





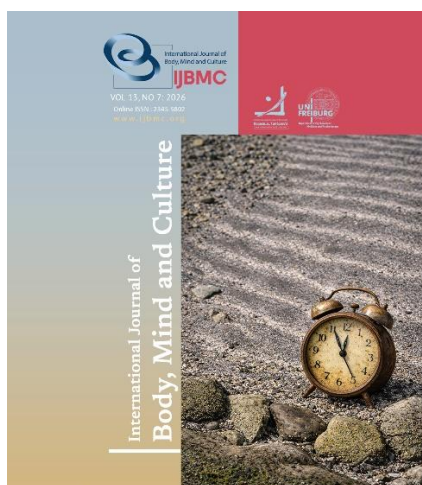
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1 University PGRI Kalimantan, Indonesia.  
2 STKIP Paris Barantai, Indonesia.

Corresponding author email address:  
normalasarie@upk.ac.id

# Exploring the Role of Banjar Culture-Based Books on Literacy, Motivation, and Cultural Identity of Elementary School Students in Kalimantan

Dana. Aswadi<sup>1</sup>, Alimudin A. Djawat<sup>1</sup>, Normasunah<sup>2</sup>,  
Normalasarie<sup>1\*</sup>



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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aimed to develop and implement the BANJAR Book, an adventure-based reading book grounded in Banjar local culture, to support early literacy, reading motivation, and cultural identity among lower-grade elementary students in rural South Kalimantan.

**Methods and Materials:** A design-based research approach was used in three rural elementary schools in South Kalimantan, Indonesia. The study involved 40 third-grade students, three teachers, and 15 parents. The intervention was implemented through two iterative cycles, including needs analysis, book design, classroom implementation, evaluation, and refinement. Data were collected using pre- and post-reading tests, classroom observation sheets, semi-structured teacher interviews, parent questionnaires, and learning documentation. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired t-tests, while qualitative data were analyzed through thematic coding and triangulation.

**Findings:** Students' mean reading score increased from  $17.63 \pm 0.68$  at pretest to  $23.02 \pm 0.80$  at posttest, with a mean difference of  $5.39 \pm 1.08$ ,  $t(39) = 31.65$ ,  $p < .001$ . Classroom observations showed relatively high engagement, with participation scoring highest ( $M = 3.08$ ), followed by peer interaction ( $M = 2.93$ ), teacher interaction ( $M = 2.88$ ), enthusiasm ( $M = 2.85$ ), and concentration ( $M = 2.85$ ). Parent responses indicated strong support for the book's cultural relevance, with 93.3% agreeing that it helped children learn Banjar culture. However, because the study used a single-group pretest–posttest design without a control group, the findings should be interpreted as preliminary.

**Conclusion:** The BANJAR Book shows potential as a culturally contextualized literacy medium for supporting early reading, engagement, and cultural awareness.

**Keywords:** Early Literacy, Local Culture, Reading Motivation, Cultural Identity, BANJAR Book, Elementary Students.

## Introduction

A strong foundation in literacy is a key prerequisite for success in formal education. Literacy encompasses not only the ability to recognize letters and read words, but also the ability to understand meaning, think critically, and connect what is read to everyday experiences (Wati et al., 2024). At the elementary school level, early literacy is the foundation for further academic development, including cross-subject understanding.

Although the adult literacy rate in Indonesia is relatively high (96–99%), literacy gaps persist among elementary school-aged children, especially in remote areas. In South Kalimantan, literacy challenges are evident in limited access to relevant reading materials, low parental participation due to economic pressures, and a lack of teacher training in engaging, contextual literacy learning practices. Data from the South Kalimantan Central Statistics Agency (2024) shows that the Community Literacy Development Index in Tabalong Regency stands at 87, indicating that there is still room for improvement, especially among elementary school-aged children.

