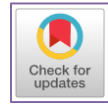


## Exploring multicultural narratives in 1000 library grant book: A focus on West Java context



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**Abstract:** Indonesia, as a multicultural country with a wide diversity of cultures, religions, and ethnicities, emphasizes the importance of promoting inclusivity and preserving local identity through education. This study aims to evaluate the suitability of multicultural themes and representations of West Javanese cultural contexts in 1,000 books donated by the National Library to 10,000 community reading parks in 2024. This study is a qualitative descriptive study using the content analysis method. The population in this study was books obtained from Librarians at the National Library, while the sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique, which came from 1000 books with a multicultural context and representation of the West Java cultural context. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis techniques were carried out using content analysis. The results showed that 35.19% of the books evaluated discussed multicultural themes. This theme was more common at the intermediate and advanced reader levels (B3 and C) than at the beginner level (A). Books specifically themed around West Java only represented 4.81% of the collection, highlighting the limitations of local cultural narratives. This study concludes that there is great potential to strengthen regional identity, foster pride in cultural heritage, and provide insight into traditional values through the provision of books on cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** Children Book; Multicultural; Literacy; West Java

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has immense diversity, encompassing religion, race, culture, and ethnicity. This diversity also includes its abundant natural resources and large population (Djumala, 2017; Tilaar, 2014). With its diverse population and background, Indonesia is known as the largest multicultural country in the world. This diversity is widely accepted as a reality, with Indonesia comprising various ethnic groups, tribes, religions, and cultures. The country consists of over 13,000 large and small islands inhabited by approximately 250 million people from over 300 ethnic groups who speak more than 200 languages. Additionally, Indonesians adhere to six officially recognized religions, Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, alongside numerous traditional beliefs (Nurcahyono, 2018).

Diversity makes Indonesia a multicultural nation, reflected in its motto, "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*," which means "Unity in Diversity." As a country rich in culture, religion, and ethnic groups, understanding the values of multicultural education is crucial. These

values include unity, democracy, tolerance, respect for culture, care, cooperation, and equality. All these values are essential for building a harmonious, safe, and peaceful society (Durriyah & Dewayani, 2024; Yangsen & Sukarismanti, 2023).

Multiculturalism reflects the dynamic interaction between various cultures within the life of a nation and state. With its diversity of races, cultures, religions, lifestyles, and languages, Indonesia has long been a model of a multicultural nation. This diversity is a wealth to be embraced and preserved and an essential tool for uniting the nation. Unfortunately, challenges arise when diversity is exploited to create division. Therefore, promoting multiculturalism that supports pluralism, harmony, and national unity becomes highly relevant (Aritonang, 2017; Puspita, 2013; Sirry et al., 2024). In education, fostering mutual respect and acceptance among students plays a crucial role in creating a peaceful and harmonious multicultural society (Huda et al., 2023). Character education in Indonesia has significantly advanced during President Jokowi's administration, mainly through Regulation No. 23/2015 issued by Anies Baswedan. This regulation emphasizes moral, spiritual, national, and diverse values and the roles of parents and communities, with activities tailored to local wisdom. This approach supports multiculturalism, as character education teaches students to understand, respect, and embrace cultural, religious, and identity diversity, fostering harmony in a diverse society (Lyesmaya et al., 2020).

In education, particularly in schools, multicultural picture books play a crucial role in supporting the learning of cultural diversity. These books allow children to explore various cultures, develop social skills, and understand different cultural groups. The unique characteristics of picture books can motivate children and provide opportunities to grasp the concept of multiculturalism. Through active engagement with books that address cultural issues, children are prepared for success in multicultural education and harmonious social life (Sugiarti et al., 2024; Ya-Huei, 2014). The family, especially parents, is the first-place children learn through observation, consciously or unconsciously. Therefore, family literacy should serve as the initial step in a child's education strategy designed by parents. However, schools also play an essential role as a supportive environment in the learning and development process of children (Fauziyyah et al., 2020).

