

Applying Knowledge Management in the Empowerment of Volunteers at Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka Purbalingga: A SECI Model Approach

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Abstract

Background: Community-based libraries rely heavily on volunteers to sustain their programs and services. However, volunteer empowerment and organizational sustainability can be limited without structured knowledge sharing and management. *Limbah Pustaka* Library, a community library in Indonesia, has implemented various initiatives to optimize the contribution of its volunteers.

Objective. This study explored the importance of knowledge management in empowering volunteers at Limbah Pustaka Library, Purbalingga. The research is motivated by the limited human resources in village libraries and the need for knowledge management strategies to enable volunteers to contribute sustainably to library services and community development.

Research Methods. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed. Data were collected through interviews with volunteers and library staff, participant observation of library activities, and review of relevant documents. The data analysis followed a sequential data condensation, presentation, and concluding process.

Data Analysis. In addition to descriptive analysis, data were analyzed thematically to identify evidence of each SECI stage and assess its impact on volunteer empowerment. The study focused on knowledge sharing and creation patterns corresponding to the SECI processes.

Result. The results indicate that all four SECI stages manifested in the volunteer program. Socialization occurred through group discussions and collaborative activities among volunteers; externalization was achieved by documenting volunteers' tacit knowledge into guides and procedures; combination involved integrating various explicit information into shared resources; and internalization took place through training and hands-on practice. Implementing the SECI model enhanced knowledge sharing and volunteer collaboration, improving service innovation and community engagement.

Conclusion. In conclusion, SECI-based knowledge management effectively empowered the *Library Waste* volunteers, as evidenced by increased collaboration and innovative service delivery. These findings support using structured knowledge management strategies in community library programs.

Keywords: Knowledge management; SECI model; library volunteers; community libraries

INTRODUCTION

Community-based libraries have long been recognized as vital institutions for promoting literacy, lifelong learning, and community empowerment, especially in rural contexts. Unlike urban public libraries, village libraries in Indonesia often operate with limited financial and human resources. This condition has led to an increasing reliance on volunteers,

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who provide technical support and play a critical role in sustaining library programs and outreach activities.

Despite their importance, volunteer-based libraries face structural challenges. Many lack systematic strategies to ensure that volunteers' contributions are sustainable and that their knowledge and skills are effectively transferred. Prior studies on village libraries in Indonesia have primarily focused on their role in literacy promotion (Rahayu, 2022) and social inclusion programs (Diana et al., 2021), but relatively little attention has been given to the mechanisms through which knowledge is shared, documented, and transformed into organizational capacity. This gap is particularly critical given that knowledge loss due to volunteer turnover is a recurring problem in community-based institutions.

This study examines the case of Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka in Purbalingga, Central Java, a village library that integrates environmental sustainability with literacy initiatives. By employing the SECI model, this research investigates how knowledge management practices contribute to the empowerment of volunteers, thereby ensuring both the sustainability of library services and the advancement of community development. Specifically, this study aims to fill the gap in existing scholarship by demonstrating how structured KM strategies can address human resource limitations in village libraries while enhancing volunteer capacity and innovation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of libraries in community empowerment has been widely acknowledged. Village libraries, in particular, are expected to serve as literacy centers and as agents of social and economic development in rural communities (Asnawi, 2015). Prior research has shown that through social inclusion approaches, libraries can improve local livelihoods by organizing training in entrepreneurship, agriculture, or creative industries (Ayub et al., 2023). These studies affirm that village libraries have the potential to become drivers of social change.

However, sustaining such initiatives depends heavily on human resources. Many village libraries struggle with staff shortages and rely on volunteers as a primary workforce (Rahayu, 2022). While volunteers bring energy and commitment, their contributions are often fragmented and vulnerable to discontinuity, especially when there is no structured mechanism to retain and transfer their knowledge. This challenge highlights the need for systematic strategies to empower volunteers, ensuring their experiences and expertise are institutionalized for long-term sustainability.

In this regard, knowledge management (KM) provides a valuable framework. KM emphasizes structured processes of capturing, sharing, and applying knowledge to improve organizational effectiveness (Tung, 2018). Empirical studies in library and non-profit contexts have demonstrated that KM can enhance service innovation, strengthen collaboration, and improve decision-making (Wulandari & Nurisani, 2020). Recent international studies have further enriched this perspective. For example, (Neema Florence Vincent Mosha & Patrick Ngulube, 2023) demonstrated that the Web 2.0-driven SECI model enhanced knowledge

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creation and sharing in Tanzanian academic libraries by leveraging blogs, social media, and other digital tools. Their findings highlight the role of technology in strengthening externalization and combination processes, which is also relevant for community-based libraries experimenting with digital platforms. Similarly, (Quang Ngoc Le & Kulthida Tuamsuk, 2023) proposed a KM model for non-profit organizations in Thailand, identifying leadership, trust, organizational culture, and technological infrastructure as critical enablers of effective SECI implementation. Their study underscores that KM practices are not purely technical but deeply social, relying on shared values and supportive leadership to succeed.

