



Article

## Towards National Identity: Analysis of Children of Purus and Anticipation to Mentawai Future

Azmi Fitriasia\*<sup>1</sup> & Wannofri Samry<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Social Science, Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Andalas, Indonesia

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### \*Correspondence

[azmifitrisia@fis.unp.ac.id](mailto:azmifitrisia@fis.unp.ac.id)

### Abstract

This article aims to know some problems of children of Purus, a coastal area in Padang city, especially related to factors leading to literary poor imagination of 'Kelompok Purus Menulis' members. The experience in manage of children Purus could became guidelines to develop the future of Mentawai's children. They have attended training and mentoring programs in three years organized by Universitas Negeri Padang. But their quality product likes poem is still poor. They tend to imitate others' works. Few are confident and stand out of box. Why? Data for this article are based on district document, and interview during the training and mentoring activities. After collecting the data, the analysis and written report for the result of research will follow. The analysis will show the poor imagination of Purus children. There are three reasons for that. First, the writer will have an extensive knowledge from reading, observing, and discussing with others. But Purus children rarely read and write. Second, family supporting. Some children of the community come from poor family background and lower level of education that hinder them from growing any better. Third, social environment. The children live in market and tourist area. It makes the children less focus on study.

## INTRODUCTION

Purus is a district that border Indian ocean ("Kecamatan Padang Barat, Kota Padang," 2020). Purus was known as tourism destination by local, national and international people. It is located in center of Padang city. But it is one of the districts with middle to low economic background, involving fishermen, 'asongan' (small traders), laborer and other occupation depending on tourism and sea (*Kecamatan Padang Barat Dalam Angka*, 2018). This article aims to know some factors leading to poor literary imagination of 'Kelompok Purus Menulis' members. They have attended training and mentoring programs for three years held by Universitas Negeri Padang. But their works like poem are still poor. They tend to imitate others' works. Some have self-confidence and are out of box. This paper wants to know their problem. Why cannot they develop their writing imagination? It will impact national identity.

Until know there is no writing about the issue. Seen from journal indexes only few article were written about it, likes Prem Phyak & Peter I. De Costa (Phyak & De Costa, 2021). They worried about the original language in new liberal and globalization. While they question the colonial, modern, and neoliberal frames of language education, this special issue invites readers to reimagine new approaches to education that connect learners with their history, land,

culture, and ecology. This article is important to help the analysis because the Purus coastal begins face globalization in Indonesia neoliberal economic.

The second writer is Kari Nixon (Nixon, [2020](#)). Many public health ethics debates are construed as the rights of the collective versus the rights of the individual. This essay demonstrates that in the context of diseases which are transmitted by healthy carriers, the issue is more complex. Instead of arguing about competing rights, this essay argues that such debates are first about competing visions of reality, in which the individual is asked to substitute a collective understanding of their body for their own personal experience of their body. Understanding this first layer of the ethics debate in such healthy carrier situations allows us to redirect persuasive energies, moving away from a beginning-point of compliance to an understanding, which may ultimately find a more willing public audience.

This article is not directly related to the research but the theoretical modes help analyze the condition of Purus children. The children's imagination issue should not be viewed as children problem but all of decision maker, because Indonesia is maritime area. Many children live in coastal with the same problem. So, it is not individual view but collective perspective. The other writers having concern with the issue are Sarah Rivett and Abram Van Engen, describing the history and study of puritanism concerning migrants in America (Rivett & Engen, [2018](#)). This writing is linked to Purus people. They comprise migrants from the local Minangkabau and other provinces. They are like marginal people with different character. They are hard, stubborn, and prone to be secular. They are not atheists and embrace God but not subject to routine prayer. Michelle N. Huang, He have best idea that needed to analysis and as comparison Purus reality (Huang, [2021](#)). The writing about Purus was written by Ivoni Yona Melinda, et all (Melinda, Asril, & Valentina, [2019](#)). Azmi Fitriasia, touching on Purus children in 4.0 and the ability of the children (Fitriasia, 2019). The article help analyze problems of Purus children.

