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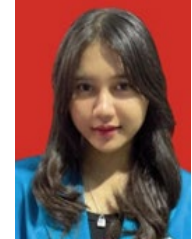
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## **BUILDING THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE CILEDUG WETAN VILLAGE COMMUNITY THROUGH THE THEMED COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM**

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### **Abstract:**

**Background:** Community service is one aspect of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education that contributes to social, economic, and educational development.

**Aim:** The Thematic Community Service Program (KKN-T) aims to build the independence of the Ciledug Wetan Village community through education-based, economic, and social empowerment.

**Methods:** This activity uses the Participation Action Research (PAR) method, which emphasizes the community's active involvement at every stage of the program, from problem identification to planning, implementation, and evaluation.

**Results:** The activities show increased children's literacy through interactive storytelling activities, encouraging their reading interest and critical thinking. In the economic aspect, MSME actors received training in branding, digital marketing, and promotional material creation to enhance the competitiveness of local products. In addition, public awareness of environmental cleanliness has increased through education on clean and healthy living behaviors (PHBS) and the management of organic and inorganic waste.

**Conclusions:** This program has a direct impact on the community and students through knowledge application, leadership development, and the enhancement of communication and collaboration skills.

**Implication:** These results affirm that student involvement in community-based empowerment programs can be an effective strategy for supporting sustainable development and innovation based on local wisdom.

**Keywords:** Community Service, KKN-T, Village Empowerment, Participation Action Research, Sustainable Programs.

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## INTRODUCTION

Thematic Community Service Program (KKN-T) is a form of community service implementation by higher education institutions to help villages face social and economic challenges. (Muslihasari, Maslahah, Oktiningrum, & Nugrahani, 2023). In its implementation, community involvement in community-based empowerment programs has proven to enhance the sustainability of program outcomes. (Saputra, et al., 2024). In addition, periodic health education can enhance the community's understanding and practice of clean and healthy living behaviors (PHBS). (Haryati, 2022).

In addition to the field of health, interactive approaches such as storytelling can also significantly increase children's interest in reading. (Muslihasari, Maslahah, Oktiningrum, & Nugrahani, 2023). Meanwhile, the application of digital technology in MSME marketing also positively impacts increasing sales and market reach. (Darmawan, Moussadecq, Rohiman, & Kurniawan, 2022). Referring to various studies, the KKN-T program in Ciledug Wetan Village is designed to integrate strategies that have proven effective in improving the quality of life of the community.

Ciledug Wetan Village was chosen as the location for KKN-T because it has various economic, social, and educational potentials that can be developed through community empowerment. However, this village still faces several challenges, such as the low reading interest among school children, the lack of marketing strategies for SMEs, and the need to raise awareness about environmental cleanliness. Therefore, the KKN-T program is expected to provide solutions that are not only relevant but also sustainable for the local community.

## METHOD

This activity uses Participation Action Research (PAR), which actively involves the community in problem identification, planning, implementation, and program evaluation. (Saputra, et al., 2024). The stages of the activities include:

1. Problem Identification: Conducted through surveys and interviews with the community and village officials.
2. Program Planning: Formulating work programs based on community needs and local potential.
3. Program Implementation: Executing Program Implementation

The implementation of this program encompasses various fields designed to have a tangible impact on the community, particularly in the areas of education, economy, and social and environmental issues. The activities involve an education-based approach, community empowerment, and skill enhancement to improve the local community's quality of life and well-being.

### 1) Education Sector

An interactive storytelling program involving expert speakers was conducted to increase the reading interest of elementary school children. This activity is designed to increase students' interest in literacy and foster imagination, critical thinking skills, and sustainable reading habits, both at school and at home. (Muslihasari, Maslahah, Oktiningrum, & Nugrahani, 2023). In addition to the storytelling sessions, discussion and reflection sessions are also provided to encourage children to understand the content of the stories and relate them to their personal experiences.

### 2) Economic Field

To enhance the competitiveness of local products, this program organizes branding and banner design training as promotional tools for MSME actors. Participants are trained in the basic concepts of branding, visual design, and the creation of attractive promotional materials that align with the characteristics of their products. The main focus is given to the village's flagship products, such as opak, tofu, tempeh, and traditional snacks. In addition, training in digital marketing strategies was also provided to equip entrepreneurs with skills in utilizing social media to expand market reach and enhance the competitiveness of their products at both local and national levels. (Darmawan, Moussadecq, Rohiman, & Kurniawan, 2022)

### 3) Social and Environmental Field

In the social and environmental aspects, this program emphasizes raising public awareness about the importance of clean and healthy living (PHBS). The activities carried out include counseling on PHBS practices that can be applied in daily life, including proper handwashing habits, environmental cleanliness management, and healthy food consumption. In addition, education on managing organic and inorganic waste was provided, especially for elementary school students, to instill environmental awareness from an early age. Educational campaigns about the importance of maintaining environmental cleanliness are also carried out through direct actions in the community. (Haryati, 2022)