Literacy is related to students' reading ability. Reading ability consists of three levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. The beginner level is usually characterized by identifying letter symbols that are combined into syllables, words, and sentences (Masitoh et al., 2023). Students can read several types of reading in various contexts, recognize words and sentences, find main ideas and keywords, and retell the contents of short readings (Astuti et al., 2021). Intermediate reading skills are usually mastered by high school students (Mondolalo & Muda, 2022). Meanwhile, advanced reading skills are characterized by the accuracy of understanding the contents of the reading and reading speed. Examples of its implementation include reading speech scripts, reading longer and more complex reading materials, applying advanced reading techniques such as reading fluently, reading with a glance, reading skips, reading selectively, reading informative discourses from the internet, and enjoying literary works (Azzahra et al., 2023).

Students' reading skills will be further honed through the existence of the library. The facilities in the library can facilitate everyone to explore the vast world in a book (Leguina et al., 2021). However, in reality, the existence of public libraries in Indonesia when compared to other developing countries is still disappointing (Indra & Nurwati,

2017; Puspitasari, 2016). Library services are not optimal, lack of library facilities such as: computers, limited chairs, incomplete books, and manual circulation service activities by recording visitor lists, borrowing, extending, and returning library materials (Solihin, 2022). This situation is compounded by the government's decision to prioritize the political and economic sectors compared to library development (Bondar, 2019).

In addition to the lack of attention from the government, there are several other factors such as lack of funds and experts. Meanwhile, there is an assumption that low reading habits are some examples of the slow development of libraries in Indonesia. The reading culture is still low, because books are considered a secondary need (Hidayati, 2019). The public in general is not used to having a special budget to buy books, journals, or periodicals, especially the lower middle class (Rahman, 2013).

Therefore in 2024, the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia launched a program to donate 1,000 books to 10,000 community reading centers and village libraries. This program aims to boost reading interest among the public and address the shortage of book collections in various regions. Additionally, this initiative is expected to encourage greater library utilization by providing books that align with readers' interests and needs, thereby transforming libraries into more active and inclusive literacy hubs (Nurhidayat, 2024; Version & Polri, 2024).

About the donation of 1,000 books, this study aims to examine whether the donated books address multicultural issues, particularly those related to local wisdom from various regions, including West Java. As we know, West Java is one of the provinces that plays a significant role in Indonesia's history, social dynamics, culture, and politics. With the largest population in the country, social and political changes in West Java considerably impact national development (Dehayy et al., 2024). On the other hand, West Java is a region rich in cultural and traditional diversity, encompassing arts, indigenous community life, and a variety of languages and beliefs. The arts of West Java, in particular, possess unique characteristics that often inspire traditional dance and music artists to create new works (Sabandiah, 2022). Books that address multicultural issues can serve as a medium to enhance cross-cultural understanding and strengthen social harmony in a diverse society.

Providing multicultural-themed books relevant to West Java supports literacy and allows communities to recognize and appreciate the richness of their local culture. This initiative is crucial for building a strong local identity while fostering tolerance and respect for diversity within a pluralistic society.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach. A descriptive qualitative approach is a research approach that aims to describe or explain certain social phenomena or events based on the perspective or experience of individuals or groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The population in this study were books obtained from Librarians at the National Library, while the sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique derived from 1000 books with a multicultural context and representation of the West Java cultural context. Books from the library were collected along with relevant information such as title, author, synopsis, and genre. This data became the basis for the subsequent classification process, which organized books based on the BSKAP (Educational Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency) categorization system.

Data were collected from observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to observe the process of identifying and classifying books that discuss multi-

cultural themes (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). The data collection tool used was an observation sheet. Interviews were used to confirm the findings seen in the study. Mainly about books with multicultural themes. The instrument used is an interview guideline. Meanwhile, documentation is used to identify the collected books. The instrument used is a documentation sheet.

