

# The Role of Gerak Selaras in Strengthening Children's Digital Literacy in Samarinda City

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## ABSTRACT

The development of digital technology has brought major changes to education, but the digital literacy gap persists at the elementary school level, especially in rural areas. Children are required to have technological skills and internet ethics from an early age, while the infrastructure, curriculum, and teacher capacity remain inadequate. This condition underscores the importance of research on children's digital literacy as a foundation for the development of smart, ethical digital citizens. This study aims to analyze the role of Gerak Selaras in improving the digital literacy of elementary school children in Samarinda through the Selaras Mengajar program. The study uses a qualitative case study design through interviews,

observations, and documentation. The analysis was conducted to understand the strategies, participation, and social values underlying community activities. The results show that Gerak Selaras plays a significant role in building contextual digital literacy through the development of a locally-based curriculum, the application of participatory methods, and the support of volunteers and partners. Despite resource and funding limitations, the values of solidarity and cooperation are the movement's main strengths in sustaining itself. This research confirms that Gerak Selaras is a community education model that bridges the digital literacy gap among children and contributes to the development of collaborative policies towards inclusive and sustainable digital education.

## INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has fundamentally changed how children learn, interact, and access information from an early age. Although the penetration of digital devices in Indonesia is increasing, various studies show that mastery of these devices is not always accompanied by critical, evaluative, and ethical thinking when elementary school children use digital content (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007; Utami et al., 2022). This condition shows that digital literacy cannot be understood merely as the technical ability to use devices, but rather as a social practice closely related to character building, moral responsibility, and cultural understanding (Buckingham, 2013; Hobbs, 2010). In the context of basic education, effective digital literacy must be able to integrate technological aspects with human values and local culture so that children do not only become users of technology, but also responsible producers of meaning in the digital ecosystem (Hidayat et al., 2024).

National policies such as the National Literacy Movement and the Merdeka Belajar (Freedom of Learning) program have encouraged the integration of digital literacy into the

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basic education system. However, its implementation in the field still shows a large gap between regions, both in terms of infrastructure availability, teacher readiness, and curriculum suitability to local needs (Hutagalung & Purbani, 2021; OECD, 2016). Research by (Basar, 2021; Pappa et al., 2024) found that although the frequency of technology use increased during Distance Learning (PJJ), it did not necessarily improve students' reflective and critical abilities regarding digital information. Teachers in elementary schools also reported difficulties in adapting to technology-based learning methods due to limited training and technical support (Alip Alawi et al., 2025; Hayyi, 2025; Supratman et al., 2025). This disparity shows that national policies have not fully addressed the practical dimensions at the elementary school level, especially in non-metropolitan areas.

In this situation, community-based initiatives are an important alternative for strengthening contextual digital literacy that is relevant to children's lives. A study by (Rahayuningrat & Sibwahi, 2024) shows that a community-based approach that utilizes local resources can overcome the limitations of formal education infrastructure. (Kazanskaia, 2025; Zainal Abiddin et al., 2022) also prove that community involvement in digital literacy activities increases student participation and fosters a sense of ownership of the learning process. The community approach allows for teaching that is more adaptive to the social, cultural, and economic conditions of the local community (Munisa et al., 2024; Nadila Utami et al., 2025; Setiadi et al., 2023). Thus, community-based digital literacy is not only a form of technology skills transfer but also a process of social empowerment that builds relationships between knowledge, ethics, and cultural identity.

From a pedagogical perspective, literature shows that interactive and participatory approaches are effective strategies for improving children's digital literacy. Methods such as collaborative learning, hands-on practice, reflection on experiences, and the use of local media have been shown to increase student engagement and understanding (Dongxue & Nagappan, 2024; Suwanto et al., 2022; Wardani et al., 2024). (Dewi Sawitri, 2024; Hasanah et al., 2025; Rozana et al., 2025) emphasize that active student participation in digital learning fosters confidence, creativity, and a sense of responsibility toward technology. However, most of these studies still focus on formal school environments and specific subjects, leaving little research on how participatory pedagogical practices are implemented by civil society organizations, especially those that integrate local cultural values.