Field findings at three elementary schools in rural South Kalimantan—SDN 1 Dayak Pitap (Balangan), SDN 3 Kapar (Tabalong), and SDN 2 Alat (Hulu Sungai Tengah)—revealed variations in students' early reading abilities. At SDN 1 Dayak Pitap, only 31% of third-grade students read fluently. At SDN 3 Kapar, around 62% of fourth-grade students could read, but their reading comprehension remained low. Meanwhile, at SDN 2 Alat, 70% of students read fluently in an academic context, but were not yet accustomed to reading independently outside of school. This data shows that the problem of literacy is not only in decoding but also in comprehension, reading habits, and emotional involvement in reading.

One factor contributing to low literacy is the lack of reading materials appropriate to students' social and cultural contexts. Textbooks tend to present general content and do not integrate local culture (Sari et al., 2021). In fact, education has a dual role: preserving cultural values while encouraging innovation to cope with social change (Lami'ah et al., 2025). The integration of local culture in learning can create authentic learning

experiences, increase motivation, and foster a sense of belonging to cultural identity (Hulu et al., 2025).

Several studies support the importance of cultural integration in strengthening literacy. Lami'ah et al. (2025) emphasize that local wisdom in learning helps students understand cultural diversity and develop moral character. Sari et al. (2021) show that children's stories based on local wisdom in Aceh increase students' cultural awareness. Wulandari et al. (2025), through the illustration “Permacil,” prove that cultural literacy can be built from an early age. Innovative media, such as Local Wisdom Pop-Up Books, have also been shown to increase reading interest and cultural literacy (Jumriyati & Fatimah, 2022). Tristaningrat et al. (2022) validate the effectiveness of Balinese culture-based storybooks in contextualizing local cultural learning. An approach that combines folklore, art, and regional cultural elements contributes to cultural pride (Hulu et al., 2025).

Building on this foundation, this study focuses on the development and implementation of the BANJAR Book (Adventure Book with Narratives Based on a Fun Reading Approach) as a Banjar-culture-based literacy medium. This book combines adventure stories with local cultural values to increase students' emotional engagement in reading and strengthen their intrinsic motivation. Unlike conventional textbooks, the BANJAR Book is designed to be contextualized within the lives of children in Kalimantan, making reading more meaningful.

Conceptually, this research views that culture-based reading materials can influence three main aspects: Early literacy, which includes reading fluency and reading comprehension (Wati et al., 2024); Reading motivation, namely interest, emotional involvement, and reading habits; Cultural identity, which is understood as awareness, pride, and understanding of Banjar cultural values in everyday life (Hulu et al., 2025; Lami'ah et al., 2025). Thus, cultural identity in this study is not understood abstractly, but as an affective and cognitive dimension reflected in the recognition of cultural symbols, understanding of local values, and positive attitudes toward regional cultural heritage.

In line with Talango et al. (2025)'s idea that educational innovation needs to be based on local needs, collaborative, and child-friendly, this study uses a Research and Development (R&D) approach to design and test the effectiveness of the BANJAR Book in the

context of remote elementary schools. This study specifically explores the role of the BANJAR Book in improving early literacy and reading motivation and in strengthening the cultural identity of elementary school students in South Kalimantan.

The early reading skills of elementary school students in remote areas of South Kalimantan remain suboptimal in terms of fluency, comprehension, and reading habits. This condition is exacerbated by the limited availability of culturally contextual reading materials and the lack of engaging literacy learning strategies. Therefore, a locally based intervention is needed that not only improves reading skills but also fosters motivation and strengthens students' cultural identity.

This research aims to develop and test the effectiveness of the BANJAR Book as a local culture-based literacy medium in: Improving the early reading skills of elementary school students; fostering motivation and interest in reading; and strengthening the Banjar cultural identity of elementary school students in rural South Kalimantan.

