

Equity-Oriented Literacy Innovation in Archipelagic Education: The GALATAMA Program in North Maluku

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ABSTRACT

Literacy inequality remains a persistent challenge in Indonesia's archipelagic regions, where geographic fragmentation limits equitable access to educational resources, institutional support, and literacy development. Existing studies on madrasa literacy have primarily emphasized school leadership, curriculum integration, and literacy culture, while insufficient attention has been given to equity-oriented literacy innovation and the contribution of religious social capital in geographically dispersed educational settings. This study investigates the Gerakan Literasi Madrasah (GALATAMA) program as an adaptive literacy model developed for madrasas in North Maluku, Indonesia. This study employed a qualitative documentary analysis design. The primary data source was the GALATAMA program monograph, complemented by national and provincial policy documents, educational statistics, and relevant scholarly literature. Data were analyzed through systematic document review, interpretation, and thematic analysis focusing on literacy inequality, program design, and the role of religious social capital. The findings reveal that literacy disparities in North Maluku madrasas are shaped by geographic isolation, unequal institutional capacity, limited supervision, and weak literacy culture. GALATAMA addresses these challenges through four integrated literacy pillars—Qur'anic literacy, Arabic literacy, English literacy, and reading culture—designed to be implemented in both urban and remote island madrasas without extensive technological infrastructure. The analysis further demonstrates that religious social capital, reflected in *halaqah*, *talaqqi*, mosque-based learning, and strong madrasa-community relationships, plays a critical role in sustaining literacy practices. This study contributes to the literature by proposing an equity-oriented literacy framework for archipelagic education that integrates adaptive program design with community-based religious social capital. The findings provide policy insights for strengthening literacy development in geographically fragmented educational systems and offer a transferable model for other island and remote educational contexts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Literacy is widely recognized as a fundamental component of educational quality, lifelong learning, and sustainable social development. Beyond the ability to read and write, contemporary literacy encompasses the capacity to interpret information critically, communicate effectively, and participate actively in increasingly complex social and educational environments. UNESCO (2017) identifies literacy as a fundamental human right and an essential foundation for achieving equitable and inclusive education. Within Islamic education, literacy holds an even broader epistemological significance because the Qur'anic command *Iqra'* establishes reading as the starting point of knowledge acquisition, intellectual development, and civilization building. Consequently, literacy in madrasas should not merely be understood as the mastery of technical reading skills but as a comprehensive educational process that integrates religious values, language competence, critical thinking, and lifelong learning (Adam & Soleman, 2022). Strengthening literacy therefore represents a strategic priority for improving both educational quality and human capital development within Islamic educational institutions.

Despite national efforts to promote literacy through programs such as the School Literacy Movement (*Gerakan Literasi Sekolah*), educational outcomes remain uneven across Indonesia. Literacy disparities are particularly evident in geographically fragmented regions where educational services face persistent structural constraints. North Maluku Province, consisting of hundreds of inhabited islands separated by extensive maritime distances, illustrates these challenges clearly. Geographic fragmentation affects not only students' physical access to education but also the distribution of learning resources, teacher mobility, professional development, institutional supervision, and policy implementation (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Maluku Utara, 2023). These structural barriers create unequal educational opportunities between urban and remote island madrasas, resulting in variations in literacy infrastructure, instructional quality, and institutional capacity. Such conditions demonstrate that literacy inequality in archipelagic regions is not solely an educational issue but also a consequence of spatial and policy-related disparities that require context-sensitive solutions.

Educational research increasingly acknowledges that geography significantly influences educational equity and learning outcomes, particularly in small island and geographically isolated regions. Crossley and Sprague (2014) argue that educational reforms developed for mainland contexts frequently fail to address the distinctive realities of island communities, where transportation constraints, dispersed populations, and limited institutional connectivity affect the implementation of educational policy. In archipelagic settings, educational inequality extends beyond differences in school resources to encompass unequal access to professional support, academic supervision, and continuous institutional development. Consequently, literacy policy in island regions cannot rely exclusively on standardized national interventions but must be designed to accommodate local geographic characteristics and institutional realities.