## METHOD

Historical method insists heuristic, critical, interpretative and historiographical (Garraghan, [1957](#)). Data for this article are taken from district document likes photos, newspaper, internet etc. Other data come from interview and observation. Researchers interviewed Purus children and their parents. After collecting data, the analysis and written report will be made regarding research results. From the analysis we will know what caused poor imagination of Purus children.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Purus Coastal Area Children

Purus area has been known for a long time. This is one of the areas in western coast of Sumatra. Purus area is as part of Padang city since 18<sup>th</sup> century. Purus was a part of government of Padang when de Stuers (1788-1861) expanded the area of Padang City (Zed, [2009](#)). Purus has been included as one of the districts in Padang city in 20<sup>th</sup> century. Purus is a swam area and its peoples work as fishermen. This area is locally called 'kampuang Purus'. It was different from aristocracy living in center of Padang. The live in 'rumah tinggi.' Various happenings—Japanese period, independence of Indonesia to Orde Lama (1945-1970)—have not changed Purus a lot. This area has roads, army office, shops and the stone house, along with rundown houses and fishermen's houses. The development began during the New Order period marked by the physical growth of the area. Purus developed as a part of Padang's central city. Various hotels were established (Subakti, [2016](#)). In Padang city especially Purus beach growth as a

tourist destination thrive. In 1980 this area was known as Purus beach. Usually, people from other cities of West Sumatra paid this area a visit every time they went to Padang. They enjoyed eating ‘rujak’ (mixed sliced fruit and vegetables served with spicy palm sugar dressing) and ‘telur katung’ (turtle egg). It was an icon of Purus beach.



**Picture 1.** Batang Arau, Padang Beach in 19<sup>th</sup> Century  
Source: Padangkita.com

The New Order administration got the area changed. People of Padang city increased drastically by 240% from colonial period. Many visited Padang city, including Purus area. The swam area changed as many hotel, restaurant and others were around. Purus beach was built as a tourist destination in reform era. The government of Padang city built Purus beach, building era. The government of Padang city built Purus beach, building the road from Muaro Port to the Minangkabau International Airport (BIM). Purus beach was prepared to be an international tourist spot. The Purus beach has sidewalks, fields for art performances and other arrangements. It provides comfort for walking, cycling, and gymnastics. In the beach area there are also playgrounds for kids such as swing sets in addition to playing sand at sea. Purus has tidy and beautiful beach now. Many has changed in Purus location (Hendra, [2021](#)).



**Picture 2.** Destination Tourism and Map Purus Beach  
Source: internet

According to 2016 data, Purus people amounted to 8,375 (*Profil Kelurahan Purus*, [2016](#)). Yet some are poor and uneducated. They work as laborer, small trader, and cleaners, fishermen. They are part of the problem as representing marginal cultural. They seem loud, rude, indiscriminate and thuggish. Some of the school-age children do not go to school. They are sometimes unruly. Fixing this social problem calls for intervention from the government, university, and NGO many activities. One of the NGOs is Tanah Ombak. It was established by some volunteers. Universitas Negeri Padang joined force to serve. They begin to help

fishermen's wives develop their skill like sewing and writing for children. However, difficulty remains. They cannot go out of the box after a-three-year training and writing.



**Picture 3.** Condition of Purus Peoples  
Source: Azmi Fitriisia Collection, 2021

They are, however, not able to put their writing to either print or online media. After observation, interview and reading some data are historical analysis. There are some problems disturbing Purus children. They find it difficult to develop their imagination in literature writing. Purus kids followed writing training held by Universitas Negeri Padang. It has been done three times. This is an annual program. The funding will continue when all requirements are met. The first program, held in 2019, raised the theme 'The writing training in media to Purus coastal children'. The training was attended by more than 17 participants aged 10-17 years. But a few of them were not children and adolescent of Purus. The partners of Universitas Negeri Padang disagreed with the requirement. The training was done one day with three speakers. In detail, the training materials included 'how to get ideas for writing', 'writing literary work' and 'author and work of art'.

After the training was completed, it was followed up by mentoring for two months held every Sunday. The mentors helped them analyse their writings. They wrote poems, short stories and others. Only one poem was published in online media. The other writings are literary collection published in 'Beranda Karya,' a community wall magazine. After two months finishing the first step of community service program held by Universitas Negeri Padang, communication kept going on. The committee of Universitas Negeri Padang motivated them but not yet fully successful. No interest in audio visual, language, and journalist program. They did not want to be journalists, affecting their social condition. Being busy doing unproductive game. Some decided to get out of the group to get married and became mothers in young ages. Others still wrote but discontinued. They were average students in elementary and first middle school. The Beranda Karya, the community wall magazine, has just published once. It was difficult to encourage them because they need constant mentoring to manage their wasted time. But the service program has its limits.