## Methods and Materials

### *Study Design*

This study uses a Design-Based Research (DBR) approach, which focuses on the development, implementation, and refinement of educational interventions in real-world contexts to produce both practical solutions and theoretical contributions (Reeves, 2006; Wang & Hannafin, 2005). Unlike conventional research and development (R&D), which is more oriented towards product production and effectiveness testing, DBR emphasizes iterative processes, systematic reflection, and the abstraction of design principles that can contribute to the development of learning theory. In this study, DBR was carried out through two iterative cycles, which included the stages of needs analysis, design, implementation, and evaluation, as well as reflection and design refinement.

In the needs analysis stage, data were obtained through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and questionnaires administered to parents at three rural elementary schools in South Kalimantan. The analysis results showed gaps in reading fluency and comprehension, as well as low emotional engagement with the available reading materials. Based on these

findings, an initial prototype of the BANJAR Book was designed, containing Banjar culture-based adventure stories with a simple narrative structure, contextual illustrations, and reading comprehension activities. The first cycle was implemented over four weeks. The evaluation results showed an increase in student participation, but revisions were needed to the vocabulary complexity, text length, and clarity of the reading activity instructions.

In the second cycle, complex sentences were simplified, a glossary of local cultural terms was added, and reflective questions were reformulated to strengthen the students' cultural identity dimension. The re-implementation showed increased engagement and more stable comprehension. From these two cycles, three main design principles were abstracted: that cultural contextuality increases emotional engagement in reading, that simple narrative structures with visual support strengthen early reading comprehension, and that local value-based reflective questions help articulate students' cultural identity. Thus, this study not only produced learning products but also conceptual design principles relevant to culture-based literacy.

### *Participants*

This study was conducted in three elementary schools in rural South Kalimantan, namely SDN 1 Dayak Pitap (Balangan Regency), SDN 3 Kapar (Tabalong Regency), and SDN 2 Alat (Hulu Sungai Tengah Regency). The schools were selected using purposive sampling based on the criteria of remote location, variation in students' initial literacy achievement, and the schools' willingness to participate in the intervention study. This approach aligns with the characteristics of DBR, which emphasizes analytical generalization over statistical generalization (Reeves, 2006).

The study involved 40 third-grade students aged 8–9 years, comprising 21 males and 19 females. The majority of students came from lower-middle socioeconomic backgrounds and used Banjarese and Indonesian in their daily lives. In addition to the students, this study involved three third-grade teachers as implementers and 15 parents/guardians, selected for their willingness and active involvement in children's literacy activities at home.

### *Instrument and Procedures*

The research instruments included an initial literacy test, observation sheets, semi-structured interviews,

parent questionnaires, and learning documentation. The literacy test consisted of two parallel forms (pre-test and post-test) that measured three aspects, namely reading fluency (decoding), literal comprehension, and simple inferential comprehension. The test includes 20 items with a structured scoring system. The internal reliability test shows a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82, which is considered good, and two basic education literacy experts reviewed the content validity.

The observation sheet is used to measure student enthusiasm, active participation, concentration, and interaction during learning using the BANJAR Book. This instrument uses a scale of 1–4 (very low to very high). Two external researchers conducted observations to minimize bias, with an inter-rater reliability coefficient of 0.87. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and students to explore their perceptions of reading engagement and understanding of Banjar cultural values. Meanwhile, the parent questionnaire used a 4-point Likert scale with 12 items assessing children's reading habits, reading interests, and responses to local cultural content. To reduce social bias, several items were formulated negatively. The questionnaire's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which was 0.79.

The research lasted for eight weeks. During the preparation stage (two weeks), researchers obtained permission from the school, collected written consent (informed consent) from parents/guardians of students, and conducted a one-day training session for teachers on the use of the BANJAR Book in literacy learning. The implementation phase lasted four weeks with eight learning sessions (twice a week, 60 minutes each) integrated into regular literacy hours. Implementation fidelity was monitored using a checklist to ensure consistency across schools. The evaluation and revision phase was conducted over two weeks through post-tests, follow-up observations, interviews, and reflective discussions with teachers to refine the book design for the second cycle.

