

Participatory Action Research on Handicraft Training to Empower PKK Women and Support SDGs

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Abstract: The empowerment of rural communities, particularly women, is crucial for improving family welfare through creative economic activities and supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This study involved PKK women in Sentul Barat Hamlet, Tiru Lor Village, Kediri Regency, who showed enthusiasm for community programs but lacked productive economic skills. The program aimed to enhance their technical abilities and creativity through handicraft training, focusing on bouquet arrangements made from snacks and kitchen spices. Using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, the study emphasized community involvement in needs assessment, planning, implementation, and reflection. Data were collected through observation, group discussions, and practice sessions. The training engaged 13 participants, all of whom successfully completed the program and produced at least two marketable products. The activity strengthened collaboration between the academic team, local government, and the community, although time constraints limited marketing and branding exploration. The findings indicate that PAR-based training effectively improves women's skills, fosters creativity, and promotes microeconomic empowerment. In conclusion, the initiative highlights the potential of community-based handicraft training to enhance local entrepreneurship, support sustainable economic growth, and contribute to SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth).

INTRODUCTION

Community empowerment is one of the strategic agendas aimed at improving welfare and promoting economic independence at the grassroots level. Women, particularly those organized under the Family Welfare Movement (PKK), play a vital role in enhancing family welfare (Fauziah, 2025) through productive, creativity-based economic activities. Previous studies indicate that empowering women through creative skills training has a direct impact on increasing household income (Masrurroh & Sadhie, 2024) while simultaneously strengthening self-confidence (Pagan et al., 2024). Globally, the World Bank and

UN Women emphasize that equal access for women to productive activities accelerates the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Basiroen et al., 2024), particularly Goal 5 (Gender Equality) and Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

In Indonesia, women's empowerment programs at the village level often face challenges such as limited capital, low technical skills, and insufficient access to information about business opportunities. These issues were also identified in Sentul Barat Hamlet, Tiru Lor Village, Gurah District, Kediri Regency. The local community especially PKK members demonstrated a strong spirit of togetherness; however, their activities remained confined to social routines and had not yet been linked to productive economic ventures capable of improving family welfare. Therefore, a scientifically based intervention was needed to address community needs through a participatory and sustainable approach.

This community service initiative employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. The PAR method encourages the active involvement of community members as agents of change, where problem identification, planning, implementation, and reflection are conducted collaboratively. This approach differs from conventional methods that tend to position communities merely as objects of development. The novelty of this study lies in the application of PAR in handicraft training within the PKK community as a model for microeconomic empowerment.

The program focused on training participants to create handicrafts such as snack and spice bouquets selected for their affordability, market value, and strong consumer demand for events such as birthdays and graduations. This training not only enhanced participants' technical skills but also stimulated creativity, nurtured entrepreneurship, and opened opportunities for additional income. Thus, the objective of this community service activity was to improve the technical skills and creativity of PKK women in Sentul Barat Hamlet through PAR-based handicraft training and to identify its impact on microeconomic empowerment and community self-reliance.

RESEARCH METHODS

This community service project employed *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) as its primary approach. PAR was chosen because it emphasizes active community participation in every stage of the process (Siswadi & Syaifuddin, 2024). Rather than positioning the community as an object of intervention, PAR regards them as subjects and partners in social transformation. This approach is particularly relevant to the PKK women in Sentul Barat Hamlet, who exhibit high enthusiasm for community engagement but possess limited skills related to productive economic activities.

Using the PAR model, the handicraft training focused on creating snack and spice bouquets was designed not merely as a skill transfer program but also as an empowerment platform to foster creativity (Azmi et al., 2024), enhance self-confidence, and open opportunities for small-scale entrepreneurship. This aligns with the objectives of the community service initiative, which emphasizes improving rural women's skills to strengthen household economic resilience (Zuhriyah et al., 2024) and support sustainable development.

Conceptually, PAR is rooted in Kurt Lewin's idea of action research, which was developed as a collaborative method for solving social problems (Afandi et al., 2022). PAR has since evolved into an approach integrating three key dimensions: (1) addressing practical community issues, (2) generating new knowledge, and (3) fostering sustainable social change. Its core principles participation, action, and reflection highlight that empowerment must be conducted *with* the community, not *for* the community. All stakeholders, including lecturers, students, village officials, and PKK women, were part of a socially oriented learning cycle focused on problem-solving.