Previous studies on literacy development in Islamic education have primarily emphasized school leadership, literacy culture, curriculum integration, and teacher initiatives as the principal determinants of successful literacy programs. School leadership has been shown to influence institutional commitment toward literacy development (Berlian et al., 2025), while literacy integration within Islamic education continues to receive increasing scholarly attention (Widiastuti, 2025). Other studies have examined the implementation of literacy movements in madrasas and highlighted the importance of habitual reading practices and institutional support in strengthening students' literacy competencies (Zamrodah, 2016). Although these studies have substantially contributed to understanding literacy improvement in Islamic schools, they predominantly examine literacy within relatively conventional educational environments and rarely consider the implications of geographic inequality for literacy policy implementation.

Moreover, existing literature has paid limited attention to literacy development from the perspective of educational equity in archipelagic contexts. Most literacy studies implicitly assume relatively homogeneous institutional conditions and therefore overlook how geographic fragmentation

shapes educational ecosystems. Recent educational ecosystem perspectives emphasize that literacy is produced through interactions among educational policies, institutional practices, community participation, and learning environments rather than through classroom instruction alone (Cosner et al., 2021). However, little empirical attention has been given to how these ecosystem components operate under conditions of geographic isolation, where limited accessibility simultaneously influences institutional capacity, resource distribution, and educational governance. Consequently, the relationship between geographic fragmentation and literacy inequality remains insufficiently understood within the context of Islamic education.

A second limitation concerns the relatively limited exploration of religious social capital as a mechanism supporting literacy sustainability in madrasa communities. Social capital has long been recognized as an important factor influencing educational participation and student achievement because networks of trust, cooperation, and community engagement strengthen educational processes (Coleman, 1988). Within Islamic educational settings, however, religious traditions such as *halaqah*, *talaqqi*, communal Qur'anic recitation, and mosque-based learning represent unique forms of social capital that potentially reinforce literacy practices beyond formal classroom instruction. While previous studies acknowledge the importance of community participation in education, relatively few have examined how religious social capital functions as an institutional resource supporting literacy development in geographically dispersed madrasa networks (Rao & Hossain, 2011). Understanding this relationship is particularly important because community-based educational support may compensate for structural limitations commonly experienced by remote educational institutions.

Against this background, the Gerakan Literasi Madrasah (GALATAMA) program implemented by the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of North Maluku represents an important policy innovation designed specifically for archipelagic educational contexts. Unlike conventional literacy initiatives that frequently depend on technological infrastructure or extensive institutional resources, GALATAMA adopts an adaptive approach that integrates four complementary literacy pillars: Qur'anic Reading and Writing (*Baca Tulis Al-Qur'an*), Arabic literacy, English literacy, and reading culture development. The program is intentionally designed to remain implementable in both urban and geographically isolated madrasas by emphasizing structured literacy routines, vocabulary development, institutional commitment, and community participation rather than sophisticated technological facilities (Tjokra et al., 2026). This adaptive design reflects an equity-oriented approach that seeks to reduce literacy disparities by accommodating differences in institutional capacity and geographic accessibility.

The present study addresses two important gaps within the existing literature. First, it examines literacy innovation from the perspective of educational equity in an archipelagic region, thereby extending current discussions on literacy ecosystems beyond conventional school-based contexts. Second, it investigates the contribution of religious social capital to literacy sustainability, offering a broader understanding of how community-based Islamic educational traditions reinforce formal literacy policy. By integrating perspectives from educational equity, literacy ecosystems, and social capital theory, this study proposes a more comprehensive framework for understanding literacy development in geographically fragmented educational environments.

Accordingly, this study seeks to answer four research questions: (1) How does the literacy ecosystem gap manifest in archipelagic madrasas in North Maluku? (2) What design principles characterize the GALATAMA program as an equity-oriented literacy innovation? (3) How does religious social capital contribute to the sustainability of literacy practices within madrasa communities? and (4) What policy implications can be drawn from the GALATAMA experience for literacy development in archipelagic educational regions? Addressing these questions is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically by enriching the literature on literacy innovation, educational equity, and Islamic education while providing policy recommendations for improving literacy development in geographically dispersed educational systems.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design using documentary analysis as the primary method. Documentary analysis is a systematic technique for examining and interpreting documents to develop understanding of social and educational phenomena. (Bowen, 2009) It is widely recognized as a rigorous standalone method in educational policy research, where documents serve as representations of policy intent, design logic, and institutional practice (Prior.L,2002,Scott.J.,2014).

