

STUDY OF MANGROVE TOURISM ECOLITERACY BASED ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN WEST PAPUA

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the level of ecoliteracy among local communities in managing mangrove tourism in Kampung Ramiki, Wasior District, Teluk Wondama Regency. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach through field observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation to explore community knowledge, perceptions, participation, and conservation practices related to mangrove ecosystem management. The findings reveal that the local community has developed basic ecoliteracy through traditional ecological knowledge and local wisdom, reflected in their awareness of mangrove functions as coastal protection areas, habitats for marine biodiversity, and essential resources supporting community livelihoods. However, this ecological awareness has not been fully transformed into systematic education-based tourism management and sustainable economic practices. The study also found that mangrove tourism management remains informal, with limited institutional capacity, unequal community participation, and insufficient managerial assistance. Strengthening environmental education, community capacity, and collaborative tourism governance is therefore essential to improve sustainable mangrove tourism development. This study contributes to expanding the understanding of community-based ecoliteracy by highlighting the integration of local ecological knowledge and sustainable tourism management as a strategy for balancing environmental conservation and socio-economic benefits in coastal communities.

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INTRODUCTION

Ecoliteracy is the ability of individuals and groups to understand the reciprocal relationship between humans and the natural environment, and to make sustainable decisions in natural resource management. This concept emphasizes the importance of ecological knowledge, environmental awareness, and concrete actions in preserving ecosystems. Ecoliteracy not only refers to theoretical understanding but also includes practical skills, values, and attitudes that encourage individuals and communities to live harmoniously with nature (Irawan et al., 2025). In coastal areas, ecoliteracy plays a fundamental role in strengthening community capacity to manage marine, coastal, and mangrove ecosystems sustainably.

Mangrove ecosystems are among the most important coastal landscapes because they provide various ecological functions for environmental balance. Mangroves serve as natural barriers against coastal abrasion, storm protection systems, habitats and nursery grounds for marine organisms, and significant carbon storage ecosystems. However, mangrove ecosystems continue to face pressure from human activities, including uncontrolled land conversion, excessive resource exploitation, and coastal development (Zega et al., 2024). Therefore, sustainable mangrove management requires not only ecological conservation strategies but also active community participation that understands environmental values and sustainability principles.

The development of mangrove ecotourism has become an alternative strategy that combines conservation efforts with community economic development. Mangrove-based tourism provides opportunities for environmental education, ecosystem preservation, and alternative livelihoods for coastal communities (Eka Desnyarti & Zulkarnaini, 2025). A systematic review conducted by Moussa et al. (2024) shows that mangrove ecotourism has great potential to support conservation and socio-economic development. However, its sustainability depends on effective governance, community involvement, and ecological awareness. Thus, community ecoliteracy becomes an important foundation for ensuring that tourism development focuses not only on economic benefits but also on ecological sustainability.

Community involvement has been widely recognized as a key element in sustainable ecotourism management. Guerrero-Moreno and Oliveira-Junior (2024), through a bibliometric analysis of community-based ecotourism studies from 2002 to 2022, revealed that research trends increasingly emphasize local participation, sustainability, and community empowerment. However, they also identified that further studies are needed to explore how local ecological knowledge and community capacity can be integrated into ecotourism governance, particularly in specific socio-cultural contexts. This indicates that understanding community-based ecoliteracy remains an important research area in sustainable tourism studies.

Several studies in Indonesia have examined the relationship between local communities and mangrove ecosystem management. Prihadi et al. (2024) emphasized that integrating community-based tourism principles with ecological assessment can strengthen sustainable mangrove ecotourism management. Meanwhile, Qurniati et al. (2024) found that community perspectives, perceptions, and attitudes significantly influence the success of mangrove conservation and utilization. Furthermore, Nugroho et al. (2025) found that community readiness, behavioral intentions, and social perceptions are key determinants of mangrove ecotourism development. These studies highlight the importance of community aspects but have not specifically examined how ecoliteracy derived from local wisdom contributes to mangrove tourism management in remote coastal communities.

