

Strategies for Self-Development among Indonesian Migrant Workers in Malaysia in the Digital Era: A Community Engagement Initiative

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ABSTRACT The community engagement initiative, "Strategies for Self-Development among Indonesian Migrant Workers in Malaysia in the Digital Era," addresses the multifaceted challenges faced by Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) under the care of the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. Over one semester, the program unfolded through hybrid events at the Hasanuddin Hall, combining virtual and in-person sessions from October to December 2023. A collaborative effort between LSM SHARING, the Indonesian Embassy, PPI UPSI Malaysia, and 115 universities, the program aimed to empower PMI through enhanced digital literacy, psychological well-being, and cultural integration. The needs assessment phase revealed significant gaps in digital skills, mental health, and cultural assimilation among PMI. Workshops, webinars, and counselling sessions were strategically employed to address these challenges. Pre- and post-assessment surveys indicated a substantial improvement in digital literacy levels, reduced psychological stress, and enhanced cultural integration. The success of the program emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach in addressing the unique challenges faced by PMI. The challenges faced, including technology accessibility and language barriers, highlight the need for continuous needs assessment and flexible program design. Recommendations include sustained support systems, tailored language programs, improved technology accessibility, and strengthened collaborative partnerships. In conclusion, the community engagement program serves as a model for empowering PMI, contributing to their resilience in the digital era. Lessons learned and recommendations provide valuable insights for future initiatives targeting the well-being of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Malaysia.

Keywords: *Indonesian Migrant Workers, Community Engagement, Digital Literacy, Psychological Well-Being, Cultural Integration.*

INTRODUCTION

In the globalized world of the 21st century, the role of migrant workers has become increasingly pivotal, contributing significantly to the economic development of host countries. Among these workers, Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) play a crucial role in various sectors,

particularly in Malaysia. Despite their essential contributions, PMI often grapple with a myriad of challenges ranging from exploitation to cultural assimilation, exacerbated by the rapidly evolving digital landscape. This backdrop necessitated the initiation of the community engagement program titled "Strategies for Self-Development among Indonesian Migrant Workers in Malaysia in the Digital Era."

The vulnerability of migrant workers is well-documented in the literature. Smith et al. (2019) illuminate the multifaceted challenges faced by migrant workers, emphasizing the need for comprehensive support systems that encompass psychological, social, and economic dimensions. The unique context of PMI, especially those under the care of the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, calls for tailored initiatives to address their specific issues. It is against this backdrop that the community engagement program emerged, recognizing the imperative of empowering PMI with skills and knowledge to navigate the complexities of the contemporary digital era.

The challenges encountered by PMI extend beyond the conventional labor-related issues. Social isolation, discrimination, and limited access to resources often hinder their successful integration into the host society. Lee and Kim (2020) shed light on the pivotal role of digital literacy in enhancing the adaptability of migrant workers in the evolving job market. The community engagement program acknowledges the significance of self-development as a holistic approach to address the multifaceted challenges faced by PMI, aligning with the findings in the existing literature. By focusing on enhancing digital literacy, psychological well-being, and social integration, the program aims to equip PMI with the tools needed for a more resilient and empowered existence.

The advent of the digital era has revolutionized the nature of work and communication, demanding a paradigm shift in strategies to empower migrant workers. PMI, being at the forefront of this transformation, require not only traditional skills but also digital literacy to navigate an increasingly interconnected world. The community engagement program recognizes the urgency of bridging this digital divide, aligning with contemporary literature that underscores the role of digital literacy in enhancing the adaptability of workers (Lee & Kim, 2020).

In essence, this introduction underscores the urgent need for tailored initiatives that address the unique challenges faced by PMI in Malaysia, specifically those under the care of the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. The forthcoming sections will delve into the methodology, outcomes, and recommendations of the community engagement program, shedding light on its potential to serve as a blueprint for empowering PMI in the digital era.

2. METHOD

The community engagement program aimed at enhancing the self-development of Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) in Malaysia was meticulously designed to address the multifaceted challenges faced by the target group. The methodology employed a combination of virtual and in-person activities to ensure maximum participation and impact. The program spanned one semester, from October to December 2023, with events taking place at the Hasanuddin Hall of the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. The following outlines the key components of the methodology:

1. Needs Assessment:

Conducted a comprehensive needs assessment to identify the specific challenges and requirements of PMI under the care of the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. This involved surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions to gather insights into their digital literacy levels, psychological well-being, and social integration experiences.

2. Collaborative Planning:

Formed a collaborative planning committee comprising representatives from LSM SHARING, the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, Persatuan Pelajar Indonesia Universitas Pendidikan Sultan Idris (PPI UPSI) Malaysia, and participating universities. Regular meetings were held to ensure a cohesive and integrated approach to program development.

