



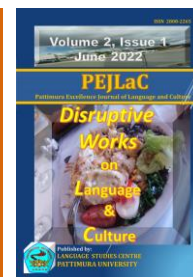
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How Ambonese Read: Challenges and Opportunities to Preserve Maluku

Folklore and Culture

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Abstract

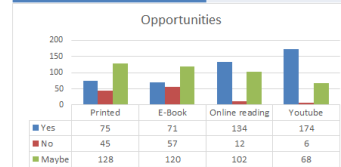
Preserving culture can be done through the folklore that are passed down from generation to generation. The main aim of this survey is to see the challenges and opportunity for Maluku Folklore preservation. This research provides an insight on the students' reading habit and preference, the availability of Maluku Folklore, and students' perception on Maluku folklore. The data collected 248 responses through an online survey. The result highlighted several interesting information; 1) Despite the result show respondents perceived reading as their hobby, their preference activity shows that in their free time books are not the first choice and the culture of bedtime stories and/or being read to by parents are an uncommon practice. 2) Students rarely read Maluku Folklore unless it is an assignment from school. 3) Students believed that Maluku Folklore is not as popular and available compared to folklore from other parts of Indonesia. 4) Maluku Folklore is not readily available for students to find and consume. 5) Students prefer to read on digital and online platforms compared to the printed ones. 6) Opportunities for preservation can be done by embracing the technology and internet to tapped in to the current young people reading preferences and habit.

Keywords: Preserving Maluku Culture, Maluku Folklore, Reading Preference, Reading Habit, Culture Appreciation and Preservation.

The significant finding: It was found that Ambonese young people do not feel that the folklore is readily available and accessible. Therefore, experts need to work hand in hand in the near future to produce good quality publication of Maluku folklore in different levels of readers

RESPONDENTS RECALLING THE LAST TIME THEY READ MALUKU FOLKLORE

Respondents Answers	Number of Respondents
Back in Junior High School	34
Perhaps Few Days ago	33
It has been a while and I cannot remember the last time I read it.	32
I think I have never read it	32
1 year ago	26
Few months ago	20
Back in senior High School	19
> 8 years ago	18
Back in Elementary School	16
When I was a child	10
2 years ago	8
Total	248



ARTICLES

I. INTRODUCTION

United Nation underlined that folklore is an “integral part of culture heritage and living culture” and that steps should be made to safeguard and conserve these folklore (NGO Commitee on Education, 1989). Folklores or traditional stories instill in the reader or listener the local wisdom as well as the vehicle to transfer knowledge and history from generation to generation. Folklore plays an important role in nurturing the multiculturalism to young people in Indonesia and specifically in Maluku (Saimima, 2022). Folklores are laden with moral lesson and was created from the common practice of ancestor to educate and to pass on values to the next generation (Abdullah, 2022).

However, the folklore or local stories are not being read or retold to the young generation nowadays. Two aspects that

contribute to this are the reading habit and the availability and access to reading materials. Indonesia National Library of Maluku conducted a Reading Habit Survey in 2020 and noted that Maluku ranked the 26th out of the 34 province in Indonesia (Liputan6.com, 2021). Meanwhile, an extensive study conducted by the center for the Policy on Education and Culture under the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2019 showed that in terms of reading culture, Maluku ranked 21st out of 34 province. Meanwhile for the availability and access to the reading material, Maluku ranked 18th from 34 provinces in Indonesia (Puslitjakbud, 2019).

This phenomenon does not only affect the reading ability and reading habit of students academically. Moreover, it is a threat to the preservation of culture of Maluku. Ministry of Education and culture reported that there are 11 regional languages in Indonesia with no more

native speaker and have been deemed extinct (Wisma Bahasa, 2021). Out of these 11 languages mentioned, 8 are from Maluku, 1 from North Maluku and 2 from Papua and West Papua. Meanwhile, we are bombarded with foreign culture which are seen as more popular, hip and happening such as currently the “K-Pop Culture or Hallyu effect or the Korean Wave” (Riaeni, Suci, Pertiwi, & Sugiarti, 2019). As part of the research to build this study, a quick internet search on google was performed by typing the keywords “*Cerita Rakyat Indonesia*” and “*Cerita Daerah Untuk Anak*”. The search result shows that none of the top 10 stories presented on the google were stories from Maluku. Another search was also conducted by typing the same keywords on YouTube Platform and the result shows that the top 10 search result did not yield any Maluku Folklore.