Kampung Ramiki, located in Wasior District, Teluk Wondama Regency, West Papua, is a coastal area with relatively well-preserved mangrove ecosystems. Local communities in this region have a close cultural relationship with their environment,

particularly in the utilization of marine and coastal resources. Traditional ecological knowledge has been passed down across generations and has shaped community behavior in the maintenance of natural resources. This local wisdom serves as important social capital in supporting conservation-based tourism development. However, socio-economic changes, limited institutional capacity, and the lack of structured environmental education may reduce the effectiveness of traditional knowledge in addressing modern tourism management challenges.

Teluk Wondama is recognized for its high coastal and marine biodiversity, underscoring the need for sustainable ecosystem management. The development of mangrove tourism in Kampung Ramiki provides opportunities to integrate conservation, education, and community-based economic activities. Nevertheless, these opportunities require improved ecoliteracy, stronger tourism institutions, and increased community capacity. Without adequate knowledge transformation and management strategies, mangrove tourism development may not achieve long-term sustainability.

Based on previous studies, existing research has primarily focused on community participation, ecotourism management models, conservation strategies, and community perceptions toward mangrove ecosystems. However, limited attention has been given to understanding how local community ecoliteracy, formed through traditional ecological knowledge and daily interaction with mangrove ecosystems, contributes to sustainable tourism management, especially in coastal communities of West Papua. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by analyzing the ecoliteracy of local communities in managing mangrove tourism in Kampung Ramiki.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on integrating the concept of ecoliteracy into community-based mangrove tourism, highlighting the role of local wisdom as a foundation for conservation behavior and sustainable tourism governance. This study is expected to contribute theoretically by enriching discussions on community-based ecoliteracy in coastal resource management and practically by providing insights for strengthening local capacity, environmental education, and sustainable mangrove tourism development.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the ecoliteracy of local communities and their involvement in mangrove tourism management in Kampung Ramiki, Wasior District, Teluk Wondama Regency, West Papua. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore community perceptions, experiences, local knowledge, and social practices related to environmental conservation and tourism management. Qualitative approaches are relevant in community-based studies because they provide a deeper understanding of social values, community participation, and human-environment interactions (Yunita et al., 2025). The research location was selected purposively because Kampung Ramiki has mangrove potential that is being developed as a community-based tourism area supported by local ecological knowledge.

Data collection was conducted through field observations, in-depth interviews, and

documentation. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, with criteria including community members directly involved in mangrove tourism management, local figures who understand coastal resource management, and residents with experience in utilizing and preserving mangrove ecosystems. Observations focused on mangrove conditions, tourism activities, and community participation, while interviews explored ecological understanding, conservation practices, local wisdom, and challenges in tourism development. The use of these techniques aims to obtain comprehensive information regarding social conditions and stakeholder involvement in tourism management (Sujarwo et al., 2026).

Data analysis was carried out using an interactive analysis model consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Erfiyana et al., 2026). Data from observations, interviews, and documentation were categorized into themes related to ecoliteracy, environmental awareness, local wisdom, and community participation in mangrove tourism management. The validity of the findings was strengthened through source and technique triangulation, comparing information from different informants and across various data collection methods to ensure the credibility and accuracy of the research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of field observations in the mangrove tourism area of Kampung Ramiki indicate that the mangrove ecosystem is still relatively well preserved. Mangrove vegetation grows along the coast, dominated by *Rhizophora* and *Avicennia* species that provide ecological benefits, including coastal protection, marine habitats, and natural resources that support community livelihoods. Tourism facilities, such as wooden trackways, have been developed to support visitor activities, though some require improvement due to natural degradation and limited maintenance. Tourism activities remain small-scale and are mostly visited by local tourists, indicating that the area has ecological tourism potential but still requires more systematic management strategies.



Figure 1. Tracking Tourist Locations

The observations indicate that the community demonstrates ecological awareness of the importance of mangrove conservation. Interviews with local managers revealed

that mangroves are perceived as essential ecosystems that protect settlements from waves and maintain marine resources. One manager stated, "*This mangrove forest protects the village from big waves; if it is damaged, it will be difficult to recover later*" (*this mangrove forest protects the village from big waves; if it is damaged, it will be difficult to recover*). This statement indicates that community ecoliteracy has developed through direct interaction with nature and traditional ecological experiences.