The data analysis technique is carried out by content analysis (Baş & Şentürk, 2020). Each book is reviewed in depth to identify elements related to the multicultural theme and the representation of West Javanese culture. The analysis includes reading the text to extract keywords, concepts, and contexts related to multiculturalism and the depiction of West Javanese cultural heritage. The aim is to better understand how these themes are presented and discussed in the books. Further categorization follows the content analysis to distinguish books that are relevant to the research theme. Books that describe cultural influences, multicultural interactions, or relationships with West Java are grouped based on characteristics such as cultural impacts, identities, and social conflicts depicted in the narrative.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Evaluation of Children's Reading Book Collection

Results Providing books that align with students' psychological development and reading abilities is crucial to enhancing school literacy. Two types of books play a significant role in achieving this goal: decodable and levelled books. Decodable books are specifically designed for early or beginner readers, featuring simple text, short sentences, and clear illustrations that are easy to understand. Their lightweight and engaging nature helps children gradually recognize words and letter sounds, laying the foundation for their reading skills. Levelled books, on the other hand, are structured with progressively complex text. The language starts from the simplest forms and gradually advances to more complex structures based on the student's reading level. The illustrations in levelled books also evolve, becoming more detailed to complement the increasingly rich text. This progression encourages readers to continuously improve their reading skills, transitioning from the early stages to advanced proficiency (Amanda et al., 2023).



Figure 1. Levelled Books B2 and B3

To ensure the effectiveness of these books, schools are expected to manage their collections under SK No. 030/P/2022 on the Guidelines for Book Leveling. This leveling process aims to match books with readers' reading abilities through a systematic approach. Based on the classification of 1,000 books using the BSKAP leveling system, this study reveals the distribution of these books across three main categories: Leveling, Multicultural Themes, and West Java Context. Regarding leveling, the categorization adheres to the standards set by BSKAP, ensuring that the books are appropriately aligned with readers' varying levels of reading proficiency.

**Table 1.** Book Cataloguing based on the regulation of the head of the standards agency for education, curriculum, and assessment number 30 of 2022

Level	A	B1	B2	B3	C	D	E
Reader	Early				Intermediate		Advanced
Font	Sans-serif font with a minimum size of 24 points.	ns-serif font with a minimum size of 20 points.	Sans-serif font with a minimum size of 18 points.	ns-serif font with a minimum size of 16 points.			
Word	Maks. 5 words	7 words	9 words	Max. 12 words	Up to 12 words per sentence and four paragraphs per page.	These books are available in standard sizes (A4, A5, A6, B5) with adaptations to other sizes suitable for Level D readers	The choice of words used is complex, including loanwords, with content exceeding 600 words
Sentence	3 sentences	5 sentences	7 sentences	3 paragraphs per page, each paragraph containing up to 3 sentences	Five sentences per paragraph		
Page	8-24 page	16-32 page	24-48 page	32-48 pages			

This study evaluates children's reading book collections using cataloging rules based on the Regulation of the Head of the Standards Agency for Education, Curriculum, and Assessment (BSKAP) Number 30 of 2022. This regulation also serves as an implementation of Law Number 3 of 2017 concerning the National Book System. This book leveling aims to classify books according to their difficulty level and their themes. From the evaluation of 1,000 donated reading books from the National Library (Perpusnas), the findings can be categorized as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Book grant from the National Library using the BSKAP level

Categori	A	%	B1	%	B2	%	B3	%	C	%
Level	29	10.74%	80	29.63%	64	23.70%	60	22%	37	13.70%
Multicultural	4	1.48%	21	7.78%	15	5.56%	31	11%	24	8.89%
West Java	0	0.00%	4	1.48%	3	1.11%	4	1.48%	2	0.74%



The evaluation results highlight the distribution of books based on reader-level categories: A, B1, B2, B3, and C. In level A, representing the lowest difficulty, 29 books were identified, comprising approximately 10.74% of the evaluated collection. Level B1, slightly more challenging, includes 80 books or about 29.63%. For level B2, categorized as intermediate, 64 books, or 23.70%, were found. Level B3, with more incredible difficulty, comprises 60 books, or approximately 22%. Finally, level C, indicating the most complex books, includes 37 books or 13.70%. The evaluation also examined the themes within the collection, focusing on multicultural and West Java (Jabar) themes. Regarding multicultural themes, four books (1.48%) were identified in Level A, 21 books (7.78%) in Level B1, and 15 books (5.56%) in Level B2. At level B3, the number of books with multicultural themes increased to 31 (11%), while level C includes 24 books (8.89%) addressing similar themes.