This study addressed ethical considerations by ensuring the confidentiality of participants' identities through data anonymization and secure data storage. Student participation was voluntary and based on parental consent.

#### *Data Analysis*

Data analysis was conducted using a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data from pre-tests and post-tests were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired t-tests to identify differences in scores before and after the intervention. Before the test was conducted, the data were checked for normality using the Shapiro-Wilk test. In addition to statistical significance, effect sizes (Cohen's *d*) were calculated to provide a practical interpretation of the magnitude of change. Effect size interpretations were made carefully in accordance with the educational research context. Given that the research design used a single pre-post group without a control group, the results of this study are interpreted as indicating improvement rather than as definitive causal evidence.

Qualitative analysis was conducted following the Miles (1994) model, namely through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. The coding process was carried out in three stages: open coding to identify initial themes, axial coding to group categories, and selective coding to formulate main themes. Two researchers independently coded and discussed their differences until they reached a consensus. Triangulation was carried out by comparing observation data, interviews, and questionnaires, as well as through member checking with teachers to increase the credibility of the findings.

#### **Findings and Results**

The research results following the application of the BANJAR Book are presented in this section. The results of the study are arranged to make it easier to see which media are most effective in helping students become more literate. The report of findings includes the following categories: quantitative results which highlight students' growth in reading skills using pre- and post-tests; qualitative findings in terms of student engagement and responses as they navigated their learning experiences; teacher and parent voices which shed light on the positive aspects regarding BANJAR Book use, and key complementary insights to what is gained from all finding sources about literary effect, motivational effects toward learning, and local literacy promotion.

## BANJAR book product results



**Figure 1**

Cover BANJAR book

The colorful cover, featuring Banjarese identity, has been proven to attract students' attention from the start. Teachers reported that the brightly colored images make children more enthusiastic about opening and reading

the book. This supports observational findings that children's initial interest increases when the material is presented in an engaging way.

 The image shows the 'DAFTAR ISI' (Table of Contents) page of the book. It is set against a background of a lush green landscape with trees and a blue sky. The text is white and black on a semi-transparent dark green background. The table lists four chapters with their respective page numbers.
 

DAFTAR ISI	
Yani dan Jembatan Goyang	1
Misteri Jejak Bekantan	11
Perahu Ajaib Sungai Barito	19
Asal Usul Kampung Kuim	24

**Figure 2**

Table of contents of the book BANJAR

A table of contents assists students and teachers in reading the text. The teacher sees that it is easy to plan lessons because of its well-organized structure, which

gives students more time to learn. Therefore, it is not simply a book for reading but an organized guide to learning to read.



**Figure 3**

*Character Introduction*

These characters are close to their lives, so this part helps students connect with the story. It helps teachers by making comprehension easier, and it helps parents

when their kids go home, since the characters and setting have already been introduced.



**Figure 4**

*Sample isi cerita*

Banjar culture-based stories (folk stories, local moral values) have been proven to increase understanding and introduce the culture. Parent questionnaire data show that 93.3% agree that this book helps children learn

about Banjar culture. From a literacy perspective, simple, illustrated stories help children focus and understand the text more easily.



**Figure 5**

*Story evaluation questions*

Teachers judged that the practice questions at the end of reading passages were useful in increasing students' understanding. Shy students felt more at ease responding to questions after (as reported during

interviews - students were not shy, they asked questions and talked). The questions on the evaluation also served as a direct measure of increased literacy.



**Figure 6**

*Answer sheet*

Response sheets allow students to write directly in notebooks, which is more convenient. Teachers get some help with assessments, and parents can track their children's concrete progress in the form of answers

written in books with a blue-lined grid on the right-hand page and red-lined words or tables on the facing left-hand page. This also promotes structured literacy behaviors beyond reading, writing, and comprehension.