The existence of local ecological knowledge among the Ramiki community reflects that local wisdom plays an important role in shaping environmental awareness. Similar findings were highlighted by Nauri and Fatmawati (2022), who explained that local wisdom contains social values that can influence community behavior and strengthen sustainable practices. Furthermore, Ramadhani and Asista (2025) emphasized that inherited traditions and local knowledge function as social mechanisms for maintaining collective identity and community cooperation. Therefore, the ecological values of the Ramiki community can serve as important social capital in developing conservation-based mangrove tourism.

However, the findings also indicate that traditional ecological knowledge has not been fully transformed into structured tourism management. Community understanding remains focused on ecological protection, while knowledge of educational tourism, visitor management, and sustainable economic opportunities remains limited. This condition shows that ecoliteracy development requires integration between traditional knowledge and modern conservation-based tourism practices. Ahmad et al. (2025) also emphasized that local wisdom-based mangrove ecotourism requires institutional support and appropriate management strategies to contribute effectively to green economic development.

The results of social observations indicate that community participation in mangrove tourism management remains concentrated among a few individuals and informal groups. Some residents have not actively participated because they perceive mangrove areas mainly as sources of traditional livelihoods rather than tourism assets. One resident explained, "*Kitong is just a regular piggi to take fish, I do not think it is a tourist attraction that can be a lot of money*" (we usually just go to take fish, not thinking about tourism as a significant source of income). This finding demonstrates that economic awareness and understanding of tourism benefits remain uneven among community members.

Community participation is an essential component in sustainable mangrove ecotourism development. Studies by Sumarmi et al. (2022) and Puspitaloka et al. (2025) revealed that successful mangrove ecotourism depends on community empowerment, environmental education, and residents' ability to transform conservation activities into sustainable economic opportunities. Therefore, strengthening community capacity in Kampung Ramiki is necessary to encourage broader participation and ensure that tourism benefits are distributed more equitably.

From an institutional perspective, the results show that mangrove tourism management in Kampung Ramiki has not yet developed a formal organizational structure.

Tourism activities are still managed independently by the community through informal coordination and village discussions. Although this approach reflects strong social relationships among residents, the absence of clear management regulations, role distribution, and long-term planning limits the development of sustainable tourism governance. A tourism manager stated, "*No one has come to teach really, kitong makes what can be done first*" (no external parties have provided intensive training, so we manage it independently based on our abilities). This indicates that community enthusiasm exists, but institutional strengthening and external support are still needed.

These findings are consistent with those of Aryanti and Koestoer (2024), who stated that sustainable mangrove tourism requires integrated management strategies that include conservation policies, institutional arrangements, and community participation. Similarly, Beddu et al. (2026) emphasized that sustainable mangrove ecotourism development cannot rely solely on local communities but requires an integrated multi-stakeholder approach involving government institutions, local organizations, academics, and other relevant stakeholders. Therefore, strengthening collaborative governance is an important step to improve the effectiveness of mangrove tourism management in Kampung Ramiki.

The need for collaboration is also related to the complexity of mangrove ecosystems as social-ecological systems. Dahdouh-Guebas et al. (2022) explained that mangrove management involves interactions between ecological conditions, community needs, and stakeholder interests, making collective decision-making essential. In the context of Kampung Ramiki, community-based management has provided a foundation for conservation, but coordination between stakeholders is necessary to improve tourism planning, conservation strategies, and economic development.

The observations on mangrove utilization practices indicate that local communities continue to depend on coastal resources for their daily needs. However, residents are aware not to exploit mangrove resources excessively, especially the prohibition on cutting mangrove trees without a compelling reason. These conservation values have been maintained through customary practices and community norms passed down across generations. This condition reflects the role of local wisdom as a foundation for ecological behavior and environmental responsibility.



Figure 2. Tourist Locations

The existence of local conservation values in Kampung Ramiki shows that traditional knowledge can support sustainable natural resource management. However, local wisdom needs to be combined with scientific knowledge, environmental education, and adaptive management strategies. Rumondang et al. (2024) emphasized that mangrove sustainability requires integration between ecological functions and socio-economic systems because community activities directly influence ecosystem conditions. Therefore, ecoliteracy development should focus not only on maintaining traditional conservation values but also on improving community capacity to manage mangroves as sustainable tourism resources.