The primary data source is the GALATAMA program monograph, which documents the policy framework, conceptual design, and implementation guidelines of the literacy innovation program in North Maluku (Tjokra et al., 2026) , Additional data sources include the Merdeka Curriculum framework(Kemendikbudristek, 2025) provincial education statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Maluku Utara, 2023), and relevant peer-reviewed literature on literacy, educational policy, and social capital.

Data analysis followed a four-stage procedure of documentary analysis consisting of skimming, reading, interpretation, and thematic analysis (Cope, B., & Kalantzis, 2000) he analysis was organized around three interpretive dimensions: (1) structural-geographic constraints in archipelagic education, (2) policy design of literacy innovation, and (3) socio-cultural mechanisms of sustainability.

Particular attention was given to the role of religious social capital as a sustaining mechanism for literacy practices within madrasa communities. This analytical focus enables the study to connect policy design with community-based educational resilience in archipelagic contexts.

The study applied theoretical triangulation using multiliteracies theory, social capital theory, and educational change theory. As a documentary-based study, it does not involve field data collection; therefore, the findings are conceptual and exploratory, intended to serve as a basis for future empirical validation.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Literacy Ecosystem Gap in Archipelagic Madrasas

Document analysis identified five interconnected dimensions shaping literacy inequality in North Maluku madrasas. Geographic accessibility emerged as the primary structural challenge, particularly for remote island madrasas experiencing difficulties in accessing books, learning modules, and literacy support materials. These logistical barriers contribute to uneven literacy resource distribution across regions (Tjokra et al., 2026).

In addition to geographic constraints, disparities in literacy facilities remain evident between urban and remote madrasas. Urban institutions generally possess better library infrastructure and more adequate reading collections, whereas many remote madrasas rely on limited literacy resources and minimal reading spaces. This condition potentially reinforces long-term inequality in literacy exposure and learning opportunities.

The analysis further indicates that literacy practices prior to GALATAMA were largely sporadic and ceremonial in nature. Literacy activities were commonly limited to short reading sessions, occasional competitions, and underutilized reading corners without structured reflection or institutional integration. As a result, literacy had not yet functioned as a sustainable learning culture within madrasa environments.

Another significant issue concerns inconsistent supervision and monitoring. The archipelagic geography of North Maluku limits the frequency and effectiveness of academic supervision, particularly for remote educational units. This condition contributes to variations in literacy implementation quality and weakens institutional accountability mechanisms.

Finally, the findings reveal that home-based reading culture remains relatively limited in many communities. Nevertheless, the document simultaneously identifies strong socio-religious cohesion,

close community relations, and embedded religious traditions as important social assets that may support literacy reinforcement and program sustainability (Tjokra et al., 2026).

3.1.2 Structure and Design of GALATAMA Program

GALATAMA is structured as a four-pillar literacy reinforcement system consisting of BTQ (Qur'anic literacy), Arabic literacy, English literacy, and reading culture development. The program framework demonstrates that these pillars are designed not as separate literacy activities but as an interconnected ecosystem intended to strengthen students' linguistic, religious, and reflective competencies simultaneously.

The BTQ pillar emphasizes Qur'anic reading fluency, vocabulary recognition, and moral reflection. Arabic literacy focuses on thematic *mufradat* and simple text comprehension related to Islamic scholarship. English literacy emphasizes functional vocabulary and basic communicative competence, while the reading culture pillar promotes habitual reading practices through literacy journals, reflective discussions, and scheduled reading time.

The program also reflects an equity-oriented design principle an equity-oriented design principle. All four pillars are intentionally structured to remain operable in geographically constrained and resource-limited madrasas without dependence on advanced digital infrastructure. This design allows implementation across both urban and remote island educational contexts (Tjokra et al., 2026).

3.1.3 Governance Structure and Minimum Standards

The program operates through a multi-level governance structure involving provincial, district/city, and madrasa-level coordination. At the provincial level, the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs is responsible for policy formulation, technical guidance, and macro-level monitoring. District and city offices function as intermediary coordinators responsible for supervision, facilitation, and institutional capacity building.

At the madrasa level, implementation is conducted through GALATAMA Teams responsible for organizing literacy activities, documenting implementation, and conducting internal monitoring. The document also identifies several minimum literacy service standards, including scheduled literacy sessions, implementation of the four literacy pillars, routine documentation, basic supervision mechanisms, and the availability of reading materials.

These standards are designed as achievable institutional benchmarks that can be implemented in both urban and geographically isolated madrasas without requiring excessive financial or technological resources.