4. Evaluation and Follow-up: Monitoring and reflection with the community to assess the program's success and impact. Follow-up in the form of ongoing training and the provision of practical guidelines to support the program's sustainability.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the KKN-T implementation in Ciledug Wetan Village include:

### 1. Increase in Children's Reading Interest



**Figure 1.** Storytelling activity with Pemuda Cirebon caring for Literacy

Storytelling activities involving expert speakers have proven effective in increasing students' interest in reading. This is evident from the increased participation in various literacy activities at school and home. (Muslihasari, Maslahah, Oktiningrum, & Nugrahani, 2023)

In addition, the results of this program also show a positive change in students' reading habits. Elementary school children have started actively reading books at home, indicating an increased interest and awareness of the importance of literacy.



**Figure 2.** Elementary school children are reading books at home.

## 2. Empowerment of MSMEs

Local entrepreneurs acquire skills in product branding strategies through training that includes a deep understanding of the importance of branding and effective banner design techniques. This training not only equips them with technical skills in banner creation but also changes their mindset regarding the role of branding in enhancing the appeal and market value of products in a competitive market. In addition, participants were also provided with an understanding of digital-based marketing strategies to expand market reach and enhance the competitiveness of their products. (Darmawan, Moussadecq, Rohiman, & Kurniawan, 2022)



**Figure 3.** Delivery and installation of Mrs. Sanyi Tempe UMKM's banner

As a follow-up to this program, KKN students also contributed to increasing the visibility of local businesses by registering factory locations on Google Maps, which were previously unavailable. This initiative makes it easier for consumers and business

partners to access business locations, thereby supporting the increased accessibility and exposure of local products in the broader market.

### 3. Environmental Cleanliness Awareness

In elementary schools, PHBS counseling and waste management education have shown positive results in increasing students' awareness of environmental cleanliness. After participating in the program, students began to habitually wash their hands properly before and after eating, after using the toilet, and after engaging in outdoor activities. This habit helps them understand the importance of maintaining personal hygiene to prevent the spread of diseases. In addition, education about healthy eating habits also encourages students to pay more attention to consuming nutritious foods, such as fruits and vegetables.

In waste management, students are given an understanding of the difference between organic and inorganic waste and how to sort it correctly. After the counseling, they started to adopt the habit of disposing of waste according to the categories taught. Some schools even started simple recycling programs, such as making compost from organic waste and utilizing inorganic waste for handicrafts. This step not only reduces the amount of waste generated but also teaches students about the concept of sustainability and waste repurposing.



**Figure 4.** Counseling on types of waste and their management at SDN 2 Ciledug Wetan

The awareness instilled through this program is not only limited to the school environment but also impacts families and the surrounding community. Students began sharing the knowledge they gained with their parents and other family members, so PHBS practices and waste management started to be implemented at home. In addition,

the environmental cleanliness campaign through direct actions, such as community service in schools and residential areas, received high enthusiasm from students, teachers, and residents. The active participation of the community in these activities shows that the program has successfully fostered a sense of collective responsibility toward environmental cleanliness.

Overall, this program has a positive impact on shaping clean and healthy living habits and increasing awareness of the importance of waste management from an early age. With the supervision and integration of hygiene materials into the school curriculum, the results achieved are expected to continue to develop and provide long-term benefits for students and the community.

## **CONCLUSION**

The KKN-T activities in Ciledug Wetan Village successfully increased community involvement in addressing local issues, particularly in the fields of education, economy, and social environment. The PAR method has proven effective in creating community-based participatory solutions, which are expected to continue even after the KKN-T program is completed. Therefore, universities need to continue fostering partnerships with rural communities in developing sustainable service programs. (Saputra, et al., 2024)

## **IMPLICATION**

The results of this research have an impact on the academic world, society, the nation, and the international community. For the academic world, this research shows that the Thematic Real Work Lecture program can be an effective way for students to apply theory in real life. This program also provides insights for universities in designing community service activities that are more beneficial and aligned with the needs of society.

For the community, this activity helps increase children's interest in reading, supports the development of SMEs, and raises awareness about environmental cleanliness. Storytelling activities have proven to encourage children to be more active in literacy activities. The mentoring of MSMEs helps small business owners market their products better, while environmental campaigns make residents more concerned about the cleanliness of the village.

At the national level, this research emphasizes that cooperation between universities, the government, and the community can aid in village development. This participatory

empowerment program can serve as an example for the government in designing policies that support education, the local economy, and environmental cleanliness.

Internationally, this research shows that the education-based community service model can be applied in various countries. This program can serve as a reference in supporting sustainable development in line with global goals.

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