

## **DEVELOPING EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN PENANG, MALAYSIA**

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### **Abstract**

*This community service program aims to develop educational psychological support for the children of Indonesian migrant workers residing in Penang, Malaysia. Migrant workers' children are a vulnerable group facing various psychological and academic challenges, such as limited access to formal education, cultural adaptation issues, emotional instability due to separation from extended family in Indonesia, and a lack of developmentally appropriate learning stimulation. This program is designed with a psychoeducational support approach, including an initial assessment of children's abilities and needs, providing cognitive and socio-emotional developmental stimulation activities, emotional regulation training, strengthening learning motivation, and basic academic support. Implementation methods include educational games, tutoring, child group counseling, and training for parents or caregivers on home learning support. The results of the activities indicate an increase in learning engagement, emotional regulation skills, and children's confidence in facing academic demands. This program emphasizes the importance of structured educational psychological support for migrant workers' children as an effort to improve their psychological well-being and the quality of their education in a migrant environment.*

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## **Introduction**

The phenomenon of Indonesian labor migration abroad, particularly to Malaysia, not only impacts families economically but also raises complex psychosocial and educational issues. Various studies show that migrant families—including children, adolescents, and parents—face multidimensional vulnerabilities due to limited access to formal education, psychological stress, changes in family structure, and challenges of cultural and social adaptation.

Several studies confirm that Indonesian migrant workers' children are vulnerable due to limited access to education and social protection. Research on sexual violence prevention education indicates that migrant workers' children are at higher risk of violence due to weak monitoring systems and limited reproductive health literacy.

Educational and play-based interventions have proven effective in increasing children's knowledge, but they are still limited to cognitive aspects and do not address deeper psychological dimensions (Hidayati et al. 2023).

In addition to protection, limited access to formal education also impacts the low career literacy of migrant workers' children. Career psychoeducation programs implemented in guidance centers or Community Learning Centers (CLCs) have been shown to improve children's understanding of various professions and foster motivation and self-confidence. However, most of these programs focus on the child as an individual, neglecting the role of the family, particularly the psychological well-being of parents, in shaping children's aspirations and motivation to learn.

Administrative limitations and citizenship status prevent many migrant workers' children from accessing formal schooling in Malaysia (Harkrisnowo 2021). In this context, the existence of Community Learning Centers (CLCs), tutoring studios, and Islamic educational institutions offers strategic alternative solutions. Research on the implementation of CLCs in Sabah shows that collaboration between the Indonesian and Malaysian governments is able to provide basic education services for migrant workers' children, despite challenges related to resources, legality, and quality of learning.

Another study highlighted the role of Islamic educational institutions for the children of Madurese migrant workers in Malaysia. These institutions serve not only as a means of religious education but also as a means of preserving cultural identity and character development. However, challenges include limited teaching staff, funding, and the need to balance religious and general education curricula. These studies confirm that migrant children's education remains structural and institutional, with relatively little attention to family psychological dynamics.

Parental migration, particularly maternal migration, has been shown to influence the parenting patterns and well-being of children left behind. Studies of child welfare in Indonesia show that changes in family structure due to migration impact children's psychological well-being, education, and health. Children raised by grandparents or extended family often experience different parenting styles, potentially impacting emotional development and academic achievement.

For adolescents, research based on the principles of Islamic law (Maqashid Syariah) found that the well-being of adolescents from migrant worker families was not always lower than that of adolescents from non-migrant families. Some dimensions of well-being, such as religious and intellectual, actually showed relatively good performance. However, the mental health dimension of adolescents from migrant worker families tended to be lower, indicating psychological distress that had not been optimally addressed. These findings demonstrate that the well-being of migrant children and adolescents is multidimensional and cannot be explained solely by economic factors (Jung and Kim 2020).

Sociological studies of education indicate that children of Indonesian migrant workers are structurally marginalized due to their families' socioeconomic status and parental migration, resulting in low access to formal education and poor quality of learning (Kodriati et al. 2023). Migrant children's education often takes place in non-formal tutoring centers, which are not yet fully recognized in the national education systems or in destination countries.

From a policy perspective, children of migrant workers are often "missing" in migrant worker protection regulations because the policy focus is more on the employment aspects of parents, rather than children's rights as subjects of education and protection (International Organizations For Migrations (IOM) 2023). As a result, access to education and child protection is residual and unsystematic.

Legal analysis shows that although the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Malaysian law recognize the right to education for all children without discrimination, in practice, Indonesian migrant children still face administrative barriers, immigration status, and structural discrimination that limit access to formal schooling (Refita, Sulton, and Asmaroini 2024). This highlights the gap between legal norms and implementation on the ground.