3.1.4 Religious Social Capital as Contextual Asset

The GALATAMA framework emphasizes significant emphasis on existing socio-religious structures within North Maluku communities as supporting assets for literacy development. The document identifies strong community solidarity, close interpersonal relations, and deeply rooted Islamic learning traditions as important contextual resources.

Several religious practices, including *halaqah*, *talaqqi*, communal Qur'anic recitation, and mosque-based learning activities, are described as cultural mechanisms that support literacy habituation, particularly within BTQ and Arabic literacy activities. In addition, close relationships between teachers, students, parents, and religious leaders facilitate collaborative participation in literacy reinforcement practices.

These socio-religious networks function not merely function not merely as cultural background factors but as active support systems contributing to the continuity and sustainability of literacy activities within madrasa communities (Tjokra et al., 2026).

3.1.5 Literacy Outcomes (Documented Results)

The implementation of GALATAMA is associated with several observable literacy outcomes associated with the implementation of GALATAMA. These include increased student participation in literacy activities, more structured reading habits, and improved vocabulary mastery across Qur'anic, Arabic, and English literacy domains.

The findings also document students' ability to produce written works, including collaborative and individual literacy products presented in madrasa literacy activities and festivals. Vocabulary improvement is identified as a particularly significant outcome because it supports students' reading comprehension, learning participation, and confidence in accessing both religious and general educational materials.

In addition, the program contributes to the strengthening of institutional literacy culture through scheduled literacy routines, documentation practices, and increased involvement of madrasa communities in literacy-related activities.

3.2 Discussion

The findings demonstrate that literacy inequality in North Maluku madrasas extends beyond limited educational resources and is fundamentally shaped by the structural realities of archipelagic geography. Geographic fragmentation constrains the distribution of learning materials, teacher mobility, academic supervision, and institutional coordination, thereby creating unequal literacy opportunities between urban and remote island madrasas. These findings support the educational ecosystem perspective, which conceptualizes literacy as the product of interactions among policy, institutions, communities, and learning environments rather than classroom instruction alone (Cosner et al., 2021). However, this study extends the existing framework by showing that geography functions as a structural determinant that simultaneously influences every component of the literacy ecosystem. In archipelagic settings, educational inequality cannot be understood solely through institutional performance because spatial isolation directly shapes the capacity of schools to implement literacy initiatives consistently. This finding reinforces previous arguments that educational policies for island regions require context-sensitive approaches rather than uniform mainland-oriented strategies (Crossley & Sprague, 2014).

The documentary evidence further indicates that literacy practices in North Maluku madrasas prior to GALATAMA were largely fragmented and programmatic rather than institutionalized as part of everyday learning culture. Literacy activities were generally limited to periodic reading events, competitions, or administrative initiatives that lacked continuity and systematic integration into teaching and learning processes. Similar patterns have been identified in previous studies, which suggest that school literacy movements often fail to generate sustainable literacy cultures when they are implemented merely as compliance-oriented activities rather than as comprehensive educational systems (Bujangga, 2022; Ramdani & Puspita, 2024). The present findings demonstrate that such challenges become even more pronounced in geographically dispersed educational systems where supervision, professional support, and institutional collaboration are constrained by distance. Consequently, literacy inequality in archipelagic madrasas should be understood as a cumulative structural phenomenon produced through the interaction of geographic barriers, uneven institutional capacity, and limited opportunities for continuous literacy development.

One of the principal contributions of this study is the identification of GALATAMA as an equity-oriented literacy innovation specifically designed for geographically dispersed educational environments. Unlike conventional literacy programs that frequently depend on technological infrastructure or extensive institutional resources, GALATAMA emphasizes literacy practices that remain feasible under resource-constrained conditions. The integration of four complementary literacy pillars—Qur'anic literacy (BTQ), Arabic literacy, English literacy, and reading culture—demonstrates a design that simultaneously strengthens religious, linguistic, and reflective competencies while remaining adaptable across diverse madrasa contexts. From the perspective of educational justice, this

model reflects the principle that equitable educational policies should expand meaningful learning opportunities for disadvantaged learners without requiring resources that are available only to privileged institutions (Brighouse & Swift, 2009). Rather than pursuing equality through identical resource allocation, GALATAMA seeks to reduce educational disparities by designing literacy practices that can be implemented consistently regardless of geographic location.