Folklore carries with it local wisdom and values as well as language and local practices. The availability of Maluku Folklore is one of the factors that will promote accessibility and popularity. When Maluku folklore are diminishing from our reading repertoire, then we risk the endangerment of our culture as whole. Therefore, this research gathered information on the reading habit and preference, availability of Maluku folklore and the perception of Junior High School (SMP), Senior High School (SMA), and University Students in Ambon.

II. METHODOLOGY

This research is a cross-sectional design survey study. Cross-sectional design provides a snapshot of the current behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs in a population. The survey utilized an online questionnaire using Google Form and

distributed to the students through the teachers of Junior High School Students (SMP), Senior High School Students (SMA) and university students in Ambon. The survey gathered data from 100 respondents: 23 are SMP students, 40 are SMA students, and 37 university students. The questionnaire consists of 4 parts: The first part is respondents’ information (4 items). The second part gathered data on students reading habit and reading preferences (9 items), the third part gathered data on the availability of Maluku Folklore (8 items), and the third part gathered information on students’ perception on the availability and accessibility of Maluku Folklore (8 items).

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents’ Demographic

The total respondents were 248 students: 102 SMP (Junior High School) students, 79 SMA (Senior High School) students, and 67 university students who live in Ambon Island. They are mostly resided in the sub district of Baguala, Teluk Ambon Baguala and Sirimau.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents

Subdistrict	SMP	SMA	University
Nusaniwe	6	0	5
Sirimau	11	27	48
Leitimur Selatan	6	5	0
Baguala	35	41	3
Teluk Ambon	44	6	11

The highest percentage of occupation for fathers were farmers – 45 out of 248 (18%), followed by government official – 39 out of 248 (15.6%) and Entrepreneur – 32 out of 248 (12.8%). The highest percentage of occupation for mothers were Unemployed – Stay-at-Home Mother – 102 out of 248 (40.8%), followed by

government official – 39 out of 248 (15.6%) and PNS (government) Teacher – 20 out of 248 (8%).

Students Reading Habit and Preference

80,2% respondents admitted that reading is their habit. However, when crossed checked with other items it shows that this high number is merely a perceived idea. When asked what they usually do on their free time, they answered: Using social media on their phones (50.6%) and Watching TV or watch YouTube - (17.7%). Meanwhile, only 15 out of 248 respondents (5.7%) chose reading for pleasure either in printed form or digital/online as the activity they usually do when they have free time.

Table 2. How students per education lever use their free time.

How Students use their freetime	UNIVERSITY	SMA	SMP	Total Response	%
Using social media	44	56	34	134	50,6
Watch TV or Youtube or Kdrama or Anime or movie	11	18	18	47	17,7
Playing outdoor with friends	2	3	24	29	10,9
Playing game on MobilePhones	3	6	15	24	9,1
Reading (printed and/or online)	7	4	4	15	5,7
Study	0	2	8	10	3,8
Play and Listen to Music	0	2	0	2	0,8
Doodle, Drawing or Painting	0	1	1	2	0,8
Sport	0	1	0	1	0,4
Doing House chores	0	0	1	1	0,4

Reading habit is nurtured as it grows from daily practice to become a habit. Emily Buchwald, a literary author once said that “children are made readers on the lap of their parents.” This means that parents’ role in developing a child to like reading is crucial. Respondents admit that their parent almost never read to and with them when they were growing up.

Table 3. Reading Habit at Home

Question	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
When you were small, did your parents read to and with you?	27%	0	35.9%	37.1%
Do your family have a “Bedtime Reading” habit?	12.1%	0	35.1%	52.8%

In keeping up with the technological advancement and internet access in young people, the result shows that students these days prefer to read on online and digital platform with 45.2% respondents chose reading webtoon and 39.1% respondents prefer to read on other online reading platforms and apps. This is followed by reading printed comics (35.5%) and reading printed novel (34.7%).

