

## COMMUNITY SERVICE THROUGH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN IN MALAYSIA DURING RAMADAN

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### Abstract:

This Community Service may be a little different from the usual PKM activities because of the location point in the neighboring country, aiming to strengthen the learning system with a community-based approach and Learning Activities as well as strengthening religious education during Ramadan through interactive learning activities, Islamic studies, worship guidance, and Islamic character development. The sustainability of this program can be maintained by increasing cooperation between the community, educational institutions, and local government. However, there is still a lack of transparency regarding the learning program due to limited permits by some parties in Malaysia. Of course, the hope of every studio manager about the continuity of the learning process calmly and without obstacles is the desire of every manager. The evaluation results show an increase in Islamic understanding, Qur'an reading skills, increased student comprehension and active community participation in supporting their children's education.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is important for every citizen of Indonesia (Erawan, 2022). However, Indonesian migrant communities often face challenges in gaining access to proper education for their children, whether due to economic, administrative, or cultural adaptation factors. Without adequate educational support, migrant children are at risk of academic delays and difficulties in integrating into society (Effendi & Rahmi, 2024). Therefore, there is a need for inclusive learning assistance and to help them obtain equal education. Sungai Mulia Guidance Center is a non-formal education initiative that aims to provide migrant children with access to learning. However, there are still various obstacles such as the lack of teaching staff, limited facilities, and low parental involvement in the learning process. This program aims to improve the quality of education in the studio through volunteer teacher training, and ongoing academic mentoring.

Education is the main foundation in shaping civilization and creating superior human resources. Through education, individuals can develop their potential, understand social values, and improve their lives in a sustainable manner. Education is also a strategic instrument in facing global challenges, including the increasing mobility of people across countries. In this context, education not only plays a role in academic aspects, but also in character building, religious values, and social integration, especially for vulnerable groups such as migrant communities.

Malaysia is one of the main destinations for labor migration from Indonesia, where migrants often bring their children. However, the reality on the ground shows that Indonesian migrant children in Malaysia often experience difficulties in accessing formal education. This

is due to limited legal documents, immigration status, economic limitations, and cultural and linguistic isolation (UNESCO, 2018). In response to these conditions, various non-formal initiatives have emerged, one of which is through the establishment of guidance studios driven by local communities and religious organizations. Sungai Mulia Guidance Studio is one concrete form of this effort, offering an alternative learning space for migrant children who are marginalized from the official education system.

Several studies have examined the issue of migrant education in Malaysia. For example, a study by Anggun Victory Abdul Rohman (2025) explains that non-formal education organized by the Indonesian community in Malaysia is able to become a bridge to shape the identity, life skills and religiosity of migrant children. Meanwhile, Arif Saefudin (2024) emphasizes the importance of a cultural and religious-based approach in providing education to migrant children to stay connected to the roots of their identity. On the other hand, research by Slamet Rosyadi (2024)(Rosyadi et al., n.d.) found that the existence of guidance centers not only strengthens basic literacy, but also plays a role in building the psychosocial resilience of migrant children. These findings show that non-formal education has a significant contribution in fulfilling the educational rights of migrant groups, although it still faces structural challenges. Based on this background, the author is interested in studying more deeply the education of Indonesian migrant children in Malaysia, especially in the context of religious education during Ramadan at Sungai Mulia Guidance Center. This community service is expected to contribute to strengthening contextual, inclusive, and religious value-based educational practices, as well as becoming a reference for the development of educational policies for migrant communities abroad.

## METHODS

This Community Service activity uses the *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) with the stages of evaluation, action planning, action and reflection (Cornish et al., 2023) approach, a method that emphasizes active collaboration between the implementation team and the studio community, in this case the managers, teachers, parents, and students at Sungai Mulia Guidance Studio. The process begins with identifying needs through participatory observation and interviews. The results are used as the basis for designing relevant religious learning strategies during Ramadan. The program implementation includes religious learning activities using *blended learning* and lecture methods. This PAR approach was chosen so that the program is not only a momentary solution, but encourages community empowerment in managing the religious education of migrant children in a sustainable manner

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Implementation of Education Program

Learning in the Guidance Center during Ramadan shows a number of positive achievements, from cognitive, affective and social aspects. The program not only has an impact on improving the Islamic understanding of Indonesian migrant children in Malaysia, but also strengthens community engagement and builds a sustainable learning culture.

The religious education program during Ramadan at the Guidance Center is carried out as a form of spiritual and character strengthening for Indonesian migrant children living in Malaysia. This activity takes place throughout the month of Ramadan with learning time starting from morning until noon, and is adjusted to the policy issued by Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL) as the central institution that is the main reference for the studio. SIKL explicitly directs that during Ramadan, educational activities are focused on religious learning as an effort to internalize Islamic values more intensively.

The series of daily activities begins with the habituation of dhuha prayers in congregation and morning tahlil, which aims to form a habit of worship and strengthen

togetherness between participants. Furthermore, children take part in learning with religious material arranged in stages, including morals, fiqh, recitation of the Qur'an, memorization of short letters, to lessons in writing PEGON (Arabic-Jawi) script. PEGON is taught as part of the classic Islamic literacy of the archipelago which is still relevant to strengthen the connection of migrant children with their cultural roots. Worship practices, simulations of religious activities, and Islamic competitions also strengthen children's interest and enthusiasm for learning.



**Image Learning process of PEGON Arab Jawi**

Based on the *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) approach, the implementation process involves the center's administrators, parents, and volunteer teachers in developing schedules, materials, and learning strategies. Learning is focused on hands-on activities (learning by doing), as children more easily understand Islamic values through real practice rather than theoretical explanations. The results of this approach show improvements in basic understanding of Islam, ability to read and memorize the Qur'an, as well as increased enthusiasm and discipline of the learners.