## Quantitative Results: Improvement in Students' Reading Ability

**Table 1**

Mean results of pretest and posttest

Variabel	Mean	SD	N
Pre-test	17.63	0.68	40
Post-test	23.02	0.8	40
Difference	5.39	1.08	40

Table 1 presents the average pretest and posttest scores for reading ability among 40 students who participated in learning using the BANJAR book. The average pretest score was 17.63 (SD = 0.68) and increased to 23.02 (SD = 0.80) on the posttest, with an average difference of 5.39 points (SD difference = 1.08). The paired t-test showed that the difference was statistically significant,  $t(39) = 31.65$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

However, these findings should be interpreted with caution. The maximum scale of the reading test was not specified in the instrument, so the practical significance of the 5.39-point increase cannot yet be evaluated in proportional terms (e.g., whether the increase occurred

on a scale of 0–25, 0–30, or another range). In addition, the relatively small standard deviations on the pretest and posttest indicate low variation in scores among students, which may reflect the homogeneity of the sample's abilities or the instrument's limited discriminatory power. The data presented also does not include individual score distributions, making it impossible to conclude the specific range of improvement for each student. Therefore, these results are better understood as an indication of an increase in average scores in the context of a pre-post single-group design, rather than as definitive causal evidence of the intervention's effectiveness.

**Table 2**

Observation Results of the Use of BANJAR Books by Students

Aspect	Total Score	Average
Enthusiasm	114	2,85
Participation	123	3,08
Concentration	114	2,85
Teacher Interaction	115	2,88
Peer Interaction	117	2,93

Observations were conducted on 40 students using an assessment sheet with a Likert scale ranging from 1 (very low) to 4 (very high). Table 2 shows the average scores for several aspects of student engagement during learning using the BANJAR book.

Participation received the highest average (3.08), followed by peer interaction (2.93), interaction with teachers (2.88), and enthusiasm and concentration (both 2.85). On a scale of 1–4, these values were in the “high” category, though they did not reach the maximum.

These findings indicate that during the intervention, students generally showed active engagement in discussions and reading activities. However, without pre-intervention comparative data or a control class, these observational results cannot be attributed entirely to the use of the BANJAR Book. In addition, all indicators

were formulated positively, aiming to capture supportive aspects of engagement without explicitly measuring potential negative or neutral responses.

### Teacher Interview Results

Interviews with three teachers revealed positive perceptions of the BANJAR Book's use. Teachers reported that students seemed more interested in reading because the story content was close to their daily lives. The colorful illustrations, simple presentation of folk tales, and comprehension exercises at the end of the reading were considered helpful for students with developing reading skills.

Teachers also observed an increase in participation in discussions, courage to ask questions, and the ability to retell the content of the reading. However, several challenges were also noted, such as limited learning time,

difficulties for some students in understanding Banjar vocabulary, and a limited number of books that had to be used in turns.

Because this data is subjective and was not systematically compared with conditions before the intervention, the interview findings are best understood as a description of the implementation experience rather than as direct empirical evidence of improved academic ability.

### *Parent Questionnaire Results*

To complement the observation and interview data, this study also distributed questionnaires to students' parents. The questionnaire aimed to determine the extent to which Banjar Books influences children's reading habits at home and how parents view their continued use. Respondents to the questionnaire were 15 parents whose children are directly involved in learning with Banjar Books. The questionnaire instrument used a Likert scale with four response options: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, and 4 = Strongly Agree.