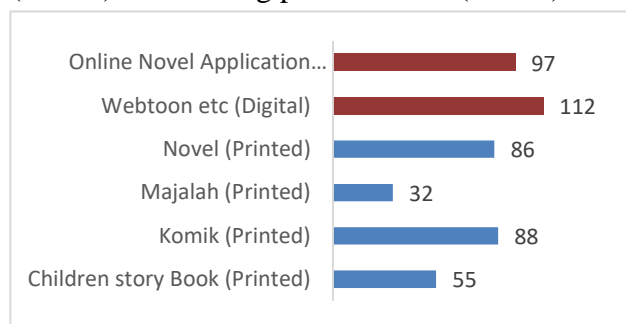


Chart 1. The Types of Reading Students Usually Read (numbers shown are answers out of 248 respondents)

However, the respondents prefer printed book/magazine/novel/comic (29%). This type of reading was significantly preferred by Junior High school respondents. Meanwhile, 27.4% prefer Online Novel platforms and apps. This type of reading format was preferred by Senior High school and University Students. 27% prefer digital book/magazine. Senior high school students prefer this format of reading. Lastly, 16.5% prefer Webtoon and similar platforms and apps. This is dominated by senior and junior high school students’

respondents.

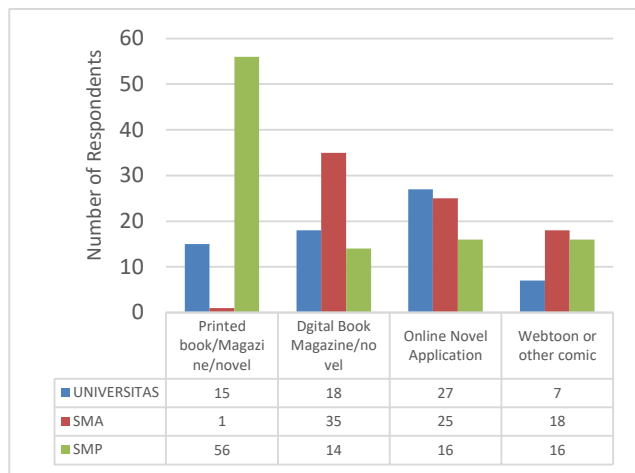


Chart 2. Students Reading Format Preference for each education level (numbers shown are answers out of 248 respondents)

The language of reading they usually read with is Bahasa Indonesia (82.4%) and English (10.8%). Ambon/Maluku language only logged 13 responds (5.2%) out of 248 respondents.

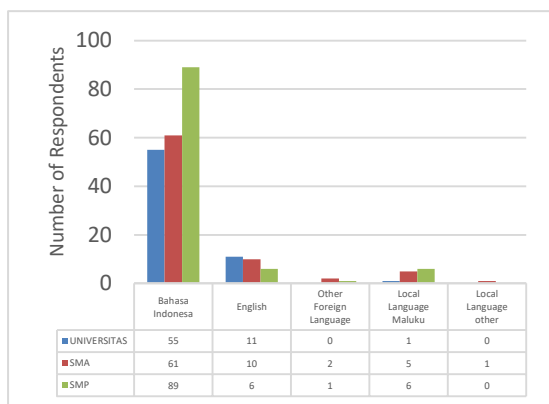


Chart 3. Language of Reading per education Level (numbers shown are answers out of 248 respondents)

Students usually get their reading material from the internet (68.4%). This includes either downloading and reading directly online from novel or comic platforms,

blog, etc. Other practices that are commonly used are borrowing from friends and from the library. Junior High School students responded higher on these practices compared to the Senior High School and University students' respondents.

