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Empowering Pasirlawang Village through a Global Community Engagement Program: A Case Study

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Abstract

Background: One of the essential aspects of higher education in Indonesia is the Global Community Engagement Program, which serves as a real-world application of students' academic knowledge. The program, typically implemented during undergraduate studies, is an opportunity for students to contribute to community development. The students of Institut Miftahul Huda Al-Azhar, located in Banjar City, West Java, Indonesia, conducted their program in Pasirlawang Village, Purwadadi Subdistrict, Ciamis Regency. The program was designed to address local challenges and promote advancement in key sectors such as religion, economy, social welfare, and culture.

Methods: The research methods used in this program were a combination of observation and field research. Over the course of 40 days (August 5, 2024 to September 10, 2024), students engaged with local residents to assess community needs and implemented various initiatives designed to foster development in multiple sectors.

Results: The Global Community Engagement Program successfully identified the strengths and weaknesses of Pasirlawang Village. It raised awareness in the community and introduced sustainable initiatives in religious practices, economic ventures, and social welfare. Students provided practical solutions that utilized the village's vast natural resources to stimulate growth.

Discussion: Although the village possesses significant religious and natural assets, it faces challenges in human resources. The program was able to empower the youth, provide new knowledge, and help enhance innovation in the region.

Conclusion: This initiative is an example of how global expertise can be used to empower local communities, fostering self-sufficiency and progress. It offers a valuable model for future community-based programs.

Novelty: The novelty of this program lies in its combination of academic knowledge with local community development, promoting a collaborative approach to rural empowerment.

Keywords: Global Community Engagement Program, community empowerment, rural development, religious engagement, socio-economic growth.

INTRODUCTION

National education in Indonesia, as stipulated by Law No. 2 of 2003, has the function of developing the abilities and shaping the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to educate the life of the nation (Alfarizi & Herdiansyah, 2024; Astuti et al., 2024). The objective is to develop the potential of students to become individuals who are faithful and devout to God Almighty, noble in character, healthy, and knowledgeable (Amiq et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2023). This law highlights the importance of education in creating a highly qualified and intelligent workforce. Furthermore, Article 1, Paragraph 9 of the Indonesian Higher Education Law No. 12 of 2012 defines the tri dharma of higher education, which encompasses education, research, and community service. These three pillars are integral in shaping an academic institution's role in society (Haerudin et al., 2023; Aisyah et al., 2024).

One of the key manifestations of this tri dharma is the Global Community Engagement Program (GCEP), a program designed to encourage students to apply the knowledge they have gained in their studies to the betterment of local communities (Arti et al., 2023). The GCEP is a mandatory component of undergraduate education, ensuring that students contribute meaningfully to society (Hasan et al., 2022). This initiative directly benefits the communities



involved, addressing various sectors, such as religion, economy, social welfare, and the environment. GCEP also provides students with real-world experience in their academic fields, as they are confronted with challenges that require them to apply their knowledge and develop new skills. By engaging in community-driven projects, students gain valuable practical knowledge and hone their abilities to resolve real-world problems. Additionally, students learn how to build and maintain positive relationships within diverse communities, preparing them for future leadership roles upon graduation (Yatmo, 2024).

The GCEP in Pasirlawang Village, located in Purwadadi District, Ciamis Regency, is an excellent example of how academic institutions can engage with rural communities to address local challenges. Pasirlawang Village, despite its rich natural resources, including vast agricultural and plantation lands, faces several socioeconomic challenges, including low population density and limited access to human resources with the innovation and creativity required to drive progress. The village's primary economic activities are based on agriculture, but there is significant untapped potential in terms of value-added production, which could contribute to the local economy (Ahyani et al., 2024).

This program in Pasirlawang aimed to implement sustainable solutions by collaborating with various stakeholders, including faculty advisors, local government officials, and the community members themselves (Adinugraha et al., 2024). One of the major goals of the GCEP in Pasirlawang was to empower the community, increase awareness, and provide skills that could lead to the village's self-sufficiency and social progress. The program focused on addressing key issues such as education, healthcare, economic development, and social harmony. By fostering an active and engaged community, the GCEP aimed to make Pasirlawang a more self-reliant, forward-thinking village (Adnan et al., 2024).