**Image Portrait of Dhuha Prayer in Congregation**

First, there was a significant increase in students' understanding of Islam, especially in the basic aspects of Islamic teachings such as Ramadan fasting, zakat, and the

importance of noble character. This can be seen from direct observation during the learning session. Children were able to explain the meaning of fasting not only ritually, but also in social dimensions such as holding back anger and sharing with others. This improvement is also strengthened through contextual methods and direct experience such as the practice of ablution, prayer, and breaking the fast together which is packaged in active learning. Research by Moch Ariffin (2019) confirms that experiential learning can strengthen the internalization of religious values in school-age children.

Secondly, the program succeeded in improving the ability to read and memorize the Qur'an. Through intensive guidance and a gradual tajweed approach, participants experienced improvements in letter pronunciation, reading fluency, and memorization of short surahs. Even some participants who previously had difficulty recognizing hijaiyah letters have now been able to read short letters with tartil. This finding is in line with the study of Inka Nusamuda Pratama and Ayatullah Hadi (2024) which shows that small group-based Qur'anic learning and individualized assistance are very effective in improving Qur'anic literacy among migrant children.



**Image Student Learning Process**

Third, this activity encourages active participation from the community, especially parents. They not only supported the program logistically, but also began to get involved in the center's activities such as accompanying their children to study, attending Islamic studies, and donating labor and food in iftar activities. This involvement is an important indicator of the success of the *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) approach, because it shows that the program has become a shared property, not just an external intervention. According to Budi Sulistya Handoyo and Reza Triarda (2020), the success of migrant education programs is largely determined by community participation as agents of change.

Fourth, there was an increase in participants' enthusiasm in participating in the entire series of activities. The program does not only contain conventional lectures and teaching, but also presents various practice-based activities such as adhan competitions, memorizing short surahs, Islamic quizzes, and worship simulations. Such activities have been proven to increase motivation to learn and strengthen participants' self-confidence. This supports findings from a study by Saefudin (2024) which states that creative and fun learning approaches are particularly important in the context of education for migrant children who are vulnerable to stress and social alienation.

Overall, the success of this program shows that a collaborative, contextual and experience-based approach to religious education can be an effective strategy in addressing

the educational needs of Indonesian migrant children abroad. In addition to providing cognitive impacts in the form of increased religious understanding, this program also strengthens the social and cultural capital of the migrant community itself. This evaluation is an important foothold in the development of similar programs that are more structured and sustainable in the future.

## 2. Program Activity Process Challenges

The program can be categorized as running well, but there are some significant challenges in its implementation. The first challenge is the limited learning time. Although the study schedule is supposed to last until noon, many parents have come to pick up their children since 12:00. This reduces the effective learning time and affects the continuity of the material. This challenge is reinforced by Budi Sulisty Handoyo and Reza Triarda's study (2020) which states that in migrant communities, parents' priorities for working time or family logistical needs often clash with children's education programs.

The second challenge is limited teacher resources and teaching materials. Most teachers are voluntary and do not have a strong pedagogical background, especially in teaching migrant children who have a diverse level of character and learning ability. This is in line with the findings of Ali Maksum (2022) which states that the education of migrant children is very demanding for adaptation of learning methods, because they are vulnerable to boredom, emotional stress, and lack of academic support at home.

In addition, limited digital facilities are also an obstacle, especially in developing technology-based learning modules as planned. Not all students have access to digital devices, so the *blended learning* method must be highly customized so as not to create gaps. Research by Inka Nusamuda Pratama and Ayatullah Hadi (2024) shows that digitalization in migrant education is only effective if it is based on direct assistance and understanding the cultural and economic context of migrant families.

## 3. Evaluation and Solution

Evaluation of the program is conducted using various methods, teacher observation of the learning process, and feedback from parents and students. The evaluation results show that the children have improved in memorizing short letters, Qur'an reading skills, and basic Islamic understanding. In addition, disciplined attitudes in worship such as maintaining prayers and Ramadan fasting also showed positive improvements.

However, a number of solutions need to be implemented to overcome the challenges that arise. First, center managers need to strengthen communication with parents. An effective communication strategy can encourage parents' collaboration and concern for their children's learning. Secondly, further training for volunteer teachers is needed, both in terms of community-based pedagogical strategies and the use of simple effective teaching media.

Furthermore, it is important to develop locally-based printed religious modules that are easily understood by students and can be taken home to study with their families. This module can be enriched with illustrations, simple language and reflective activities. This approach is supported by Moch Ariffin (2019) which emphasizes the importance of developing contextual teaching materials in community-based non-formal education.

Finally, it is important to strengthen the relationship between the sanggar and SIKL as the central institution, by opening space for joint training, continuous monitoring, and curriculum evaluation that is adaptive to the context of migrant communities. This collaboration will ensure the long-term sustainability of the program, and become a model for developing relevant religious education for Indonesian children abroad. From the evaluation results, the program showed a positive impact on improving students' academic understanding. Parents' participation in supporting their children's education also

increased. In addition, the voluntary teacher training succeeded in improving teachers' competence in implementing more interactive and adaptive learning methods.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Ramadan learning program at Guidance Center has proven to be effective in improving access and quality of learning for migrant children. The sustainability of this program can be maintained by increasing cooperation between the community, educational institutions, and local government. However, there is still a lack of transparency regarding the center's learning program due to limited licensing by some parties in Malaysia. Of course, the hope of every sanggar manager about the continuity of the learning process quietly and without obstacles is the desire of every manager.

PKM Religious Education during Ramadan is also effective in improving migrant children's understanding and practice of worship. The sustainability of this program can be done by forming a more active Islamic-based learning community, increasing Islamic understanding, Qur'an reading skills, increasing student understanding and active community participation in supporting their children's education.

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