The findings further reveal that mangrove tourism development in Kampung Ramiki requires a collaborative management model that integrates community participation, improved governance, and technological support. Mardianton et al. (2024) explained that strengthening governance and community involvement supported by innovation can improve sustainable coastal tourism management. Similarly, Efani et al. (2024) highlighted that collaborative-based mangrove ecosystem management can provide comprehensive solutions by integrating conservation objectives, tourism development, and community welfare.

The development of mangrove tourism in Kampung Ramiki demonstrates that ecoliteracy plays an important role in connecting environmental conservation and community-based tourism practices. The community's ecological knowledge, developed through long-term interaction with mangrove ecosystems, provides an initial foundation for sustainable tourism development. However, this knowledge requires further transformation into structured conservation education, tourism management skills, and community empowerment programs. Without this transformation process, ecoliteracy may remain limited to traditional conservation awareness, failing to produce broader social and economic impacts.

These findings support Rifai et al. (2024), who argued that understanding stakeholder perceptions is essential to developing sustainable coastal tourism because

different community groups may have varying levels of awareness, expectations, and involvement. In the context of Kampung Ramiki, differences in community understanding of mangrove tourism benefits indicate the importance of building shared perceptions among stakeholders. Strengthening ecoliteracy can be a strategy for aligning conservation goals with community economic interests.

The results also indicate that community-based mangrove tourism should not only emphasize environmental preservation but also encourage social innovation and local economic development. The experience of the Ramiki community shows that local knowledge and cultural values are valuable resources, but they require institutional support to create sustainable tourism governance. This finding strengthens previous studies that state that successful mangrove ecotourism development depends on integrating ecological conservation, community empowerment, and adaptive management strategies (Ahmad et al., 2025; Puspitaloka et al., 2025).

Furthermore, strengthening ecoliteracy in Kampung Ramiki can support the development of mangrove tourism as an environmental learning space. Community knowledge about mangrove functions can be transformed into educational tourism activities, such as conservation programs, environmental interpretation, and visitor learning experiences. This approach can elevate local communities from mere resource users to conservation actors and tourism educators. Therefore, ecoliteracy becomes a bridge between traditional ecological knowledge and sustainable tourism innovation.

Overall, this study reveals that mangrove tourism development in Kampung Ramiki has strong ecological and socio-cultural foundations but still faces challenges related to institutional capacity, community participation, and tourism management strategies. Unlike previous studies that mainly focused on mangrove conservation strategies, governance models, or economic benefits of ecotourism, this research emphasizes the role of community ecoliteracy derived from local wisdom as the basis for sustainable mangrove tourism development. The integration of local ecological knowledge, community empowerment, and collaborative governance provides a strategic framework for balancing conservation objectives and improving the welfare of coastal communities.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the local community of Kampung Ramiki has developed basic ecoliteracy derived from traditional ecological knowledge and local wisdom regarding the importance of mangrove ecosystems. This ecoliteracy is reflected in community awareness of mangrove functions as coastal protection, marine habitats, and essential resources supporting local livelihoods. However, the findings indicate that this ecological knowledge has not been fully transformed into systematic education-based tourism management and sustainable economic practices due to limited institutional capacity, tourism management skills, and community participation.

This study highlights that strengthening ecoliteracy is an important strategy for developing sustainable community-based mangrove tourism. The practical implications

of this research emphasize the need for environmental education programs, tourism management training, stronger community institutions, and collaboration among local communities, government, and related stakeholders. These efforts are expected to transform local ecological knowledge into sustainable tourism practices that maintain environmental conservation while improving community welfare.

The contribution of this study lies in demonstrating the role of local wisdom-based ecoliteracy as a foundation for integrating conservation values and community-based tourism development, particularly in coastal communities. Future research is recommended to explore collaborative mangrove tourism management models involving multiple stakeholders and to examine the long-term impact of ecoliteracy improvement programs on environmental sustainability and local economic development.

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