The implementation of PAR in this program consisted of five stages:

a. *To Know* (Understanding the Real Situation)

The initial stage involved observation and immersion with the residents of Sentul Barat Hamlet. The student team participated in local health post activities and PKK daily routines before initiating the training. This step aimed to build trust and gain a comprehensive understanding of the community's social,

economic, and cultural conditions. From this stage, it was identified that the PKK women had strong communal solidarity but lacked skills related to productive economic activities.

b. *To Understand* (Identifying Community Issues)

The second stage involved focus group discussions (FGDs) with PKK members. During the sessions, participants expressed their desire to learn new, economically beneficial yet simple-to-learn skills. The discussions resulted in a consensus to conduct handicraft training on snack and spice bouquet making, as the materials were affordable, easily accessible, and produced goods with clear market potential.

c. *To Plan* (Designing the Action Plan)

Activity planning was carried out collaboratively through several strategic steps. First, the training venue was determined to be the house of a local PKK leader, Mrs. Talia, considered a suitable and accessible location. Second, the number of participants was set at 13 PKK members from Sentul Barat Hamlet who showed interest in joining the training. Third, a detailed schedule was arranged, including the opening session, welcoming remarks, material presentation, bouquet-making practice, and reflection session. Simple and locally available materials were prepared, such as used cardboard, sponges, skewers, snacks, kitchen spices, bouquet paper, ribbons, and glue guns as the main adhesive.

d. *To Act* (Executing the Action Program)

The training was conducted on August 12, 2025, involving 13 participants in hands-on handicraft sessions. During practice, participants were introduced to basic bouquet-making techniques preparing the frame using cardboard and sponges, arranging snacks or spices on skewers, organizing bouquet paper neatly, and decorating with ribbons and tissue. All participants successfully completed at least two saleable bouquets. Their enthusiasm was evident, as many expressed prides in being able to create their own handcrafted products.

e. *To Change* (Building Awareness and Sustainability)

The final stage involved a joint reflection session with participants. They realized that this simple activity could open up new business opportunities for graduation gifts, birthdays, or family events. Although time constraints prevented the optimization of marketing aspects, participants committed to developing these skills further. The reflection stage also fostered greater confidence among PKK women, reinforcing their belief that they can contribute to enhancing their families' economic well-being.

Strengths and Challenges Analysis

The *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) method used in this activity proved to offer several significant advantages. First, this approach provided opportunities for PKK women to be actively involved in every stage of the process from problem identification to program reflection allowing them to become not only beneficiaries but also key agents of change. Second, the activity offered experiential learning, enabling participants to acquire skills through hands-on practice rather than theoretical instruction alone. Third, the training successfully utilized local resources by employing inexpensive, simple, and easily accessible materials, ensuring that the skills learned could be independently replicated at home.

However, several limitations were encountered during implementation. The relatively short duration of the program restricted the exploration of marketing aspects and product branding strategies in greater depth. Moreover, continuous mentoring is required to ensure that the acquired skills can further develop into sustainable and productive economic ventures.

Through the PAR approach, the handicraft training program in Sentul Barat Hamlet effectively enhanced the technical skills, creativity, and microeconomic awareness of PKK women. The collaborative process not only resulted in the creation of marketable bouquet products but also fostered self-reliance and entrepreneurial spirit. Therefore, PAR can be viewed as a strategic approach that bridges academic knowledge with real community needs while delivering sustainable impact on rural economic development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the community service program in Sentul Barat Hamlet, Tiru Lor Village, Gurah District, Kediri Regency began with a clear and measurable objective: to enhance the skills of PKK women in creating handicraft products that are both creative and aesthetically pleasing while possessing market value. From the outset, the program was designed using a participatory approach, ensuring that the community members were not merely passive beneficiaries but active participants throughout the entire process. Consequently, the PKK women had the opportunity to develop their potential while contributing meaningfully to improving family welfare (Azmi et al., 2024).

The first objective of the program was to improve the technical skills of the PKK women in Sentul Barat Hamlet. The results indicate that this target was successfully achieved. Through training in making snack and spice bouquets, participants were introduced to various practical techniques from cutting cardboard for the frame, arranging snacks or spices with skewers, wrapping with decorative paper, to adding ribbons and embellishments. The learning process adopted an experiential learning model, allowing participants to acquire skills through direct practice rather than theoretical explanation alone (Haryati & Makarim, 2025). This approach enabled them to learn faster and gain confidence to replicate the products independently at home. Each participant managed to produce at least two bouquets with good quality and visual appeal, suitable for sale at events such as birthdays, graduations, or family celebrations. This achievement demonstrates that with an appropriate approach, technical skills can be significantly improved even within a relatively short training period.

The second objective was to empower families economically at the micro level. During the post-training discussion, the participants realized that their handmade products carried not only creative but also economic value. They calculated that the required capital was relatively small, as most materials such as cardboard and foam could be recycled from household items, while snacks and spices were easily purchased from nearby stalls at low cost. Meanwhile, the selling price of a bouquet could reach two to three times the initial capital,

depending on design creativity and content quantity. This realization fostered new motivation among the women to market their products, both locally and via social media. Thus, the program successfully raised awareness that simple activities could transform into entrepreneurial opportunities to supplement family income.