**Table 3**

#### *Parent Questionnaire Results*

No	Statement	1	2	3	4	Total
1	My child has become more interested in reading after using the Banjar Book.			3	12	15
2	The stories in the Banjar Book are easy for my child to understand.			2	13	15
3	The Banjar Book helps my child learn about Banjar culture.			14	1	15
4	My child often retells the contents of the Banjar Book at home.		2	10	3	15
5	The Banjar Book allows my child to interact more with peers.		4	8	3	15
6	I support the continued use of the Banjar Book in school.				15	15

The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their children were more interested in reading after using the BANJAR Book (3 agreed; 12 strongly agreed). Most also stated that the stories were easy to understand (2 agreed; 13 strongly agreed) and helped children learn about Banjar culture (1 agreed; 14 strongly agreed).

Responses to the statement about the habit of retelling the content of the reading at home were more varied (2 disagreed; 10 agreed; 3 strongly agreed), indicating that the impact on literacy practices at home was not entirely uniform. Statements about increased social interaction also showed variation (4 disagreed; 8 agreed; 3 strongly agreed). All respondents strongly agreed with the continued use of the BANJAR Book in schools.

Although these results show strong support from parents, their interpretation should take into account that all items were formulated positively, which may lead to a tendency to agree (acquiescence bias). In addition, the sample size was relatively small (N = 15), and no

standardized instruments were used to measure reading interest or cultural identity. Hence, these findings are more descriptive and perceptual in nature.

### *Key Findings and Implications*

Overall, the results of the study show an increase in the average reading score in the pre-post single-group design, accompanied by observational reports and positive perceptions from teachers and parents regarding student engagement and the cultural relevance of the BANJAR book. However, methodological limitations—including the absence of a control group, the lack of a maximum test scale, low score variation, and the use of unvalidated perception instruments—require careful interpretation of the findings. Therefore, the results of this study are best understood as an initial indication of the potential of locally based books to support basic literacy and student engagement. This finding still requires further testing with a more robust research design.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that using the BANJAR Book as a locally based cultural literacy medium is associated with higher early reading scores, greater student engagement in class, and positive responses from teachers and parents in rural elementary schools in South Kalimantan. However, these results should be interpreted with caution, given that the research design was a single pre-post group design without a control group. Thus, the observed improvement cannot be definitively attributed solely to the BANJAR Book intervention. Nevertheless, these findings provide initial indications that contextual learning materials closely tied to students' lives can support understanding. This is conceptually in line with the views of [Vygotsky & Cole \(1978\)](#) and [Bruner \(1997\)](#) that learning will be more meaningful when it is linked to the social experiences and cultural contexts of learners, even though this study did not directly measure the zone of proximal development, the quality of scaffolding, or the social mediation mechanisms specifically described in these theories.

The development process for the BANJAR book, which integrates Banjar folklore, colorful illustrations, and reading comprehension questions, demonstrates an effort to create an enjoyable, context-based learning experience. Conceptually, this approach aligns with the idea of Fun Learning and with the findings of [Tristaningrat et al. \(2022\)](#) that Balinese local culture storybooks can improve students' contextual understanding. Furthermore, the use of Banjar folklore also supports [Lami'ah et al.'s \(2025\)](#) view that local wisdom in learning not only helps cultural understanding but also builds Islamic character. However, it should be noted that this alignment is conceptual and comparative in nature, not the result of direct testing of cultural or moral variables in this study. This study did not empirically measure the internalization of moral values or character dimensions, so claims about character building should be understood as possible implications rather than verified findings.

The increase in student participation, peer interaction, and the courage to ask questions observed during learning also supports the assumption that integrating local culture can increase the meaningfulness of learning, as stated by [Lestari & Kurniawan \(2025\)](#). The relatively high student involvement in classroom

observations can be interpreted as an indication that culturally relevant material helps create a more participatory learning atmosphere. However, because there were no pre-intervention comparative data, such as systematic observations or control groups, this increase in activity cannot be entirely attributed to the BANJAR Book. In addition, variables such as teaching style, researcher enthusiasm, or the novelty effect also had the potential to influence student responses during the relatively short research period.