Among the various KM frameworks, the SECI model proposed by Nonaka and Takeuchi has gained prominence for explaining knowledge conversion processes. The model outlines four modes: socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization, describing how tacit and explicit knowledge interact to create new knowledge (Adesina & Ocholla, 2019). International scholarship has shown that the SECI model is effective in diverse sectors, including education, healthcare, and non-profit organizations, because it captures informal and formal knowledge exchange (Böhm & Durst, 2025). However, few studies have applied the SECI model to grassroots library initiatives in rural contexts.

Based on this review, two research gaps emerge. First, while prior studies confirm the empowering role of village libraries, there is limited discussion on how systematic KM frameworks can be embedded in volunteer-driven settings. Second, the application of the SECI model in community-based libraries remains underexplored, especially concerning volunteer empowerment and sustainability. Addressing these gaps, this study investigates how knowledge management through the SECI framework is implemented in *Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka*, a community library in Indonesia that integrates literacy promotion with environmental sustainability.

METHODS

This research adopted a qualitative descriptive approach suitable for exploring complex social phenomena in natural contexts. The choice of method was based on the study's aim to understand how knowledge management is applied to empower volunteers at *Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka*. Qualitative research allows researchers to explore the experience of research subjects contextually and holistically (Creswell, 2015).

The study employed purposive sampling to ensure that participants possessed relevant knowledge and experience. A total of five informants were selected, consisting of: (1) The head of *Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka* (also the founder and manager), (2) Two core volunteers actively involved in both environmental and library activities, (3) One incidental volunteer (student) assisting with technical library tasks, (4) One PKK cadre from Muntang Village who regularly collaborates with the library. The inclusion criteria were: direct involvement in the daily operation of the library, active participation in knowledge-sharing activities, and willingness to reflect on their experiences.

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Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's framework, which includes data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing. This process was integrated with the SECI model as an analytical lens. For instance, interview excerpts describing informal mentoring were coded under "socialization," while documentation of craft-making procedures was categorized as "externalization." This dual coding approach allowed the researchers to systematically map empirical data onto the four SECI stages, ensuring theoretical alignment and analytical depth. Triangulation was applied across different data sources (interviews, observations, and documents) to enhance validity. Member checking was also conducted by sharing preliminary findings with participants for feedback and confirmation.

TABLE 1
List of Informants

No.	Informants	Position
1	RH	Head of Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka
2	PL	Incidental Volunteers of the Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka
3	ANR	Incidental Volunteers of the Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka
4	EA	Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka's Core Volunteers
5	RK	PKK Cadres of Muntang Village

FINDINGS

Getting to Know the Volunteers at the Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka

Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka is a village library in Muntang Village, Kemangkon District, Purbalingga Regency, Central Java. This library has 2 (two) focuses: the environment and education. In the environment, the Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka plays a role in managing waste that can be used for useful goods and crafts. This library also has a 3-wheeled vehicle that can transport books and garbage. Here are the results of the interview.

"Here we also have a multipurpose vehicle that can transport books and also transport garbage. The goal is to always maintain the environment, and also, we can reach places such as schools so that children want to read books, or the term picks up the ball" (Interview with RH as the head of the Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka, June 24, 2025).



Figure 1. Mobile Library by Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka

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As previously explained, in terms of institutional structure, Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka is assisted by volunteers in its activities. In total, 15 volunteers have different tasks. Here are the results of the interview:

"There are 15 volunteers here, 13 female and 2 male volunteers. Each volunteer has a different task (Interview with RH as the head of the Library of Waste, June 24, 2025)."

TABLE 2
Types of Volunteers

Types of Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka Volunteers	Duties and Responsibilities
Core Volunteers	• Garbage collection • Waste sorting • Processing waste into crafts • Library management • Library collection processing
Incidental Volunteers	• Library management • Library collection processing

Source: Primary Data processed, in 2025

The library classifies volunteers, namely core volunteers and incidental volunteers. The core volunteers consist of residents of the Muntang Village Community and some are cadres from the PKK (Family Empowerment and Welfare). Meanwhile, incidental volunteers are students who volunteer to assist in the operation of Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka. Here are the results of the interview;

"The volunteers here are mostly from residents here and also from PKK cadres. If the incidental is students who want to help here (Interview with RH as the head of the Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka, June 24, 2025)."

Incidental volunteering began with the involvement of students participating in the volunteer program at Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka. Students with various backgrounds were given training in the form of book input into Inlis Lite owned by the Library of Library Waste. Furthermore, the mechanism for recruiting volunteers is carried out procedurally. The following is an excerpt from the interview results;

"Recruitment of volunteers goes through a process first, starting with training or debriefing first so that they understand their duties and responsibilities as well as the necessary abilities" (Interview with RH as the head of the Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka, June 24, 2025)."

