

Long Distance Parenting: an Academic Endeavor Addressing the Challenges Faced by Indonesian Migrant Workers

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ABSTRACT The collaborative effort between LSM SHARING, the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, PPI UPSI Malaysia, and 115 universities in Indonesia and Malaysia, aimed to address the challenges faced by Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) engaged in problematic situations. This hybrid event, conducted over one semester from October to December 2023, sought to empower PMI in their roles as parents while working abroad. The program included workshops, counseling sessions, and interactive forums tailored to the specific needs identified through a comprehensive needs assessment. The needs assessment highlighted a significant knowledge gap among PMI regarding effective strategies for Long Distance Parenting, emphasizing the urgency of targeted interventions. Drawing inspiration from empirical evidence in the literature, the curriculum addressed practical and emotional dimensions, focusing on communication, emotional support, and technological utilization. Results indicated positive impacts on emotional and psychological well-being, demonstrating the program's effectiveness in mitigating the challenges associated with Long Distance Parenting.

Keywords: Long Distance Parenting; Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI); Hybrid Event; Emotional Well-being; Collaborative Intervention

INTRODUCTION

The advent of globalization has brought about unprecedented opportunities for economic mobility, leading to the rise of a substantial migrant workforce across the world. Among them, Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) play a vital role in contributing to the economic development of both their host countries and Indonesia. However, this pursuit of livelihood often comes at a significant cost, especially in the context of familial relationships. The phenomenon of Long-Distance Parenting has emerged as a pressing issue, as PMI grapple with the challenges of maintaining meaningful connections with their families while working abroad.

A comprehensive understanding of the impact of Long-Distance Parenting on PMI requires a nuanced exploration of the multifaceted challenges faced by these individuals. The separation from their families, particularly from their children, has profound implications on the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of both parents and offspring. As highlighted by studies such

as that of Asis and Ruiz (2015), the absence of parents due to international migration can lead to heightened stress and emotional distress for children left behind, potentially affecting their educational attainment and overall development.

The significance of addressing the issues related to Long Distance Parenting becomes even more pronounced when considering the scale of the Indonesian diaspora. With a considerable number of PMI seeking employment opportunities abroad, there is an urgent need to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the complexities of parenting from a distance. This aligns with the findings of Hugo (2014), who emphasizes the importance of providing migrant parents with resources and support to mitigate the negative consequences of separation on family dynamics.

The unique circumstances faced by PMI currently under the care of the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur add an additional layer of complexity to this issue. These individuals, often grappling with various challenges such as legal issues, workplace exploitation, and cultural adjustment, are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of Long-Distance Parenting. Recognizing this vulnerability, the collaborative initiative between SHARING, the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, PPI UPSI Malaysia, and numerous universities in Indonesia and Malaysia seeks to address these challenges by providing tailored support and education.

In light of the existing literature and the identified gaps in knowledge, it becomes evident that Long Distance Parenting is not merely an individual concern but a societal issue that necessitates collective action. The initiative, taking place over one semester through a hybrid event, aims to empower PMI with the necessary tools and knowledge to foster healthier and more resilient familial relationships despite the physical distance.

By delving into the complexities of Long Distance Parenting and its implications for PMI, this collaborative effort seeks not only to address the immediate challenges faced by these individuals but also to contribute to a broader discourse on the intersection of migration, parenting, and family dynamics. The following sections will elucidate the methodology, results, and discussions derived from this innovative initiative, shedding light on the potential avenues for transformative change in the lives of PMI.

2. METHOD

The methodology employed in the "Long Distance Parenting" initiative was designed to be comprehensive, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) and their specific needs in the realm of parenting from a distance.

1. Needs Assessment:

Prior to the initiation of the program, a thorough needs assessment was conducted through surveys and interviews among the targeted PMI group currently under the care of the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. The goal was to identify the specific challenges, concerns, and gaps in knowledge regarding Long Distance Parenting. This initial phase drew inspiration from the works of Antman (2010) and Dreby (2010), emphasizing the importance of tailoring interventions based on the unique needs of migrant families.

2. Literature Review:

A comprehensive review of existing literature on Long Distance Parenting, migration, and the psychological impact on families provided the theoretical framework for the initiative. Studies by Baldassar (2007) and Bryceson (2002) informed the development of the curriculum, ensuring that it was rooted in empirical evidence and best practices from similar contexts.

3. Curriculum Development:

Building upon the insights gained from the needs assessment and literature review, a curriculum was developed to address the identified gaps in knowledge and skills. Workshops, counseling sessions, and interactive forums were designed to be culturally sensitive and relevant to the experiences of PMI. The curriculum development process drew inspiration from successful interventions discussed by Graham and Jordan (2011), ensuring a holistic approach to Long Distance Parenting support.

4. Collaboration with Universities:

Recognizing the importance of a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach, partnerships were forged with 115 universities in Indonesia and Malaysia. This collaboration allowed for the pooling of resources, expertise, and diverse perspectives. The engagement of universities also aligned with the recommendations of Hugo (2014) to integrate migrant support programs into educational institutions.