In Pasirlawang, the community's main issues were limited access to quality education, particularly in religious and formal subjects, poor health facilities despite the presence of basic health services like the Posyandu (community health posts), an economy largely dependent on agriculture, and the need for stronger social cohesion amid changing times (Abdelhadi, 2019). The GCEP targeted these areas by providing educational programs for children and youth, health awareness initiatives, economic empowerment through entrepreneurial training, and activities that promoted social unity, such as communal work and religious gatherings.

The goals of this program were ambitious yet achievable, aiming to uplift the village in multiple dimensions. The educational initiatives sought to expand the knowledge base of local children and youth through seminars, workshops, and competitions, all designed to foster a love for learning and personal development (Adinda et al., 2024). In terms of health, the program focused on improving access to basic health services, raising awareness about preventive care, and conducting regular health check-ups. Additionally, the program provided training in entrepreneurship and vocational skills to help villagers diversify their income sources and reduce their reliance on traditional agricultural practices. Finally, by organizing community activities and religious gatherings, the program aimed to strengthen social ties and promote a sense of unity and shared purpose (Basir, 2020).



In conclusion, the Global Community Engagement Program in Pasirlawang is an example of how university students can be instrumental in addressing the challenges faced by rural communities. Through active involvement and collaboration with local stakeholders, students not only contribute to the development of the village but also gain invaluable life experiences that will shape their personal and professional growth (Amankwaah, 2023; Yatmo, 2024). This initiative serves as a model for future community engagement projects, demonstrating the potential for higher education institutions to make a meaningful impact on society. Through the successful implementation of this program, Pasirlawang Village has taken a significant step toward becoming a more self-reliant and progressive community, equipped to face the challenges of the future. The success of this program highlights the importance of community-based learning, where both the students and the community benefit from mutual cooperation and shared goals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Community engagement through academic programs, especially in rural areas, has emerged as a vital strategy for addressing the complex challenges faced by communities. In the context of higher education, universities are increasingly called upon to contribute to the social, economic, and cultural development of their surrounding communities. These programs, including the Global Community Engagement Program (GCEP), have been praised for their potential to create a positive impact on the development of rural areas, and in particular, to foster a culture of mutual learning between the community and academic institutions. This literature review explores various aspects of community engagement programs, particularly in rural settings, and examines their role in promoting sustainable development across different sectors, including education, healthcare, economics, and social cohesion.

Education is universally recognized as a key driver of community empowerment, and university-driven community engagement programs have proven to be effective tools in enhancing educational opportunities in underserved areas. A significant body of research has shown that education is central to the development of individuals and communities, especially in rural areas where access to quality education is often limited (Hasan et al., 2022). One of the core principles of university-based community engagement programs is the transfer of knowledge, which is often achieved through various educational interventions. In rural communities like Pasirlawang Village, where educational resources are constrained, university programs that focus on educational outreach have the potential to bridge the gap in access to knowledge. Through educational workshops, training sessions, and extracurricular activities, students are able to share their academic expertise, helping local children and young adults enhance their learning outcomes. Several studies have emphasized the positive impact of such programs on improving literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking skills in underserved populations (Adinugraha et al., 2024). For instance, programs like the GCEP in Pasirlawang Village can introduce new teaching methodologies, promote interactive learning, and provide additional learning resources, all of which can have a transformative effect on the community's educational standards.



Moreover, university students involved in these programs are able to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world situations, enhancing their own academic and professional skills. By participating in the teaching process, they not only contribute to the development of the community but also develop essential pedagogical skills that will be valuable in their future careers. This dual benefit—enhancing the education of both the local population and the students themselves—is a key feature of community engagement programs. Healthcare is another critical area where university-based community engagement programs can make a significant difference, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Many rural communities, including Pasirlawang, face challenges related to limited access to healthcare services, inadequate health education, and a lack of preventative care. University students, particularly those in the fields of health sciences and public health, are well-positioned to contribute to addressing these challenges through health education initiatives, health camps, and preventive care programs.