As for West Java themes, no books were found in level A. However, level B1 includes four books (1.48%) on this theme, followed by three books (1.11%) in level B2. Level B3 has four books (1.48%) discussing West Java, while level C includes two books (0.74%) on the same theme. The findings provide a clear picture of the distribution of books based on difficulty levels and themes. The results indicate that the collection is reasonably diverse, with many books addressing multicultural themes, though West Java themes are less represented. Furthermore, this study reveals efforts to meet the needs of young readers across various skill levels, offering a variety of themes to enrich their reading experience. The evaluation provides valuable insights for managing library collections to better align with young readers' difficulty levels and interests.

**Table 3.** Comparison of book numbers

Description	Total	%
Level (1)	270	100%
Multicultural (2)	95	35.19%
Jabar (3)	13	4.81%

The Category Level includes books grouped based on the difficulty level and depth of material presented, aligned with the leveling system from BSKAP. Of the 1,000 donated books from the National Library (Perpusnas), only 270 follow the BSKAP leveling system. The remaining books are either ungraded or use a different leveling system. For this reason, this study focuses on books leveled according to BSKAP to ensure compliance with the government's book-leveling regulations. In addition to the Level category, the Multicultural category is an essential aspect of this book collection. 95 books, or approximately 35.19% of the analyzed collection, are classified under this category. This figure indicates that nearly one-third of the analyzed books explore themes of multiculturalism. These books address various aspects of culture, ethnicity, religion, and social diversity in society, aiming to introduce and educate readers about the importance of understanding and tolerance toward differences.

The multicultural theme is highly relevant to Indonesia's social context, which is rich in cultural diversity. Its presence in this collection demonstrates that social diversity issues receive significant attention when selecting children's reading materials. (Abdurahman et al., 2018; Djumala, 2017). Although the proportion of books with multicultural themes is not as large as the Level category, it still indicates significant attention to strengthening the values of diversity through children's literacy. On the other hand, books related to the West Java (Jabar) theme account for only 13 books, or approximately 4.81% of the total analyzed collection. This figure indicates that while

some books highlight themes or cultural contexts of West Java, their proportion is significantly smaller compared to the Level and Multicultural categories.

The West Java theme includes books discussing the region's culture, history, and community life. However, despite an interest in introducing local cultures such as West Java in this collection, the theme remains relatively limited and less represented than other themes, like multiculturalism. This may reflect limitations in the donated book collection or indicate that regional cultural themes like West Java are not yet widely disseminated in children's literacy despite the importance of introducing local cultural values to the younger generation.

While this book collection focuses on diverse difficulty levels within the Level category, the proportion of books with multicultural themes also reflects significant thematic diversity. However, the relatively small number of books on the West Java theme indicates that more general or national themes dominate the collection. This highlights how the collection reflects the needs and trends in children's literacy education while emphasizing the importance of expanding local themes. Incorporating more regional content can enrich children's knowledge and foster their appreciation and love for their local culture.

If we look at the result, we can discuss from the evaluation of the donated book collection that the distribution of books based on reader levels is diverse. Books with the lowest level of difficulty, categorized as Level A, account for only 29 titles, or approximately 10.74% of the total analyzed collection. Meanwhile, Level B1, which offers a slightly higher difficulty, dominates with 80 titles, or about 29.63%. This is followed by Level B2, at an intermediate level, with 64 titles, or 23.70%. For Level B3, which has a higher difficulty level, there are 60 books or 22%. Lastly, Level C, representing the most complex level, comprises only 37 books, or about 13.70%.