The latest bibliometric study (Oktarina et al., 2025) shows that pedagogical and technical issues dominate research on digital literacy in Indonesia. However, there is limited exploration of the role of local communities in shaping children's digital competencies. Additionally, research by (Suwanto et al., 2022) highlights the lack of long-term evaluation of the impact of digital literacy programs on changes in children's behavior and character. Several international studies, such as those by (Livingstone, 2014; UNESCO, 2018), also emphasize the importance of digital literacy as a child's right and social responsibility, rather than merely a technological aspect. However, the Indonesian literature has not

discussed in depth how community organizations articulate these values in the context of basic education, especially outside Java and in remote areas such as East Kalimantan.

In this context, Gerak Selaras, an organization that emerged in Samarinda in 2019, is an important example to analyze. Through the Selaras Mengajar program, this movement combines basic digital skills training, internet ethics, and the strengthening of local culture, supported by young volunteers and local partnerships. This approach demonstrates the distinctive characteristics of new social movements-based on values, participation, and solidarity-which differ from formal educational interventions (Buckingham, 2013; Hobbs, 2010). However, to date, no academic study has systematically documented how Gerak Selaras' strategies, pedagogical methods, and social structures improve elementary school children's digital literacy in Samarinda.

Based on the above description, this study argues that a contextual, participatory, community-based approach can be an important complement to formal digital literacy policies. However, the effectiveness and sustainability of such a model require a deep empirical understanding of the social, cultural, and institutional factors that influence it. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the role of Gerak Selaras in improving the digital literacy of elementary school children in Samarinda City by highlighting program strategies, pedagogical approaches, and the supporting factors and challenges encountered. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of community-based digital literacy literature in Indonesia and to provide relevant policy and educational practice recommendations for schools, local governments, and civil society organizations.

## METHOD

This study uses Gerak Selaras as its unit of analysis, a civil society organization that focuses on improving the digital literacy of elementary school children in the city of Samarinda. The analysis examines the organization's activities, learning strategies, and the experiences of the actors involved in the Selaras Mengajar program, namely volunteers, administrators, parents, and students. This study not only positions Gerak Selaras as an institutional object but also as a social arena where interactions, value negotiations, and contextual digital learning practices occur. Thus, the unit of analysis covers three main dimensions: the organizational dimension (structure, strategy, and resources), the pedagogical dimension (teaching methods and learning interactions), and the socio-cultural dimension (values and community participation).

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study strategy. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand social phenomena in depth and in context, especially how values, strategies, and actions are constructed within the community's social space (Yin, 2018). Case studies were used to answer the questions of how Gerak Selaras plays a role in improving the digital literacy of elementary school children and why certain strategies were chosen in learning practices. The qualitative approach is meaning-oriented and prioritizes the interpretation of social reality as understood by the actors (Creswell et al., 2006). Through this strategy, the research not only

describes Gerak Selaras's practices but also reveals the social and pedagogical patterns that explain its successes and limitations.

This study used two data sources: primary and secondary. Primary data were collected through online interviews via Zoom, which were then transcribed verbatim. Interviews were conducted with 12 key informants selected through purposive sampling, including 5 volunteers, 2 core administrators, 3 parents, and 2 elementary school students participating in the program. Informants were selected based on their level of involvement in Gerak Selaras activities and their capacity to provide information relevant to the research focus. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from internal organizational documents, including the Selaras Mengajar training syllabus, annual activity reports, and documentation archives published on Gerak Selaras' official Instagram account. These documents helped researchers understand the chronology of activities, the internal curriculum structure, and the organization's public communication strategies year by year.

The data collection process used three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted online via Zoom using a semi-structured guide that enabled exploration of informants' personal narratives and social experiences. All interviews were recorded with the participants' permission and then transcribed for analysis. In addition, observations were conducted online via Gerak Selaras' official Instagram account (@gerakselaras). This technique was used to trace the dynamics of activities, patterns of public communication, and the organization's visual representation of digital literacy practices. Social media observation provided an opportunity to understand how Gerak Selaras narrated their activities to the public, built the movement's image, and engaged digital audiences through posts, photos, videos, and testimonials. Observation notes were compiled based on content analysis of posts, comment interactions, and patterns of consistency in the messages and values conveyed in the digital space.