From the points above, it is known that volunteers at Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka are equipped with the skills to carry out their responsibilities as volunteers. As a library located in the village area, the willingness to continue to progress and develop continues to be pursued by the manager of Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka.

Application of SECI Model in Knowledge Management in Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka

The findings of this study show that knowledge management at *Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka* was successfully implemented through the four stages of the SECI model. Each stage contributed to strengthening volunteer capacity and sustaining the library's dual mission in literacy and environmental empowerment.

Socialization: Building Shared Understanding

Knowledge sharing occurred through coordination meetings, informal mentoring, and collective activities between the library manager and volunteers. This process facilitated the transfer of tacit knowledge, such as library management practices and environmental awareness, to new members.



Figure 1. Coordination Meeting with Core Volunteers

Similar to Saide and Mahendrawathi (2015), structured socialization improved interpersonal communication, created solidarity, and built volunteers' sense of belonging—key factors in sustaining community-based initiatives.

Externalization: Documenting Tacit Skills

Tacit knowledge related to craft-making from waste and systematic book processing was converted into explicit forms such as training guides and cataloging procedures. This stage ensured continuity and reduced dependency on individual expertise. Consistent with Nurcahyo and Sensuse (2019), externalization safeguarded local knowledge from being lost due to volunteer turnover, a common challenge in community-driven organizations.

Combination: Integrating and Disseminating Explicit Knowledge

The library disseminated explicit knowledge through multiple platforms, including its website, published anthologies, and the display of craft products. These practices integrated local experiences into accessible resources, expanding the reach of the library's innovations beyond the immediate community.

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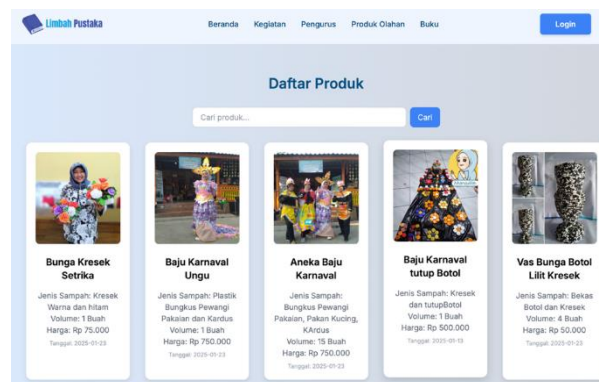


Figure 2. Library of Waste Library Website

This finding supports Adesina and Ocholla (2019), who highlight that the combination stage strengthens organizational visibility and knowledge dissemination across networks. So that in the end, in this case, there is no practice of knowledge hiding, which is a behavior of deliberately withholding or not sharing knowledge (Bidang, Fuller, 2025); all activities are carried out openly.

Internalization: Embedding Knowledge into Practice

Through training, mentoring, and experiential learning, volunteers absorbed explicit knowledge and transformed it into tacit competencies. Some volunteers even became trainers or resource persons in external forums, reflecting the embedding of knowledge into practice and leadership roles. This cycle resonates with Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) notion of continuous organizational learning, where individuals' tacit knowledge enriches the collective capacity of the organization.



Figure 3. Visit of School Student at Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka

The SECI model provided a systematic framework for sustaining volunteer empowerment at *Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka*. Each stage addressed immediate operational needs and reinforced long-term resilience by preventing knowledge loss, fostering innovation, and enhancing collaboration. Compared with previous studies that focus mainly on the literacy role of village libraries (Rahayu, 2022; Diana et al., 2021), this research highlights how knowledge management processes function as a mechanism of empowerment. The case

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illustrates that even in resource-limited settings, structured KM strategies can transform community libraries into sustainable agents of social change.

In the context of volunteer empowerment, this internalization cycle is represented by selecting several competent volunteers to be resource persons in several places. In addition, the resource persons were also selected from the PKK cadres of Muntang Village. Such a volunteer empowerment model has a positive side. Volunteers are not only burdened with technical things but also allowed to develop. Such a mechanism is then referred to as Internalization in the SECI Model. The flow of *explicit knowledge*, which is then sensed by the volunteers and becomes *Tacit Knowledge* as a manifestation of internalization. Even the tacit knowledge possessed by the volunteers was shared with others by being used as a resource person or speaker.