This distribution indicates that the book collection primarily focuses on readers with basic to intermediate literacy skills, as reflected in the dominance of books at Levels B1 and B2. This suggests an effort to address the needs of readers developing their reading skills. However, the low proportion of books at Level A raises concerns, as books in this category are essential for beginner readers, such as young children. Similarly, the limited number of books at Level C may restrict options for advanced readers who require more challenging materials.

Using leveling standards from the Standards Agency for Education, Curriculum, and Assessment (BSKAP) in book categorization is also crucial. Out of the 1,000 donated books, only 270 adhere to the BSKAP leveling system. The remainder consists of books without leveling or those using a different system. This highlights the need for greater attention to ensure that book collections in community libraries or reading centres align with nationally established standards, enabling them to meet readers' needs at various levels optimally.

### **Impact of Distribution of Children's Reading Book Collections on Literacy Programs**

In managing collections, it is vital to examine the impact of this distribution on literacy programs. Though limited in number, books at Level A play a critical role in introducing literacy to young children. Meanwhile, books at Level C, despite their scarcity, have the potential to support advanced readers in further developing their literacy skills. Therefore, efforts are needed to balance the distribution of collections by increasing the number of books in underrepresented levels and adapting ungraded books to meet BSKAP standards.

The diversity in book difficulty levels also has implications for developing literacy programs in community libraries or reading centres. Literacy facilitators, for instance, can utilize these books to design reading activities tailored to participants' abilities. Additionally, this collection can be used to promote inclusive learning, ensuring that every child, regardless of their skill level, can find books that suit their needs and interests.

As a follow-up, it is crucial to evaluate ungraded books further. Adapting or reclassifying these books could be a solution to enhance the accessibility and relevance of the collection. Collaboration with publishers, government agencies, or educational institutions can also help enrich the collection with books that align with the required levels. With these steps, the donated book collection can become more than just a reading resource, it can effectively support national literacy efforts. This aligns with the vision of fostering inclusive education and ensuring every child can grow with books that meet their needs.

Evaluating the donated book collection offers an intriguing insight into the focus on multicultural themes. Of the total 1,000 books received, and after classification using BSKAP leveling standards, 270 books were identified, with 95 of them, approximately 35.19%, featuring multicultural themes. These books explore various aspects of diversity, including culture, ethnicity, religion, and social dynamics, playing a crucial role in introducing the values of inclusivity to children. Multicultural-themed books are particularly relevant in Indonesia's socio-cultural context, which is rich in diversity, reflecting a significant effort to promote tolerance and appreciation for differences through literacy.

The distribution of multicultural books based on reader levels is also noteworthy. For beginner readers (Category A), only four books (1.48%) address this theme. The number increases gradually at Level B1 with 21 books (7.78%) and Level B2 with 15 books (5.56%). A significant increase is observed at Level B3 with 31 books (11%), while Category C contains 24 books (8.89%). These data show that multicultural themes are more prevalent in books for intermediate to advanced readers, whereas the collection for beginner readers remains very limited.

The scarcity of multicultural-themed books for beginners warrants attention, considering that early childhood is a critical period for instilling values of tolerance (Kartini & Akip, 2024; Mardianti et al., 2023; Rusmiati, 2023). Books with engaging visuals and simple narratives could be an effective solution for introducing concepts of diversity to children at this stage. Additionally, focusing on local cultural diversity, particularly the context of West Java's culture, could be a strategic step to build awareness of local cultural richness while connecting it to national values.

The utilization of multicultural-themed books in literacy activities also holds great potential. For instance, these books can be used in read-aloud activities for children, where inclusivity and diversity can be conveyed interactively (Karina et al., 2022; Masliyah & Kurniawaty, 2023). In addition, multicultural themes can serve as inspiring discussion material with community leaders or motivators, allowing children to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of appreciating differences (Soekmono, 2017).