Meanwhile, document analysis was conducted by examining internal organizational archives, including the Selaras Mengajar program syllabus, annual activity reports, and evaluation records kept by administrators. This document helped researchers understand the program's structural and pedagogical dimensions and served as triangulation material for interview and online observation results. Through a combination of these three techniques, this study obtained a triangulated view of the practices, communication, and strategies of the Gerak Selaras organization in improving the digital literacy of elementary school children in Samarinda.

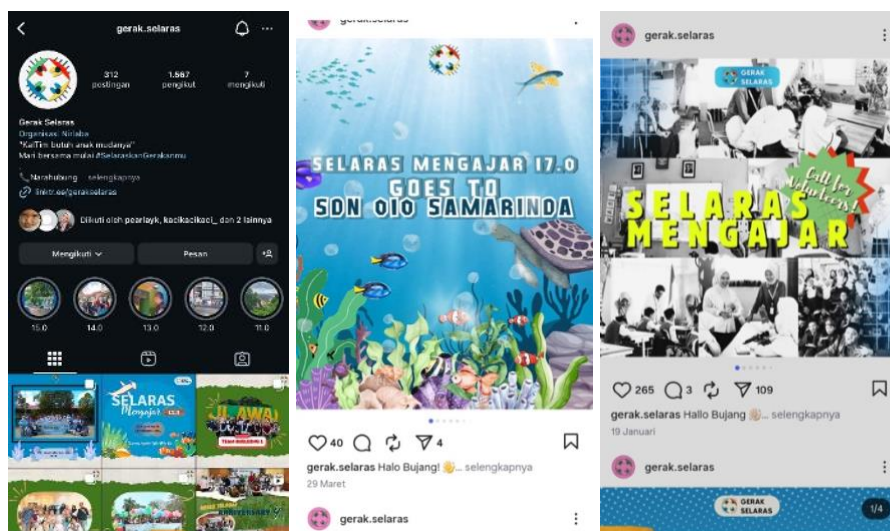
Data analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis approach as described by (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis began with repeated readings of interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents to identify patterns of meaning and initial themes, including digital learning strategies, child participation, social support, and organizational challenges. After the data reduction process, the researchers compiled narrative descriptions that showed the relationships between categories, such as the connection

between volunteer pedagogical innovation and children's involvement in activities. The next stage is interpretation, where emerging patterns are linked to the social context and organizational goals. To ensure data validity, method and source triangulation were carried out by comparing results from online interviews, field observations, and digital documents. The reliability of the analysis was strengthened through member checking techniques with key informants and peer debriefing with two academic colleagues to ensure consistency of interpretation.

## RESULT

Gerak Selaras was founded in 2019 as a social initiative by three young people from Samarinda who were concerned about the low level of digital literacy among children in East Kalimantan. The organization grew into a volunteer-based civil society movement focused on digital education and the preservation of local culture. With a horizontal structure based on the Dongsanak system, Gerak Selaras emphasizes the values of solidarity, togetherness, and cooperation in carrying out its programs. Its transformation into a foundation in 2023 strengthened the organization's legitimacy while opening up broader partnership opportunities, including support from the private sector.

Figure 1. Gerak Selaras' Instagram profile and programs.



Source: Screenshot from the Gerak Selaras Instagram platform

The findings reveal three main aspects that explain the role of Gerak Selaras in improving the digital literacy of elementary school children in Samarinda City, namely:

### The “Selaras Mengajar” Program as a Contextual Digital Literacy Initiative

The Selaras Mengajar program is the core activity of Gerak Selaras, designed to improve the digital literacy of elementary school children in Samarinda City. Based on the data collection results, this program teaches basic digital skills, including using Microsoft Word and PowerPoint, text processing, and document storage. In addition, the material

covers aspects of digital ethics and security, helping children understand how to use the internet wisely and recognize reliable sources of information. Each learning session lasts approximately 90 minutes and is divided into several stages, starting with a topic introduction, followed by material delivery, hands-on practice, and a closing reflection. In its implementation, volunteers use various media, such as laptops, projectors, and simple writing tools, to help children understand the practical uses of technology.