The emphasis on vocabulary development across Qur'anic, Arabic, and English literacy also represents an important pedagogical strategy within the program. Vocabulary knowledge constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for reading comprehension, critical thinking, and broader literacy achievement (Haryadi, 1992). By positioning vocabulary reinforcement as the foundation of literacy development, GALATAMA addresses one of the core obstacles frequently encountered by students in resource-limited educational settings. Furthermore, integrating multiple literacy domains into a coherent institutional framework reflects the multiliteracies perspective proposed by Cope and Kalantzis (2000), which argues that literacy should encompass diverse linguistic, cultural, and communicative competencies rather than conventional reading skills alone. This integrated approach suggests that literacy innovation becomes more sustainable when religious literacy, language learning, and habitual reading practices are developed simultaneously within a single educational ecosystem.

Another significant contribution of this study concerns the role of religious social capital in sustaining literacy practices within madrasa communities. Existing educational literature generally conceptualizes social capital as a resource that facilitates academic achievement through trust, social networks, and community participation (Coleman, 1988). The present findings extend this perspective by demonstrating that religious traditions—including *halaqah*, *talaqqi*, communal Qur'anic recitation, and mosque-based learning—function not merely as cultural practices but also as institutional mechanisms that reinforce literacy participation and continuity. These traditions create regular opportunities for reading, discussion, and collaborative learning beyond formal classroom settings, thereby strengthening literacy habituation through culturally embedded educational practices. Rather than relying exclusively on formal administrative structures, GALATAMA mobilizes existing community resources that already possess legitimacy within local Islamic educational traditions.

This finding resonates with the concept of funds of knowledge, which emphasizes that community-based cultural practices constitute valuable educational resources capable of enriching school learning (Moll et al., 2006). Likewise, culturally sustaining pedagogy argues that educational innovation becomes more effective when it is connected with local cultural identities rather than replacing them with externally imposed models (Paris, 2012). In the context of North Maluku, religious social capital provides institutional resilience by connecting literacy activities with community participation, parental engagement, and long-established Islamic learning traditions. Consequently, literacy sustainability emerges not only from policy implementation but also from the successful integration of educational innovation with socio-religious structures that already shape everyday community life. This perspective contributes to the growing discourse on educational resilience by demonstrating that locally embedded cultural resources may represent strategic assets for sustaining literacy development in geographically isolated educational systems.

The findings also generate important implications for educational policy in archipelagic regions. First, literacy policies should explicitly recognize geographic fragmentation as a structural determinant influencing educational access, supervision, and institutional quality. Standardized national literacy initiatives may unintentionally reproduce educational inequalities when they fail to accommodate the realities of island-based education. Second, literacy development should prioritize adaptive institutional design rather than infrastructure-dependent interventions. The GALATAMA experience demonstrates that structured literacy routines, vocabulary development, community participation, and integrated literacy programming may produce more sustainable outcomes than technology-centered approaches alone. Finally, religious social capital should be recognized as a legitimate educational resource within Islamic schooling. Integrating local religious traditions into literacy policy not only strengthens community ownership but also enhances the long-term sustainability of literacy initiatives.

Collectively, these findings suggest that educational equity in archipelagic contexts is best achieved through policy innovations that integrate geographic sensitivity, institutional adaptability, and community-based cultural resources within a coherent literacy development framework.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that literacy inequality in archipelagic madrasa contexts is shaped by interconnected structural challenges, including geographic fragmentation, unequal institutional capacity, inconsistent supervision, and limited literacy culture. The findings indicate that GALATAMA represents an equity-oriented literacy innovation model designed to remain accessible across both urban and remote island madrasas through low-resource literacy practices, structured habituation, and integrated vocabulary reinforcement. The study further reveals that religious social capital embedded in traditions such as halaqah, talaqqi, and community-based religious learning functions as an important sustainability mechanism for literacy development within madrasa communities.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of equity-oriented literacy theory in archipelagic education by highlighting the relationship between geographic inequality, adaptive literacy design, and religious social capital. The findings suggest that literacy sustainability in geographically fragmented regions cannot rely solely on infrastructure expansion or formal policy intervention, but also requires integration with local socio-cultural structures. Practically, the GALATAMA model provides policy relevance not only for other Indonesian archipelagic provinces but also for geographically dispersed educational regions globally facing similar challenges of educational access and literacy inequality. Since this study relies on documentary analysis, future research should incorporate field-based investigation through interviews, observations, and comparative studies across multiple archipelagic educational contexts.

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