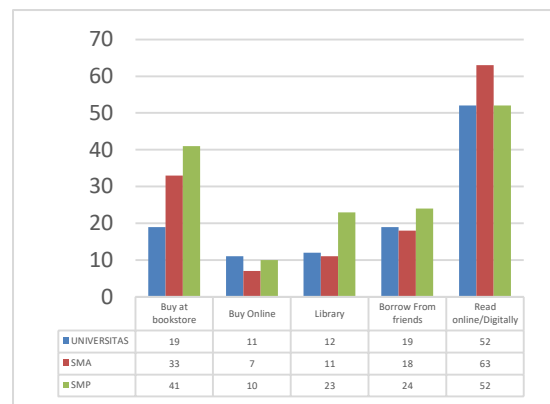


Chart 4. Where students get their reading material per education level (numbers shown are answers out of 248 respondents)

Availability and Access to Maluku Folklore

81,6% respondents said that they have read Maluku Folklore in their life. However, when asked how often do they read Maluku Folklore the answers tend to show that Maluku Folklore is not something students read often. The highest respondents answered Rarely (36.4%) Sometimes (34.4%), Never (16%). Meanwhile, only 13.2% out of 248 respondents claimed that they usually and often read Maluku Folklore.

The survey provided an open-ended item which asked the respondents to mention the last time they read Maluku Folklore. The respondents' answers range sometime in the past few days and last week, from last year, or to the specific level at school. Some respondents admitted that they cannot remember when and that they believe they have

never read a Maluku Folklore. Respondents also added that the reason they even have the chance to read Maluku Folklore is because of a school assignment (134 out of 248 respondents) or when they are enrolling in a storytelling competition which uses Maluku Folklore (85 out of 248 respondents).

Table 4. Respondents recalling the last time they read Maluku Folklore

Respondents Answers	Number of Respondents
Back in Junior High School	34
Perhaps Few Days ago	33
It has been a while and I cannot remember the last time I read it.	32
I think I have never read it	32
1 year ago	26
Few months ago	20
Back in senior High School	19
> 3 years ago	18
Back in Elementary School	16
When I was a child	10
2 years ago	8
	248

The availability of Maluku Folklore has varied responses. Respondents stated that Maluku Folklores in the form of printed book are seldom readily available or seen in the local bookstore. 73.6% respondents in this survey admitted that they have never buy or being bought Maluku Folklore book either from the bookstore or from online shop. On the previous survey items, respondents admit that there were Maluku Folklore books in the library. Meanwhile, Maluku Folklore can be found online when they really search for it.

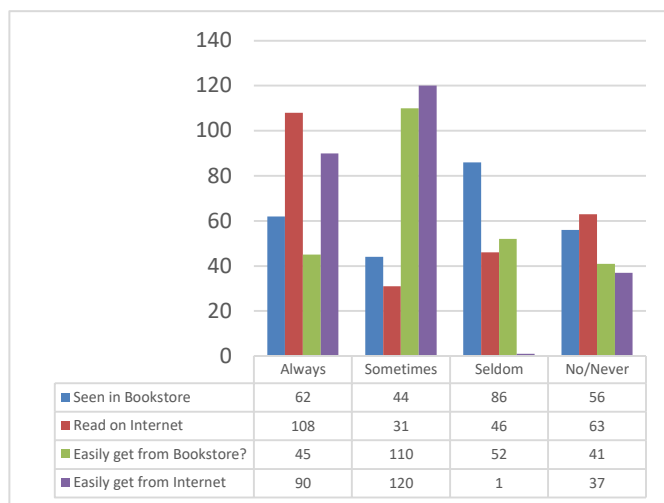
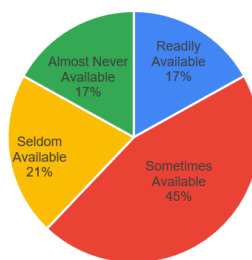


Chart 5. Availability and Accessibility of Maluku Folklore in print and online (numbers shown are answers out of 248 respondents)

Students’ perception on the availability and accessibility of Maluku Folklore

Respondents believe that Maluku Folklore books are not easily to be found and readily available in the local bookstore. On the other hand, the respondents felt that Maluku Folklore is easily accessed and available on the internet when they search for it.