From a quantitative perspective, the pre-test and post-test scores showed a statistically significant average increase. These findings are consistent with [Wandari et al.'s \(2026\)](#) research, which states that media based on local wisdom, such as pop-up books, can improve early reading skills. However, it should be emphasized that this study did not use standardized reading tests, the maximum scale of the tests was not explicitly described, and the variation in student scores was relatively low. These conditions limit the interpretation of the improvement's practical significance. Therefore, rather than concluding that the BANJAR Book is causally "effective," these results are more appropriately understood as an indication of a positive relationship between the use of locally based teaching materials and improved reading scores in a limited sample context.

Parent questionnaire data show positive perceptions of children's interest in reading and awareness of local culture. These findings are in line with the views of [Wulandari et al. \(2025\)](#), who illustrated that narrative media can foster children's cultural literacy. Furthermore, these results can also be conceptually linked to [Street's \(2003\)](#) theory of literacy as a social practice, which states that "literacy should not only be considered a technique but also a social practice contextualized within culture and environment." However, this study did not conduct an in-depth, systematic measurement of literacy practices at home or of family social dynamics. All questionnaire statements were formulated positively and did not use validated instruments to measure reading motivation or cultural identity, so agreement bias should be considered when interpreting the results.

Teacher and parent support for the sustainability of the BANJAR Book can also be understood within [Bronfenbrenner's \(1979\)](#) Ecological Systems framework,

which emphasizes the importance of interactions among school, family, and cultural environments in child development. The positive responses from both environments indicate harmony between the home and school contexts in their support of literacy. However, this study did not comprehensively map the ecological system (e.g., through mesosystem, exosystem, or chronosystem analyses), so the connection to Bronfenbrenner's theory remains at the level of conceptual interpretation.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that contextualizing local culture in the BANJAR Book has the potential to support early literacy and strengthen students' recognition of cultural identity in specific learning contexts. These findings are consistent with several previous studies (Lami'ah et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2021; Wandari et al., 2026; Wulandari et al., 2025), although comparisons between studies should account for differences in design, sample size, instruments, and intervention duration. It is important to emphasize that the absence of a control group, the relatively small sample size, the use of non-standardized instruments, the potential influence of teachers, and the limited duration of the study pose threats to the study's internal and external validity. Therefore, rather than stating that this study strongly "validates" effectiveness, it is more accurate to conclude that this research provides promising preliminary evidence regarding the potential of locally-based books, which still requires further testing through more rigorous experimental or quasi-experimental designs and more comprehensive variable measurements.

#### *Conclusions and Implications*

This study shows that implementing the BANJAR Book as a locally based cultural literacy medium is associated with higher initial reading scores among elementary school students in three rural schools in South Kalimantan and increased student engagement during classroom literacy activities. The integration of Banjar folk tales, contextual illustrations, and reading comprehension exercises resulted in materials that were closer to students' experiences, which were followed by increased participation, greater willingness to discuss, and the ability to retell the reading content. Furthermore, based on teachers' and parents' perceptions, as reported through questionnaires and interviews, the use of the BANJAR Book is associated

with growing interest in reading at home and increased awareness of Banjar cultural values among students. However, these findings should be interpreted with caution because the study employed a single pre-post group design without a comparison group, and the measures of reading interest and cultural identity were not standardized. Therefore, the results of this study are better understood as initial indications of the potential of locally based books to support literacy, reading motivation, and the articulation of students' cultural identity, rather than as definitive causal evidence. Implicitly, integrating local culture into literacy teaching materials can be considered a contextual strategy in remote schools, while still emphasizing the importance of teacher creativity and family involvement. To strengthen the findings, further research is recommended using experimental or quasi-experimental designs with control groups, validated literacy and motivation instruments, and longitudinal studies to assess the sustainability of the intervention's impact over the long term, including the possibility of adapting to digital formats that maintain their pedagogical validity.

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#### Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

#### Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Ethical considerations in this study were that participation was entirely optional.

#### Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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## Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contribute to this study.

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