Table 1. Learning materials selaras mengajar programs

No	Subject Matter	Main Objectives	Learning Activities	Tools and Materials
1	Introduction to Microsoft Word	Understanding the functions and parts of Microsoft Word	Discussion of experiences and demonstration of basic features	Laptop, projector, whiteboard
2	Text Processing in Microsoft Word	Setting text alignment & saving documents	Hands-on practice editing and saving documents	Laptop, Word guide
3	Ethical Use of the Internet	Using the internet wisely and recognizing reliable sources	Discussion and exercises on finding accurate information	Laptop/tablet, internet access
4	The Culture of East Kalimantan	Getting to know and appreciating local culture	Group presentations and class discussions	Presentation materials, stationery
5	Traditional Games as Learning Tools	Understanding social and cultural values through traditional games	Playing traditional games and reflection	Traditional games

Source: Elaborated research data

The table above shows that the material taught is not limited to technical skills but also relates technology to students' social and cultural contexts. Learning activities are not only oriented toward mastery of devices but also toward the formation of ethical digital behavior rooted in local values.

Interestingly, all learning materials are arranged contextually and tailored to the level of understanding of elementary school students. For example, when introducing internet ethics, teachers use educational games or simple situation simulations so that children can easily grasp the moral message. In addition, teaching is not only focused on digital skills but also integrates East Kalimantan's cultural values. This can be seen in sessions on regional culture, where children are introduced to folk tales and traditional games as part of character building.

Based on the study's results, the Selaras Mengajar program not only improves basic digital skills but also serves as an educational medium that fosters ethical awareness and cultural identity in children. The learning activities, which are designed to be interactive

and experience-based, make this program more than just technology training – it becomes a process of character building that is relevant to the This study shows that the Selaras Mengajar movement has successfully translated the idea of digital literacy into simple, enjoyable, and meaningful educational practices for children. The combination of technology and local culture makes learning feel closer to students' daily lives. Children not only learn how to operate digital devices, but also understand social values such as cooperation, responsibility, and appreciation for local traditions. This contextual approach shows how digital education can be built on the social realities familiar to students, rather than rigid technical training.

### **Interactive and Participatory Pedagogical Approaches in Digital Learning.**

The Selaras Mengajar program implements an interactive, participatory, and context-based teaching approach to improve the digital literacy skills of elementary school children. Based on field findings, learning activities are not structured in a one-way manner; rather, they provide space for student participation. Volunteers act as facilitators, encouraging students to experiment, discuss, and work together in small groups. The teaching method is organized into four main stages, namely opening, material delivery, practical activities, and closing. In practice, learning sessions last approximately 90 minutes, with flexible time allocation based on student needs. The following table illustrates the structure of teaching activities implemented by Gerak Selaras:

Table 2. Structure of teaching activities implemented by Gerak Selaras

Activity Stages	Duration (minutes)	Learning Activities
Opening	10	Introduction to the topic, learning objectives, and activities to spark student enthusiasm.
Presentation of Material	30	Presentation of key concepts through demonstrations, discussions, and question and answer sessions.
Practical Activities	20	Students conduct exercises directly using digital devices or group activities.
Closing and Reflection	10	Conclusion of the material, feedback, and reflection with students.

Source: Elaborated research data

From the observations, this approach made the classroom atmosphere more dynamic and encouraged the children to participate actively. For example, when learning about digital ethics, students were asked to identify examples of positive and negative behavior in the virtual world through a simple role-playing game. In another session, children were invited to present their group work using PowerPoint, with volunteers providing guidance. In addition, reflection was an important part of the learning process. Children wrote down their understanding or impressions on small pieces of paper (sticky notes), which were then

collected for discussion. This activity not only strengthened the children's memory of the material but also helped volunteers evaluate the effectiveness of the methods used.

Field findings show that the digital learning process implemented by Gerak Selaras is interactive and participatory. Students are not positioned as passive recipients but as active participants at every stage of the activity. The learning process is carried out through a combination of hands-on practice, group discussions, educational games, and self-reflection, which makes learning more lively and meaningful.