The next objective was to optimize the use of PKK women's leisure time through positive, productive, and meaningful activities. Based on collective reflection, many participants admitted that before the training, their free time was mostly spent on routine household tasks or casual social activities that provided little economic benefit. Through this training, they felt more productive as they were able to create valuable works. Several participants even expressed pride in showcasing their creations to their families especially their children as proof of their creative and useful skills. Therefore, the activity not only filled leisure time with positive engagement but also enhanced the participants' self-confidence and self-esteem as empowered individuals.

Beyond technical and economic aspects, another important goal of this program was to strengthen social bonds and foster teamwork among PKK members. This was evident throughout the training process, which was characterized by mutual assistance, tool sharing, idea exchange, and encouragement. The atmosphere was lively and enjoyable, making the training interactive rather than monotonous. This sense of togetherness strengthened solidarity and social cohesion among the women. Such warm interaction is crucial in community empowerment because the success of a program depends not only on the tangible product outcomes but also on the social process within it. Through this activity, the values of cooperation and collaboration were revived and internalized, serving as social capital for future PKK initiatives.

The final objective of the program was to apply academic knowledge gained from university studies to direct community engagement through a participatory method. The involvement of students and lecturers in this program was not limited to that of instructors but rather as facilitators who encouraged active participation from the community. This participatory approach aligns with the principles of *Participatory Action Research* (PAR), which served as the core

method of this activity. Through PAR, students were able to apply theoretical knowledge acquired in coursework (Ramdhani, 2025), particularly in areas of community empowerment, entrepreneurship, and creative economy development. Simultaneously, the community benefited from acquiring new skills and business opportunities. This synergy between academia and community demonstrates that knowledge does not end in theory but can be practically implemented to meet real societal needs.

From the perspective of program outcomes, this activity successfully achieved its predetermined goals. Participants improved their technical skills, recognized the economic potential of their products, utilized their time more productively, strengthened social solidarity, and actively engaged in participatory learning. Nevertheless, several important points should be considered for future development. One notable limitation was the short duration of the program, which prevented in-depth exploration of marketing and product branding strategies. These aspects are crucial to ensure that handicraft products can reach a wider market and generate more significant economic impact.

Furthermore, the program revealed that sustainability must be planned from the beginning. A one-time training session is insufficient to establish sustainable economic enterprises. Therefore, follow-up mentoring is needed, including additional training, marketing network development, and support from local government or business partners. Such follow-up initiatives would help transform the potential emerging from this activity into stable micro-enterprises.

From a theoretical perspective, the outcomes of this program reinforce the understanding that PAR is an effective method for community engagement. Through its cyclical process of *to know, to understand, to plan, to act, and to change* (Wahyuni et al., 2025), PAR enables collaborative learning, concrete action, and critical reflection that foster new awareness. This aligns with academic studies emphasizing that community empowerment cannot be achieved through a top-down approach but must involve the community as active subjects of change.

When viewed in the context of sustainable development, this activity aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly Goal 5

(Gender Equality) and Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). By providing access to skill training for rural women, the program contributes to improving household economic capacity while strengthening women's roles within the community.

Overall, the results and discussion affirm that a simple training activity such as creating snack and spice bouquets can generate wide-ranging impacts spanning technical skills, microeconomics, time management, social cohesion, and knowledge application. This program serves as evidence that effective collaboration between universities and communities can yield tangible benefits when designed through a participatory approach. Moving forward, program development that integrates aspects of marketing, branding, and product innovation is expected to enhance the program's long-term impact and ensure sustainable community empowerment in Sentul Barat Hamlet.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The community service program conducted in Sentul Barat Hamlet, Tiru Lor Village, Gurah District, Kediri Regency demonstrates that handicraft training specifically in creating snack and spice bouquets using the *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) approach can bring tangible benefits to rural women's empowerment. The entire series of activities successfully improved the PKK women's technical abilities, fostered creativity, and broadened their understanding of home-based business opportunities. The participants' active involvement from needs assessment to final reflection proved that PAR fosters collective ownership, self-confidence, and social solidarity.

In addition to producing aesthetically appealing and marketable products, this program contributed to strengthening family microeconomies, optimizing leisure time through productive activities, and building a positive collaborative learning climate. Thus, the program not only enhanced individual skills but also reinforced the socio-economic foundation of the PKK community as a driving force of village development.

For program sustainability, continuous mentoring is essential to transform the acquired skills into productive economic ventures through further training in digital marketing, small business management, and product branding strategies. Strengthening collaboration among PKK members, village authorities, universities, and local MSMEs will also be vital to expand market access and funding opportunities. Developing a diversified range of local-based handicraft products and integrating them into village programs such as BUMDes or women's cooperatives can ensure stronger institutional support. Finally, documentation and publication of the program outcomes should be enhanced to serve as a best practice model that can be replicated in other regions while contributing to the advancement of community-based participatory service learning.

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