**Picture 4.** Universitas Negeri Padang Service Program in 2019  
Source: Azmi Fitriisia Collection, 2021

In year 2020 Universitas Negeri Padang gave opportunity the committee to make service program. The committee of Universitas Negeri Padang continued to teach writing to them. The member of ‘Kelompok Purus Menulis’ and other children of Purus got training and mentoring again. But some problems came to fore. Peoples around Tanah Ombak area were unhappy when other children joined the training. They wanted their sole children to get the service. They want to monopolize all program and facilities from NGO or UNP service program. It was difficult to give convince them. Eventually, some members the second training were children in the vicinity of Tanah Ombak. They were ten or eleven years old of elementary school. Some were new member as they did not follow the previous training in 2019. Only two were 16 and 17 years old. They had studied Indonesia language. It’s basic knowledge that they had. But they had no idea about writing, literature, literary figures as part of training materials given by the trainers. All of materials were new for them. The second training was to do with writing. After one-day training, mentoring continued for two months. In second training the committee developed writing literature to them. It was because they had experienced theatre and ever performing.

Member of training wrote the children story. Some topics were ‘garbage’, ‘environment’, ‘family’, ‘playing’, and ‘holiday’. Their stories and poems were not published on online or print maedia. The reason because they have not met the requirements yet. Again, their writing pieced have been published on “Beranda Karya,” the community wall magazine. There are some problems participants of training encountered. They were used to reading, observing, and discussing writing. ‘Tanah Ombak’ had library. The collection of Tanah Ombak library have been available. It involved the children story, dictionary, popular and general knowledges. All of collection had around 3.000 titles. The committee service program of Universitas Negeri Padang donated some books concerning writing learning. Unfortunately, they preferred hearing to reading. To solve the problem some volunteers (college students) from Universitas Negeri Padang joined. But Covid-19 pandemic has blocked it all. The volunteers could not help them owing to the pandemic. People did work from home. Children of Purus had similar problems and experience. They could not work because Purus beach has been closed as a tourist destination in three months. They received food aid to sustain their lives. Children of Purus like others learned by online. They must adapt with new condition



**Picture 5.** Library of Tanah Ombak  
Source: Azmi Fitriasia Collection, 2020

The committee of Universitas Negeri Padang attempted to get the third service program in 2021. The third training developed knowledge about professional journalists and social media opportunity to get money. They got some chance while running the 3<sup>rd</sup> training and mentoring. It was attended by some participants of the second program. There were some new

members, being the first time for writing training to them. In the third training in 2021, the youngsters were exposed on how to deal with social media ethics and social media for productive activity. They learned YouTube. Now “Kelompok Purus Menulis” have their own YouTube channel. They have been also introduced with variation of newspapers, journalist working. But they could not to continues publishing of wall magazine, youtube and social media without their mentor (Interview with Hendri, Tanah Ombak, November, 26, 2021). The mentors are very important to them. The families of children of Purus are avarage poor, it’s problem for their education and future life. Lately, coastal area of Purus is beginning to grow lively. Many tourists comes. It pushes them to positive activities. They need volunteers need to help them use their time properly.

### Anticipation for Mentawai Future

Mentawai is a new growing area of tourism. The physical infrastructures have been fixed. The 2023 government plan shows there will be many alternatives to come to Mentawai. The Mentawai government will build the airport. The airport suits airplanes with 70 passengers from many provinces in Indonesia. Various hotels in Tuapejat will prepare for tourists coming. They are equipped with hall for meetings and stadium generals. Tua Pejat beach is beautiful and richfull with white sand. Along the coast, they met fishermen, boat makers, women drying fish or ‘ikan asin’ and children while playing in the sea. All shows original and natural condition.



Picture 6. Coast of Tuapeja, Mentawai Islands Regency, 2021  
Source: Azmi Fitrissia Collection, 2021

But for the future, in more than ten years to come everything will change. The government and local council (DPRD) must prepare the rule to protect children and others. It will be necessary for Mentawai people and children. They must have concept to service the tourists. The cultural globalization clinging to Western domination will get Mentawai identity lose. Children and teenager must love to study and have knowledge. Education is important more than many other development programs. Many graduates of university must be targeted by government. Children and teenager must have the characters that are appropriate with Mentawai customary rules.

### CONCLUSION

Forming the national identity should solve problems of children of Purus area face. They need the mentors or volunteers all time likes second mother. Mentor help whatever they need. Their problems are inability to write imagination, personal problem, and understand their psychology. Their mother are uneducated, poor and sometimes behave badly. Children in

tourist destination and market area needs mentoring. It is important that the government of Mentawai plan the changing culture. Children and teenagers were important assets for the future. If they have weakness, local culture will be changing to beef up national identity.

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