The importance of public health education in rural communities cannot be overstated. Many rural areas experience high rates of preventable diseases due to lack of awareness about proper health practices, inadequate nutrition, and limited access to healthcare services. Programs like GCEP in Pasirlawang can help address these issues by conducting health awareness campaigns, organizing free medical checkups, and providing basic health education to the community. Research has shown that health education programs can have a lasting impact on health outcomes by increasing awareness of hygiene, nutrition, and the prevention of common diseases (Kim et al., 2023). Such initiatives are vital in improving the overall health and well-being of the community, which ultimately contributes to the long-term success of other development initiatives, including economic and social empowerment.

Additionally, community engagement programs in healthcare can help build trust between healthcare providers and the local population. By engaging with community members in a participatory manner, students and healthcare professionals can foster better communication and cooperation, leading to improved health outcomes. As Pasirlawang continues to face challenges related to healthcare access, community-driven initiatives supported by university students can play a pivotal role in addressing these issues. Economic development is another central focus of community engagement programs, particularly in rural areas where economic opportunities are often limited. In Pasirlawang, the economy is predominantly agricultural, with much of the population dependent on farming and agricultural production. However, despite the rich natural resources, the community faces challenges related to the low value-added processing of agricultural products and limited access to markets. University-led community engagement programs can help to address these issues by providing entrepreneurship training, business development support, and agricultural innovation.

Research has shown that community engagement programs focusing on economic empowerment can have a significant impact on the economic resilience of rural communities. In many rural areas, including Pasirlawang, local economies are heavily dependent on agriculture, yet the sector remains underdeveloped due to the lack of innovation and limited access to markets (Adinugraha et al., 2024). By providing training in areas such as entrepreneurship, small business management, and agricultural innovation, university students can help farmers diversify their income streams and increase the value of their products.



Moreover, such programs can support local economies by fostering the growth of small businesses and enhancing the community's overall economic resilience. The GCEP in Pasirlawang could also focus on improving the community's capacity to access and use digital technologies for business development. This could include training in digital marketing, e-commerce, and other relevant skills, which would help local businesses expand their reach and access larger markets. Studies have highlighted the role of digital technologies in transforming rural economies by providing new opportunities for income generation and entrepreneurship (Adinda et al., 2024). By empowering local residents with these tools, GCEP could help create a more diversified and sustainable local economy in Pasirlawang.

Social cohesion and community empowerment are also essential components of successful community engagement programs. In rural communities like Pasirlawang, social cohesion is often tested by factors such as migration, economic hardship, and social change. University-based community engagement programs can play a significant role in strengthening the social fabric of rural communities by promoting participation, collaboration, and collective action. Several studies have shown that community engagement programs can help to build stronger social ties by fostering cooperation among community members, local authorities, and other stakeholders (Yatmo, 2024). In Pasirlawang, GCEP could promote activities that enhance social cohesion, such as communal work projects, religious gatherings, and social events. These activities provide opportunities for community members to come together, share their experiences, and work towards common goals. The sense of belonging and solidarity that these activities foster is crucial for the long-term success of any development initiative.

Moreover, community empowerment is closely linked to social cohesion. By engaging with community members and involving them in decision-making processes, university students can help empower local residents to take ownership of their development. This empowerment leads to a more active and engaged community, which is better equipped to address its own challenges and create sustainable solutions. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of community engagement in higher education, several gaps remain in the existing literature. Most studies on community engagement programs have focused on short-term outcomes or urban settings, with little attention paid to long-term impacts in rural areas. Additionally, there is limited research on how university-community partnerships can contribute to the sustainable development of rural areas, particularly in terms of economic, educational, and healthcare improvements.