Local Bookstore



Internet



Chart 6. Comparing the Availability and Accessibility of Maluku Folklore at Local Bookstore and on Internet

Students believed that Maluku Folklore is not as popular or available compared to

folklore from other part of Indonesia. They noted Java, Sumatra and Kalimantan as the most popular and known folklores. When asked to mention specifically the Folklore they remember, not all respondents gave their answer. 35 out of 248 respondents mentioned *Malin Kundang*, followed by *Sangkuriang* (18 respondents), *Gunung Tangkuban Perahu* (15 respondents), *Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih* (14 respondents), *Timun Mas* (14 respondents). Other mentioned *Dewi Sri* (5 respondents), *Danau Toba* (5 respondents), *Roro Jongrang* (4 respondents). A total of 22 out of 248 respondents mentioned Maluku Folklore. These respondents only mentioned 3 Maluku Folklores: *Batu Badaong* (10 respondents), *Tanjung Martafons* (8 respondents), and *Nene Luhu* (4 respondents).

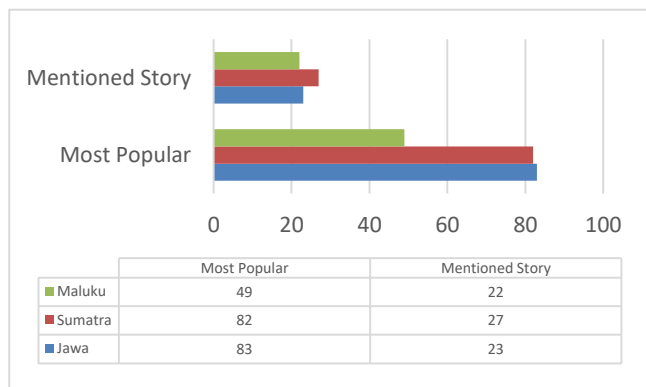


Chart 7. Students perception on the Popularity of Indonesian Folklore and the ability to mention Folklore they remember online (numbers shown are answers out of 248 respondents).

One of the respondents wrote, “*I can only remember reading folklore from Java. When I was at elementary school, I remember that all the books were about folklore from Java, from how a city is formed and the story about the kingdom in Java*” (Respondent 60, translated)

Lastly, the respondents were asked their preference for the Maluku folklore to be available and to access. Majority of the respondents prefer the Maluku Folklore to be available on YouTube (174 respondents - 70.2%) and on online platforms (134 respondents - 54%). Respondents least preferred the Maluku Folklore to be available on E-Book (57 respondents - 23%) and in printed book or reading material (45 respondents - 18.1%).

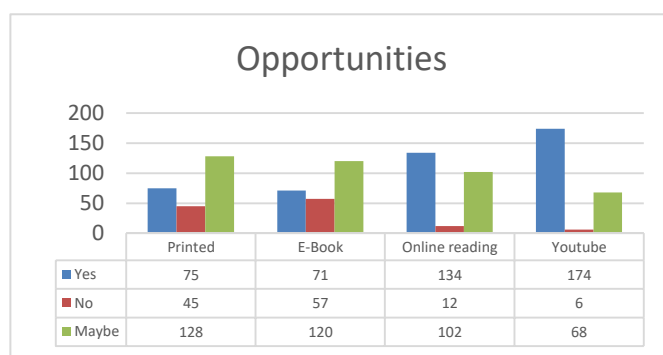


Chart 8. Identified opportunities based on respondents preferred reading platform and format.

IV. DISCUSSIONS

Culture preservation, specifically the preservation of Maluku folklore is currently facing a great challenge with the ‘invasion’ of internet, technology and gadgets. Not only that, the challenge is also more inherent because these generation of young people in Ambon (Maluku) do not have reading habit and culture. **Poedjiastuti (2018)** emphasized that the habit of reading is shaped by socio-cultural aspects and not only on the cognitive ability of the reader. Many have mentioned that Maluku people has an oral tradition where stories and culture are passed down by means of speech and stories instead of written ones. This is proven by the lack of written historical artefact

from Maluku. Socio-cultural aspects also refer to the nurtured environment for reading to grow for example, whether the child grow up in a household where reading and reading habit are prevalent by the role model of the parents (Yusof, 2010). This research also surveyed the recent habit and reading culture of the current young people. It does confirm that there was a lack of reading culture that was nurtured from childhood. It is rare to find parents who reads to the children either of a scheduled times of the day or for bedtime stories. Academic research and popular literature have shown that these parent-child reading time do play a role in nurturing reading culture by introducing the love of books, storytelling, and planting the seed for a healthy mindset and habit towards books and reading habit (Nathanson, Pruslow, & Levitt, 2008).