Further analysis of readers' needs is essential to ensure this book collection becomes even more beneficial, particularly for levels lacking multicultural-themed books. On the other hand, through literacy, children can be guided to understand that diversity is an integral part of life that must be accepted and appreciated. This understanding will



help them grow into individuals prepared to navigate an increasingly global and multicultural world (Sutarto, 2016).

Only 13 books, or approximately 4.81% of the 270 analyzed books, were identified in evaluating books with the West Java theme. This number is significantly smaller than the multicultural theme, which dominates the collection. No West Java-themed books were found in Level A, while Levels B1 and B3 each include four books (1.48%), Level B2 contains three books (1.11%), and Level C has only two books (0.74%). The limited representation of West Java-themed content in children's reading materials requires attention, as introducing local culture to the younger generation contributes to strengthening regional identity and pride in cultural heritage. In line with research findings on culturally literate critical reading textbooks, the use of West Java-localized materials can enhance students' sensitivity to the noble values of religion, customs, and culture. This not only facilitates the internalization of these values in students' lives but also strengthens their understanding of cultural diversity in a more locally relevant context. Thus, locally themed books have the potential to serve as strategic tools for fostering cultural understanding while instilling regional pride (Adam, 2021; Damaianti et al., 2017; Indrawati & Sari, 2024).

Additionally, such themes also have the potential to foster a better understanding of cultural diversity within a narrower but highly relevant context, namely at the regional level. Enhancing the representation of West Java cultural themes in children's book collections is essential as a strategic step. This can be achieved by collaborating with local publishers specializing in regionally themed books. Additionally, partnerships with West Javanese artists, writers, and cultural figures can provide innovative solutions for creating engaging and relevant books.

Folk tales, legends, or traditional practices from West Java could be adapted into modern and interactive stories, incorporating captivating illustrations or even educational game elements to increase children's interest. Although the representation of West Java themes in the current collection is limited, there is significant potential to develop children's literacy based on local culture. The approach is vital for strengthening the cultural identity of the younger generation while ensuring that the values of local wisdom remain alive and relevant in the face of modernization.

## **CONCLUSION**

The evaluation of the donated book collection revealed several key findings regarding the distribution of reader levels and themes. The dominance of books in levels B1 and B2 highlights a focus on readers with basic to intermediate literacy skills. In contrast, the relatively low number of books in levels A and C warrants attention. Books in level A, though limited, play a crucial role in introducing literacy to young children. On the other hand, books in level C have significant potential to support advanced readers in further developing their literacy skills. Of the 1,000 donated books of the 270 evaluated books. However, these themes are predominantly found in books for intermediate and advanced readers (levels B3 and C), while beginner-level books (level A) have very few. This is concerning, as early childhood is critical for instilling tolerance and appreciation for diversity. Thus, efforts are needed to increase multicultural books for beginner readers. The evaluation also highlighted the limited representation of West Java-themed books, with only 13 titles (4.81% of the collection). These books have immense potential to strengthen regional identity, foster pride in cultural heritage, and provide insights into traditional values. The minimal representation underscores the

need to enhance this category through collaborations with local publishers, authors, and cultural figures. Stories based on folklore, legends, or traditions can be modernized to engage children while preserving cultural values.

Based on these findings, there are several opportunities for further research to strengthen national literacy efforts. A priority is to explore the reading needs of levels A and C, focusing on preferences for beginner and advanced readers. Strategic research is also needed to develop multicultural-themed books for beginners, using engaging visuals and simple narratives to introduce cultural diversity to young children. Additionally, enhancing the representation of West Java culture requires partnerships with local creators to produce relevant and attractive content for children. This collection's diversity in themes and levels offers significant opportunities to support inclusive literacy programs, where every child can find books suited to their needs and interests. Strategic steps, such as increasing books in underrepresented levels and themes and adapting ungraded books to meet BSKAP standards, can make the collection more effective for promoting national literacy, introducing values of inclusivity, and preserving local culture. These efforts align with fostering a generation ready to navigate a globalized world while staying rooted in local cultural heritage.

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