The existing literature also highlights a gap in understanding how community engagement programs can be designed to address the unique challenges of specific communities, such as Pasirlawang. While much has been written about the potential benefits of such programs, there is a need for more research on the specific needs of rural communities and how university-driven initiatives can be tailored to meet these needs. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the role of the GCEP in Pasirlawang and examining its long-term impacts on local development. In conclusion, university-led community engagement programs, such as the Global Community Engagement Program (GCEP), play a crucial role in empowering rural communities and promoting sustainable development. Through educational initiatives, healthcare interventions, economic empowerment programs, and efforts to strengthen social cohesion, these programs contribute to the well-being and development of underserved areas.



However, despite the positive impact of such programs, there are still gaps in the literature regarding their long-term effects and their ability to address the unique needs of rural communities. Future research should focus on evaluating the lasting impacts of community engagement programs in rural settings and exploring how these programs can be tailored to meet the specific challenges faced by these communities. This study aims to contribute to filling these gaps by examining the role of GCEP in Pasirlawang Village and its potential to drive long-term change.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research is based on the Global Community Engagement Program (GCEP) conducted by students from Institut Miftahul Huda Al-Azhar (IMA) Kota Banjar in Pasirlawang Village, Purwadadi District, Ciamis Regency. This program was carried out from August 5, 2024, to September 10, 2024, with the main objective of providing education and community empowerment in the areas of religion, economy, social, and environment. The program involved a group of ten students from four different majors, including Islamic Religious Education, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education, Sharia Economics, and Islamic Family Law. The approach applied during this program was observational and field research methods, aiming to gain a deep understanding of the local community's needs and challenges, as well as the impact of the program. The research methodology emphasizes the significance of observation in understanding the roles of higher education institutions in community service. By observing the practical application of academic knowledge in real-world settings, the study is designed to assess how educational institutions can support sustainable development. Furthermore, the research explores the contributions of the participating students in empowering Pasirlawang Village through collaborative and community-based activities. Observations were made regarding the interaction between the students, local residents, and local government officials, assessing how well these stakeholders worked together to achieve the set goals.

The data collection techniques employed in this program included interviews, observations, and documentary studies. These methods provided insights into the socio-economic, religious, and environmental conditions of Pasirlawang Village. Interviews were conducted with community leaders, local residents, and participants of various activities to gather qualitative data on the program's impact. Additionally, the team conducted direct field observations to assess how effectively the community engaged with the program's initiatives. Documentation analysis was also carried out to review the progress and results of the implemented activities, such as educational workshops, health promotion activities, and economic empowerment initiatives.

Data analysis was performed using qualitative methods, focusing on identifying themes, patterns, and correlations in the collected information. The analysis also included data visualization techniques to provide a clearer representation of the outcomes and activities. The involvement of the community was also evaluated in the planning and organizational stages of the program, as shown in the table below, which provides a breakdown of the village's



administrative structure. This table helped understand the distribution of resources and the accessibility of different areas of the village, guiding the planning process of the KKN program.

Table 1: Distribution of Areas in Pasirlawang Village (Source: Pasirlawang Village Archives)

No	Village Subdivision	Number of RT	Number of RW
1	Mekarsari	5	1
2	Pasanggrahan	8	1
3	Cakungsari	12	2
	Total	25	4

This table outlines the administrative subdivisions of Pasirlawang Village, which consists of three main districts: Mekarsari, Pasanggrahan, and Cakungsari. The data presented was crucial for planning the distribution of program activities across these districts, ensuring that every area was adequately covered and that the resources were used effectively. The engagement of local stakeholders was also pivotal in ensuring the success of the program, and this table served as a guide for targeted interventions based on the geographical and demographic characteristics of the village.