The teaching pattern in Selaras Mengajar shows a shift from conventional methods to more dialogic and child-centered learning. This approach not only improves children's understanding of digital skills but also builds their confidence, curiosity, and ability to work together. The open classroom dynamic allows every student to participate without fear of making mistakes, while volunteers act as mentors who guide rather than lecture. This practice confirms that effective digital learning depends not only on device availability but also on interactions that provide space for children to learn actively and reflectively.

### **Supporting Structures and Challenges**

The success of the Selaras Mengajar program in improving the digital literacy of elementary school children in Samarinda City cannot be separated from strong structural support, both from within the organization and from external parties. Field data shows that volunteers are the main pillar in implementing activities. The number of volunteers increased significantly from 16 in 2021 to more than 120 in 2023, indicating growing public trust in this program. Volunteers not only serve as teachers but also as activity planners, material developers, and learning outcome evaluators. In addition to internal factors, external support also plays an important role. Gerak Selaras collaborates with various parties, including Pertamina, local bookstores, coffee shops, and media partners, who contribute funds, publications, and learning facilities such as classrooms, projectors, laptops, and sound systems. These partnerships expand the program's reach and enhance its sustainability without compromising the organization's independence.

However, field findings also reveal several challenges and obstacles that still need to be addressed in implementing the program. Before obtaining sponsorship, the main sources of funding were internal donations and the sale of recycled materials, such as plastic and paper, through waste banks. In terms of facilities, limited equipment is a real problem – in some sessions, one laptop is shared among four to five students, which affects learning effectiveness.

Another obstacle arose regarding human resources, mainly because not all volunteers had a formal education. This led to variations in teaching methods and in the delivery of materials, as well as the need for additional support to maintain the quality of learning. In terms of curriculum, the absence of a standard syllabus in the early stages led to the experimental development of materials, using the old curriculum (KTSP 2007) as a reference because the 2013 Curriculum no longer includes ICT subjects.

Based on the study's results, the main strength of Gerak Selaras lies in the synergy between the collective spirit of volunteers and the support of external partnership networks. This collaboration is an important foundation for the sustainability of the Selaras Mengajar program. However, this success is also accompanied by various structural challenges, including limited access to digital devices and disparities in teacher capacity. This condition shows that managing a digital literacy movement requires a balance between social idealism and adequate resource readiness.

The findings of this study illustrate that Gerak Selaras grew through social solidarity and collective commitment rather than through significant institutional support. The support of volunteers and local partners became the force that enabled this movement to survive and thrive, even amid financial and infrastructural limitations. On the other hand, the various obstacles encountered indicate an ongoing organizational learning process – how this community adapts, improves management, and seeks creative solutions to emerging challenges. Values such as cooperation, independence, and a sense of belonging become the social energy that sustains the movement. Thus, the supporting structure and challenges faced by Gerak Selaras reflect the unique dynamics of civil society organizations that are oriented towards social change through education.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal three main points: First, Selaras Mengajar presents a contextual digital literacy program, combining technical skills (e.g., Microsoft Word/PowerPoint) with digital ethics and the strengthening of local culture; Second, the pedagogy used is interactive and participatory, involving hands-on practice, group discussions, educational games, and reflection that places children as active subjects; and third, the sustainability of the program depends on social capital (volunteers and local partnerships) despite facing structural obstacles such as limited equipment, funding, and variations in volunteer competencies.

The Harmonious Movement approach is in line with international digital competency policies and frameworks that view digital literacy as a combination of technical, social, and ethical skills: UNESCO emphasizes the ability to access, assess, create, and participate safely and appropriately in the digital space (UNESCO, 2018), while the OECD stresses the need for cognitive, collaborative, and adaptive skills to cope with the rapidly changing digital world (OECD, 2016). In the context of basic education in Indonesia, the need for digital literacy integrated with local ethics and culture is increasingly urgent. The importance of integrating cultural values and ethics is also consistent with Indonesian studies that emphasize the need to contextualize digital education at the basic level (Suwanto et al., 2022; Wardani et al., 2024). Research (Saifuddin & Putra, 2024) indicates that teacher readiness, parental support, and infrastructure are key factors influencing the effectiveness of digital literacy in elementary schools. A study (Hidayat et al., 2024) on Digital Literacy Based on Sundanese Culture found that the internalization of cultural values in digital media enhances students' cultural understanding and identity.