TABLE 3
Summary Of SECI Implementation at Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka

SECI Stage	Main Findings	Evidence
Socialization	Coordination meetings, mentoring, and group discussions strengthened knowledge sharing and built a sense of belonging among volunteers.	"This coordination meeting is important for us so that cooperation is always solid." (RH, Head of Library, 24 June 2025)
Externalization	Tacit skills such as craft-making and collection management were documented into guides and standardized procedures to ensure continuity.	"We are guided by Mrs. RH to make crafts from waste... such as vases from plastic bottles and carnival clothes." (EA, Core Volunteer, 25 June 2025)
Combination	Explicit knowledge was disseminated through the library's website, anthologies, and craft exhibitions, enhancing visibility and outreach	"We want this library to be known to more people, so we built a simple website to introduce programs and products." (RH, Head of Library, 24 June 2025)
Internalization	Volunteers absorbed explicit knowledge through training and practice, transforming it into tacit competencies and leadership skills.	"I was able to immediately put into practice what I had learned in class directly at Limbah Pustaka." (ANR, Incidental Volunteer, 14 July 2025)

Source: Primary Data processed, in 2025

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that the SECI model offers a practical and systematic framework for managing knowledge in community-based libraries, particularly those dependent on volunteers. Each stage of the model Socialization, Externalization, Combination, and Internalization was clearly evident at *Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka* and contributed to the empowerment of volunteers.

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First, socialization fostered effective knowledge sharing between the library manager and volunteers through coordination meetings and mentoring. This interpersonal interaction transferred tacit knowledge and cultivated trust and solidarity. Saide and Bidang (Saide & Mahendrawathi, 2015) argue that such structured sharing processes strengthen organizational cohesion. In community libraries, socialization plays an additional role: it sustains volunteers' motivation and sense of belonging, which are often more critical than financial incentives.

Second, externalization ensured that tacit knowledge—from craft-making techniques to cataloging skills—was documented into explicit forms such as manuals, labels, and systematic workflows. This transformation reduced dependency on individual actors and safeguarded organizational memory against volunteer turnover. These findings reinforce 's(Nurcahyo & Senses, 2019) conclusion that externalization is vital for ensuring the continuity of community-driven programs.

Third, the combination involved integrating and disseminating explicit knowledge through the library's website, anthologies, and exhibitions of waste-based crafts. Such practices enhanced the library's visibility and extended its impact beyond the immediate community. As (Adesina & Ocholla, 2019) notes, combination activities amplify organizational innovation by broadening the circulation of explicit knowledge. The case of *Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka* illustrates how even modest resources can be leveraged to expand influence through strategic knowledge dissemination.

Fourth, internalization occurred when volunteers absorbed explicit knowledge through training and practice, transforming it into tacit skills. Significantly, some volunteers were elevated to trainers and speakers in external forums, showing how the internalization process generated leadership capacity. This aligns with Nonaka and Takeuchi's argument that internalization is not the endpoint but part of a continuous cycle of organizational learning and knowledge creation.

Beyond confirming the utility of the SECI model, this study offers two broader contributions. Theoretically, it extends the application of knowledge management research to grassroots, resource-constrained library contexts, which are often overlooked in KM scholarship dominated by studies of corporate or formal institutions. Practically, it demonstrates that systematic KM can serve as an empowerment mechanism for volunteers, addressing the shortage of professional staff and the need for innovation in community libraries.

In comparison with previous studies that highlight the social and educational roles of village libraries, Bidang (Diana dkk., 2021), this research shows that the very process of knowledge management rather than only the programs delivered constitutes a central driver of empowerment. This reframing emphasizes that village libraries can thrive not merely as

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providers of literacy services but as knowledge organizations, where structured processes ensure sustainability, resilience, and innovation.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that applying knowledge management through the SECI model effectively empowers volunteers in a community-based library setting. At *Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka*, the four SECI stages socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization were not only observable but also systematically integrated into daily practices. These processes enabled volunteers to acquire, share, and apply knowledge, resulting in enhanced collaboration, service innovation, and sustained community engagement.

The novelty of this research lies in its application of the SECI framework to a village library context, an area that has received limited scholarly attention. By illustrating how knowledge management addresses human resource shortages while simultaneously fostering volunteer capacity, this study contributes both theoretically and practically to discussions on library management, volunteer empowerment, and community development.

In practical terms, the findings suggest that other village libraries and community-based organizations can adopt structured KM strategies to overcome resource constraints and enhance their sustainability. The case of *Perpustakaan Limbah Pustaka* serves as a best-practice example of how community libraries can transform into centers of empowerment and innovation when guided by systematic knowledge management.

Future research could extend this study by applying mixed methods or comparative case studies to explore how different community libraries adapt KM frameworks in varied socio-cultural settings. Such inquiries would further enrich the understanding of how knowledge management can strengthen grassroots initiatives and contribute to broader societal development.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

[Rheza Ega Winastwan]: Conceptualization, Introduction, writing the original draft, literature review, findings, review, and editing. [Lisda Safarina Zidna]: Collecting data with interview, observation, and documentation. [Annisa Nur Fatwa] Methods, writing the original draft, and editing. [Almas Inti Kiasati] conclusion and abstract.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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