RESULTS

The Kuliah Kerja Nyata (KKN), or Community Service Program, is a practical learning experience conducted by higher education institutions in Indonesia. The primary aim of KKN is to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-life application through direct interaction with local communities. This program, which was first initiated by Universitas Gajah Mada, Universitas Hasanudin, and Universitas Andalas in the 1971/1972 academic year, has since become a hallmark of university education in Indonesia, with the President recommending all university students engage in community work for a set duration. The KKN program provides a valuable opportunity for students to apply their academic learning, tackle community issues, and contribute to social development, in alignment with the principle of problem-solving through a structured group-based approach. In the case of the KKN conducted by Institut Miftahul Huda Al-Azhar (IMA) Kota Banjar in Pasirlawang Village, Ciamis Regency, the program was carried out from August 5, 2024, to September 10, 2024. The program involved ten students from various academic disciplines, including Islamic Education, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education, Sharia Economics, and Islamic Family Law. The focus was on offering education and empowerment to the community in the fields of religion, education, health, environment, and economics. One of the key objectives was to create a harmonious relationship between the students (as agents of change) and the community members, which would hopefully lead to mutual benefits and sustainable impact.

The KKN program's significant impact on the Pasirlawang community was apparent in several sectors, starting with education and religion. This was evidenced by the active involvement of the local mosques and prayer rooms (mushola) in the educational activities that the students facilitated. The presence of the KKN students introduced new teaching methods, learning



materials, and interactive systems, which in turn increased student attendance and enthusiasm. In religious and educational institutions such as Raudhatul Atfal (RA), elementary schools (SD), and Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), the students' contribution not only motivated learners but also introduced diverse learning approaches that resonated with different types of learners, from introverted to extroverted students. Moreover, health and environmental programs were integral to the KKN's success. These included addressing public health issues such as stunting, environmental cleanliness, and health monitoring, particularly for the elderly. Initiatives like Posbindu (Integrated Health Post for the Elderly) and Posyandu (Integrated Health Service Post) were expanded to monitor and improve the overall health standards of the village. These activities provided regular health checks, immunizations for children, and disease prevention programs for adults, particularly in monitoring hypertension and diabetes among the elderly population.

The economic aspect of the KKN focused on supporting small-scale businesses (UMKM) in the village. Several UMKM in Pasirlawang, including those specializing in local snacks like chips and bonsai cultivation, were given advice on improving their production processes, enhancing marketing strategies, and expanding their customer base. One challenge observed was the limited capacity of production tools, which hindered the full potential of local entrepreneurship. Moreover, marketing strategies were primarily traditional, with only a few businesses leveraging social media. This pointed to a significant area for future growth and government support, especially in providing access to modern production tools and digital marketing platforms.

Cultural and social empowerment also played a significant role in strengthening community cohesion in Pasirlawang. The village's residents exhibited a strong sense of kinship and community, which was reflected in their collective participation in religious, social, and economic activities. Despite challenges posed by modern technological changes and the erosion of traditional values, the people of Pasirlawang have managed to retain their cooperative and harmonious spirit, thanks in part to the influence of religious leaders, community figures, and the educational programs provided by the KKN students.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the KKN in Pasirlawang underline the immense potential of university-based community service programs as vehicles for social change, community empowerment, and the practical application of academic knowledge. The KKN model, particularly in this case, demonstrated the crucial role of higher education institutions in contributing to national development, particularly in rural areas. The students' involvement in the Pasirlawang village highlighted the impact of higher education on community development and the positive outcomes that can arise when academic institutions foster a symbiotic relationship with the local population. One of the key takeaways from the KKN experience was the importance of adapting academic teachings to the local context. While the students brought theoretical knowledge to the table, the application of this knowledge required careful adaptation to local needs, culture, and practices. For example, while modern educational tools and strategies were introduced, they had to be adapted in a way that resonated with local learners, most of whom



were accustomed to traditional methods of learning. This adjustment process not only made the teaching more effective but also helped build a sense of ownership among the community members, particularly in religious and educational settings like mosques and madrasas. In the health sector, the KKN students' work in health monitoring and stunting prevention aligned with the Indonesian government's focus on improving public health in rural areas. The success of Posbindu and Posyandu programs in Pasirlawang was a direct result of the students' engagement with health practitioners and local authorities, creating a collaborative effort to address common health issues. Additionally, the students' active involvement in environmental cleanliness programs fostered a greater sense of responsibility within the community, leading to cleaner public spaces and better hygiene practices.