The final two articles focus on educational interventions related to the prevention of sexual violence. Participatory game-based education has been shown to improve migrant workers' children's knowledge of reproductive health, body boundaries, and mechanisms for reporting sexual violence (Kodriati et al., 2023; Kodriati et al., 2023). Pre- and post-test results showed a 13.40% increase in knowledge, indicating the effectiveness of an educational approach based on developmental psychology and public health.

## **Method**

The mentoring method for community service students in Penang Malaysia, for students in Penang Malaysia is as follows: 1). Direct Learning Method: Community service students in Penang Malaysia will conduct direct learning in class. 2). Group Learning Method: Community service students in Penang Malaysia will divide students into several small groups to conduct discussions, games, and other activities that can improve the academic and non-academic abilities of students, 4). Activity-Based Learning Method: Community service students in Penang Malaysia will organize extracurricular activities, such as sports, arts, and other activities that can improve the non-academic abilities of students, 5). Evaluation Method: Community service students in Penang Malaysia will conduct regular evaluations to monitor the progress of students and identify areas that need improvement. By using various mentoring methods, it is hoped that it can improve the academic and non-academic abilities of students in Penang Malaysia.

## Result and Discussion

### 1. Education and Vulnerability of Migrant Children

Several studies highlight that children of Indonesian migrant workers experience limited access to formal education and increased vulnerability to psychosocial risks. Educational interventions focusing on sexual violence prevention and career psychoeducation demonstrate positive effects on children's knowledge, awareness, and motivation. However, these interventions largely address cognitive and informational aspects, with limited attention to emotional wellbeing or family context.

Community Learning Centers (CLC), learning shelters, and Islamic educational institutions play a critical role in providing educational access for migrant children in Malaysia. These institutions function not only as learning spaces but also as social support systems preserving cultural and religious identity. Nevertheless, challenges related to legal status, resources, and instructional quality persist, limiting their long-term effectiveness.

Research on left-behind children and adolescents indicates that parental migration—particularly maternal migration—significantly influences caregiving arrangements and child wellbeing. Adolescents from migrant families show mixed welfare outcomes: while some dimensions such as religious and intellectual wellbeing remain stable, psychological wellbeing tends to be lower compared to peers from non-migrant families. These findings suggest that economic benefits do not automatically translate into holistic wellbeing.

Studies on migrant workers reveal moderate to high levels of anxiety related to work stress, legal uncertainty, and family separation (Porusia et al. 2023). Interventions using relaxation techniques show limited effectiveness. In contrast, a recent study applying a positive psychology-based HERO (Hope, Self-efficacy, Resilience, Optimism) training demonstrated significant and sustained improvements in migrant parents' psychological wellbeing (Eva et al. 2022). This finding indicates the potential of strength-based mental health interventions in migrant contexts.



Picture 1. Meeting with parents

International Community Service (KKN) students assigned to the Permai Guidance Center (SBP) in Kulim, Lunas, Kedah, Malaysia, held a farewell event on Tuesday evening (February 18th). This activity concluded the several-week-long community

service program. The event was warmly attended by KKN students, studio administrators, and the surrounding community. A welcoming speech was given by the management of SB Permai Kulim, who expressed their appreciation for the students' dedication in sharing knowledge and introducing Indonesian culture to the students.

The Head of the Kriss Garuda Community also expressed his gratitude and expressed his hope that the friendship and camaraderie would continue even after the program ended. During the KKN program, students actively participated in various activities, including introducing Indonesian culture, creating maps of Indonesia, making crafts from paper towels, and creating lanterns from used bottles and balloons. The event concluded with a friendly gathering and group photos, leaving fond memories for both parties. Hopefully, this togetherness will be the beginning of a cross-cultural friendship between Indonesia and Malaysia.



Picture 2. Photo with the students

## Conclusion

The findings indicate that current research on Indonesian migrant families remains fragmented across educational and psychological domains. Most educational studies overlook parental psychological wellbeing, while mental health research rarely examines its implications for children's learning and development.

The application of positive psychology interventions for migrant parents represents a significant advancement, aligning with contemporary shifts toward resilience and wellbeing-oriented frameworks. Integrating parental psychological wellbeing into educational and family studies may provide a more comprehensive understanding of migrant family resilience.

For psychology of education, these findings underscore the importance of family climate and parental wellbeing in shaping children's motivation and learning engagement. For policymakers and practitioners, family-based interventions offer a promising strategy to enhance both educational and psychological outcomes among migrant families.

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