On the other hand, the practice of telling a story can still be found although not many anymore. Several respondents admitted that instead of 'reading', the stories were told to them. Respondents 135 said, "(I) have never read the story. I listen to the story (as it was being told to me)." (translated). This is affirmed by respondent 136 who said, "I have never actually read. I only hear the stories my grandparent told me." (translated). Parents are finding less time to chat or bond with the children over Local folklore due to their time of work and the interference of technology and gadget use in the household.

Another challenge for Maluku Folklore preservation is the lack of Maluku culture representation in standardized textbook they used at school. A previous study was conducted by Yuliani (2020) on Riau Folklore showed that although Riau's Folklore was present in school textbook but students were also unaware of many local folklore. The survey showed that

Maluku Folklore are not as popular compared to Java and Sumatra's Folklore. Respondents can mention numerous stories from those areas as compared to Maluku Folklore. Respondent 137 ironically wrote, "I wish I can say that we read about Maluku in school. But in reality, we only read about Java and Sumatra." (Translated). The underrepresentation of culture in textbook may lend to the lost of identity and appreciation towards one's culture.

Nevertheless, there are some avenues where young people gain access to Maluku Folklore. It was previously mentioned that instead of reading, they were being told the story. The survey also found that YouTube, Story Telling Competition, and School Assignments are what makes young people read or gain exposure to Maluku Folklore. Respondents 241 mentioned, "To be honest, I didn't 'read'... I watch the (animated) folklore story on YouTube. This was done last year to complete a class project" (translated). These practices need to be maintained, improved and incorporated to facilitate the young people to access and appreciate Maluku Folklore.

This research also shone some light on opportunities for the preservation and appreciation of Maluku Folklore. It is true that reading habit and culture is lacking and Maluku Culture is underrepresented in standardized textbook or Indonesian folklore literature. However, the young people are currently more literate and have develop different preference on the platform of reading they prefer (Kurniasih, 2016). This survey affirms that even the young people in Ambon have preferred the online and digital reading platform such as online reading on blogs and social media or on online apps such Webtoon, Wattpad, Dreame etc. These are opportunities that need to be considered by those who pursue

the preservation of the Maluku Folklore. Aside from the printed books, we need to also consider publishing the many Maluku folklores through these platforms.

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Therefore, this research was conducted to understand the challenges and opportunities for the preservation of Maluku Folklores. This research has identified that there are challenges such as Ambonese young people have lower reading motivation and lack the culture of reading, the underrepresentation of Maluku folklore in standardized school textbook and national literature, and lack of popularity and awareness of Maluku folklore. However, this research has also shown that there are opportunities that can be taken to remedy this situation. Another one of the challenges is that the young people do not feel that the folklore is readily available and accessible. Therefore, we need to work hand in hand to produce good quality publication of Maluku folklore for different level of readers. Apart from the printed publication, we can tap on the young people reading preferences on online and digital platforms, YouTube, and podcast to reach more readers and to ensure exposure. Beside that, we need to appreciate those who diligently held storytelling competition and the teachers who gave assignments for students on Maluku folklore. These activities not only allow them to compete and learn but also among the few opportunities they get to access and appreciate the Folklore with the values and message in it. When we continue to this, we will be able to preserve Maluku culture through Folklores. We will be able to help the young people of tomorrow to learn their identity,

embody the values and stand proud of who they are as they contribute to the world.

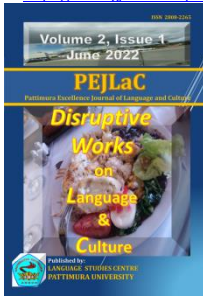

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