital Literacy Curricula: Future non-profit organizations should consider standardizing their digital literacy curricula to include more comprehensive “Information Fluency” training. This would help close the gap between basic reading skills and advanced critical analysis of digital information; Directions for Future Research: Future studies should use longitudinal methods to examine the long-term effects of digital literacy on family dynamics and child development. Additionally, investigating how Big Data analytics can reveal interaction patterns within these literacy communities may offer deeper insights into the sustainability of digital empowerment models.

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