On the other hand, research on Developing Integrated Learning Based on Digital Literacy and Ethics reveals that a learning model that combines digital ethics with local material can improve fifth-grade students' understanding of digital responsibility (Wardani et al., 2024). These studies are relevant to this finding: the integration of culture, ethics, and participatory methods has proven effective in the Indonesian context.

Interpretatively, these findings show that Gerak Selaras is not only a local response to the lack of attention to digital literacy in the formal curriculum, but also a space for social education experiments where students learn actively and reflectively. The participatory approach increases engagement and enables deeper learning (Buckingham, 2013; Hobbs, 2010). When students are involved in discussions, hands-on practice, and reflection, they not only master technical aspects but also develop critical awareness and digital ethics. Variations in volunteer capacity and equipment limitations indicate that, despite strong intentions and social structures, without material support and professional training, optimal results are difficult to achieve.

Digital literacy in elementary school children should be understood as a comprehensive social practice involving technical, ethical, cultural, and character aspects. This approach is consistent with studies emphasizing that children and adolescents experience gradation in digital inclusion, that access alone is not enough without pedagogical support, critical literacy, and an adequate social context (Livingstone, 2014; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). Social values such as solidarity and togetherness, emphasized by Gerak Selaras, emerge as important social capital for sustainability. The presence of volunteers as a major component of the organization and local partnerships demonstrates that sustainable digital literacy education requires not only material design but also support for social and cultural infrastructure.

When compared to digital literacy or media literacy programs in other contexts in Indonesia, Gerak Selaras is similar to a study in Yogyakarta that examined digital literacy practices in private schools and found that schools utilize local resources and information media as a means of learning technology, supporting interactive methods and digital media (Suwanto et al., 2022). However, unfortunately, in formal settings, curriculum regulations and a lack of equipment often pose greater obstacles than in non-formal community contexts. Gerak Selaras, although community-based and flexible, shows that informal aspects offer adaptability but are also more vulnerable to sustainability issues when institutional support is weak.

Going forward, Gerak Selaras needs to formulate a standard local syllabus that integrates basic technology, digital ethics, and local cultural values as integral parts of the material, while still allowing for adaptation to local needs and school characteristics. Volunteer skills must be improved through formal training and mentoring. In contrast, strategic partnerships with local governments, formal schools, and the private sector must be strengthened to make hardware support and infrastructure access more reliable. Periodic evaluation and documentation of learning outcomes must be carried out to measure the

impact not only from a technical perspective, but also in terms of the character, ethics, and cultural identity of students, and feedback from students and volunteers must be used as material for reflection for continuous program improvement.

## CONCLUSION

This study found that Gerak Selaras, through its flagship program Selaras Mengajar, is an effective community-based initiative in improving the digital literacy of elementary school children in Samarinda City. The program successfully integrates basic digital skills - such as word processing, online information search, and internet safety - with the instillation of digital ethics and the strengthening of local cultural identity. The contextual, interactive, and participatory learning approach makes digital literacy not only a technical skill but also a means of character building and social awareness, rooted in children's lives and environments.

Conceptually, this research contributes to the development of community-based digital literacy studies in Indonesia, emphasizing that strengthening children's digital capacity requires an adaptive social and cultural approach. These findings enrich the perspective of the New Social Movement in the context of education, showing that social transformation can begin with civil society initiatives oriented towards values, solidarity, and collective participation. Furthermore, this research offers an alternative model of non-formal education that can serve as a reference for educational institutions, local governments, and the private sector in designing sustainable digital literacy programs rooted in local contexts.

However, this study has several limitations. First, the data coverage remains limited to the Samarinda City area, so generalizing the results to other regions should be done with caution. Second, the empirical data used primarily come from documentation and interviews, so they do not fully represent long-term changes in children's digital behavior. Third, a systematic quantitative evaluation of participants' improvement in digital competency has not been conducted. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the study area, use a mixed approach and evaluate the long-term impact of digital literacy programs on the character and digital ethics of the younger generation.

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