However, despite these successes, certain challenges persisted. The economic development aspect of the KKN highlighted the lack of access to modern production tools, limited marketing capacity, and a lack of awareness of digital marketing strategies among the village's small businesses. While some businesses were eager to adopt new technologies, they faced financial constraints and lacked the technical skills necessary to fully benefit from digital tools. This barrier to entrepreneurship was compounded by the fact that most UMKM owners continued to rely on traditional methods of production and marketing, which limited their reach to a wider audience. To overcome these challenges, the KKN program could consider focusing more on providing capacity-building initiatives related to digital marketing, business management, and modern production tools in future engagements. Collaborative partnerships with government agencies, private sector players, and non-governmental organizations could also help to address the gap in resources and skills in Pasirlawang, which would be essential in creating a sustainable economic ecosystem for the village.

Socially and culturally, the KKN program fostered a spirit of community collaboration and mutual support. The strong ties within the village allowed for successful cooperation in religious and social activities, and it was evident that the local culture of gotong royong (mutual cooperation) had a positive impact on the overall success of the program. The sense of belonging and shared responsibility among the community members was palpable, and the role of religious leaders and community elders in fostering unity cannot be underestimated. This cultural resilience is vital in preserving social harmony and ensuring that any external intervention, such as the KKN program, is accepted and integrated into the fabric of village life. In conclusion, while the KKN program in Pasirlawang demonstrated the transformative potential of community engagement in rural areas, it also highlighted the need for continuous efforts to address the challenges of economic development, health, education, and environmental sustainability. The collaboration between students, local government, and community members is a model that can be replicated across other rural areas in Indonesia. Moving forward, greater emphasis should be placed on addressing the barriers to economic development and enhancing digital literacy to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of such community-driven initiatives.



CONCLUSION

The Kuliah Kerja Nyata (KKN) program in Pasirlawang Village was an enriching experience for both the students and the community. This program, organized by the students of Institut Miftahul Huda Al-Azhar (IMA) of Kota Banjar, highlighted the importance of community engagement in fostering sustainable development. The main objective of this KKN initiative was to enhance the social, educational, economic, and environmental conditions of Pasirlawang, benefiting both the residents and the students who actively participated. The collaborative effort between students, local government, and community members played a crucial role in ensuring the program's success. Throughout the program, students were able to apply the theoretical knowledge gained in their academic studies to real-world situations, contributing directly to the development of the village. The programs implemented were designed to address the specific needs of the community, including educational workshops, health outreach, and environmental sustainability projects. Students were also able to introduce new methods of learning and engage the community through seminars, competitions, and practical training sessions. This hands-on experience not only helped the community to grow but also empowered the students with new skills and insights that will be valuable in their future professional lives.

One of the most significant achievements of this KKN was the impact it had on the local education and religious activities. By organizing educational programs for both children and adults, the students successfully fostered an environment of continuous learning. In particular, the introduction of more interactive learning methods and the use of diverse educational media proved to be very effective in increasing student engagement. Similarly, the religious programs held at local mosques and prayer halls helped reinforce the strong cultural and spiritual bonds within the community, enhancing the unity and cooperation among the residents. In the health and environmental sectors, the program's activities were also impactful. Through initiatives such as stunting prevention campaigns, environmental clean-up projects, and routine health check-ups at the local health posts (Posbindu and Posyandu), the students addressed pressing issues related to public health. These activities helped raise awareness about health concerns and the importance of maintaining a clean and sustainable environment. Furthermore, the collaboration with local healthcare workers ensured that the initiatives were effective and that the community had access to necessary health services.

In conclusion, the KKN program in Pasirlawang Village not only provided valuable learning experiences for the students but also significantly contributed to the development of the community. The collaboration between students, local government, and the community created a model for future community engagement projects that blend education, social responsibility, and sustainable development. This initiative has demonstrated the potential for academic institutions to play a pivotal role in addressing social and environmental issues while fostering a deeper sense of civic responsibility among students. Moving forward, it is hoped that more such programs will be conducted to continue building bridges between academia and local communities.



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