5. Hybrid Event Implementation:

The initiative was executed through a hybrid event spanning one semester, with activities conducted in the months of October, November, and December 2023. This format allowed for a flexible and accessible delivery of the program, accommodating the diverse schedules and locations of the PMI participants. The hybrid model drew inspiration from successful virtual initiatives discussed by Alarcón et al. (2020) and in-person interventions highlighted by Dreby (2010).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The "Long Distance Parenting" initiative, a collaborative effort between SHARING, the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, PPI UPSI Malaysia, and universities in Indonesia and Malaysia, unfolded over one semester through a hybrid event. The following section outlines the results obtained from the various components of the program and engages in a comprehensive discussion on their implications.

1. Needs Assessment Results:

The needs assessment conducted prior to the initiation of the program provided crucial insights into the challenges faced by Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) in their roles as distant parents. Surveys and interviews revealed a pronounced knowledge gap regarding effective strategies for maintaining familial connections across borders. Additionally, emotional and psychological well-being emerged as significant concerns for both PMI and their children left behind.

This aligns with the findings of Antman (2010), who emphasized the importance of addressing the unique needs of migrant families through targeted interventions. The results reinforced the necessity of a holistic approach that encompasses both practical and emotional dimensions of Long-Distance Parenting.

2. Curriculum Impact:

The carefully crafted curriculum, rooted in empirical evidence from literature reviews and the needs assessment, played a pivotal role in equipping PMI with the necessary knowledge and skills. Workshops focused on practical strategies for effective communication, emotional support, and the use of technology to bridge the physical distance. Counseling sessions provided a safe space for PMI to share their experiences and receive personalized guidance.

The impact of the curriculum was evident in post-event evaluations, with participants expressing increased confidence in navigating the challenges of Long Distance Parenting. The emphasis on culturally sensitive approaches, as inspired by Graham and Jordan (2011), contributed to the effectiveness of the program, ensuring that interventions were relevant to the diverse backgrounds of PMI.

3. Collaborative University Partnerships:

The collaboration with 115 universities in Indonesia and Malaysia facilitated a dynamic exchange of resources and expertise. Interactive forums hosted during the hybrid event allowed PMI to connect with academics, students, and fellow migrant workers, creating a supportive network. This collaborative approach not only enriched the program but also aligned with the recommendations of Hugo (2014) to integrate migrant support into educational institutions.

The engagement of universities also provided a platform for ongoing research and evaluation. Researchers from various disciplines could contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by PMI and the effectiveness of support programs. This collaborative research aspect aligns with the call for interdisciplinary approaches in addressing migration-related issues (Alarcón et al., 2020).

4. Hybrid Event Adaptability:

The hybrid nature of the program, combining both virtual and in-person components, proved to be adaptable and inclusive. PMI, often dispersed across different locations, could participate in the activities without the constraints of geographical distance. Virtual workshops and forums facilitated meaningful interactions, while in-person counseling sessions allowed for a more personalized touch.

This adaptability resonates with the observations of Dreby (2010), who noted the importance of flexible and accessible support mechanisms for migrant families. The hybrid model not only accommodated the diverse circumstances of PMI but also set a precedent for future initiatives seeking to address the multifaceted challenges of Long Distance Parenting.

5. Emotional and Psychological Well-being Impact:

One of the critical outcomes of the initiative was the positive impact on the emotional and psychological well-being of both PMI and their children. The emphasis on emotional support and coping strategies in the curriculum, coupled with counseling sessions, contributed to a heightened sense of resilience among participants. This aligns with the research of Baldassar (2007), which highlights the central role of emotional connections in mitigating the negative effects of parental absence. The initiative not only provided practical tools for effective parenting but also fostered a sense of community and understanding among PMI, mitigating the feelings of isolation often associated with migration.

6. Sustainability and Future Directions:

While the results indicated significant positive outcomes, the sustainability of these impacts is a critical consideration. Continuous engagement with universities, the establishment of online support networks, and the integration of Long-Distance Parenting education into pre-departure training programs for migrant workers emerge as potential avenues for sustaining the initiative's impact. Moreover, ongoing research and evaluation will be essential to adapt the program to evolving challenges and incorporate new insights. The collaborative nature of the initiative positions it well for continuous improvement and expansion, ensuring that it remains responsive to the dynamic needs of PMI.



Figure 1. Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI)



Figure 1. Flyer Community Service Activities

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the "Long Distance Parenting" initiative successfully addressed the challenges faced by Indonesian Migrant Workers in fulfilling their parental roles while working abroad. The results demonstrated the effectiveness of a comprehensive and collaborative approach,

drawing on needs assessments, literature reviews, and partnerships with universities. The positive impact on emotional and psychological well-being, coupled with the adaptability of the hybrid event model, underscores the potential for transformative change in the lives of PMI.

Moving forward, sustained efforts are required to ensure the longevity of these positive outcomes. The integration of Long-Distance Parenting support into broader migration policies, ongoing collaboration with academic institutions, and a commitment to continuous research and evaluation will be instrumental in shaping the future of initiatives aimed at supporting PMI and their families. The success of "Long Distance Parenting" serves as a beacon for future endeavors seeking to address the complex intersection of migration, parenting, and family dynamics on a global scale.

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