3. Workshops and Webinars:

Engaged experts in digital literacy, mental health, and cultural integration to conduct workshops and webinars. Virtual platforms were utilized to reach a wider audience. Workshops focused on enhancing digital skills, providing mental health support, and fostering cultural awareness to improve social integration.

4. Counselling Sessions:

Organized individual and group counselling sessions facilitated by certified counsellors. These sessions aimed at addressing the psychological well-being of PMI, providing a safe space for them to express concerns and seek guidance.

5. Digital Literacy Modules:

Developed comprehensive digital literacy modules tailored to the needs of PMI. Covered basic computer skills, online communication tools, and awareness about digital resources available for personal and professional development.

6. Pre- and Post-Assessment Surveys:

Administered pre-assessment surveys at the beginning of the program to gauge participants' baseline levels in digital literacy, mental health, and social integration. Post-assessment surveys were conducted at the end of the program to measure the effectiveness of the interventions.

7. Feedback Mechanism:

Established a feedback mechanism to gather insights from participants throughout the program. Feedback forms and virtual suggestion boxes were utilized to ensure continuous improvement and responsiveness to the evolving needs of PMI. This comprehensive methodology aimed to create a holistic and sustainable program that addresses the unique challenges faced by PMI in Malaysia, laying the foundation for their self-development in the digital era.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The community engagement program aimed at enhancing the self-development of Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) in Malaysia unfolded over a semester, incorporating various activities to address their unique challenges. This section delves into the results of the program and engages in a discussion that contextualizes these outcomes within the broader framework of migrant worker empowerment.

One of the primary focuses of the program was to enhance the digital literacy of PMI. Pre-assessment surveys revealed a significant gap in digital skills among participants, with a substantial number having limited knowledge of basic computer operations and online communication tools. Through a series of workshops and webinars, the program successfully imparted fundamental digital literacy skills, covering areas such as using email, navigating social media, and utilizing online resources for personal and professional development.

The post-assessment surveys demonstrated a noteworthy improvement in participants' digital literacy levels. The majority reported increased confidence in using digital tools, accessing online information, and engaging in virtual communication. This shift is particularly crucial in the context of the digital era, where the ability to navigate online platforms is not only a convenience but increasingly a necessity for personal and professional growth.

The observed improvement in digital literacy aligns with the findings of Lee and Kim (2020), who emphasize the pivotal role of digital literacy in enhancing the adaptability of migrant workers in the evolving job market. Empowering PMI with digital skills not only facilitates their integration into the digital economy but also opens up avenues for continuous learning and skill development.

Counselling sessions were a key component of the program, addressing the psychological well-being of PMI. Pre-assessment surveys unveiled a range of mental health challenges, including stress, anxiety, and feelings of isolation. The counselling sessions provided a safe space for participants to express their concerns, seek guidance, and develop coping mechanisms.

Post-assessment surveys revealed a positive shift in participants' mental well-being. A significant number reported reduced stress levels, improved emotional resilience, and a better understanding of how to navigate the psychological challenges associated with their migrant status. The success of the counselling sessions underscores the importance of incorporating mental health support in programs targeting migrant workers.

The impact on psychological well-being resonates with the work of Smith et al. (2019), which highlights the need for comprehensive support systems encompassing psychological dimensions for migrant workers. The success of the counselling sessions indicates that addressing mental health is not only crucial for individual well-being but also contributes to the overall resilience and adaptability of PMI.

Recognizing the significance of social integration for PMI, the program incorporated workshops and activities aimed at fostering cultural awareness and facilitating better integration into the host society. Pre-assessment surveys indicated that many participants faced challenges in adapting to the local culture, experiencing feelings of isolation and discrimination. Post-assessment surveys reflected positive changes in participants' perceptions of cultural integration. Many reported increased confidence in engaging with the local community, understanding cultural nuances, and establishing meaningful connections. This shift is indicative of the program's success in not only addressing practical challenges but also fostering a sense of belonging among PMI.

The outcomes related to cultural integration align with the findings of Brown and Ford (2021), emphasizing the importance of needs assessment for effective community initiatives. Tailoring activities to address the specific challenges faced by PMI in their cultural integration journey proved instrumental in fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment.

The program's overall impact on the self-development of PMI is evident through the collective improvements observed in digital literacy, psychological well-being, and cultural integration. The hybrid nature of the program, incorporating both virtual and in-person components, allowed for a broad reach and active participation from a diverse group of PMI.

The success of the program underscores the importance of a holistic approach in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by PMI. The combination of digital literacy, mental health support, and cultural integration activities creates a comprehensive framework for empowering

migrant workers. This aligns with the call for holistic support systems for migrant workers by Smith et al. (2019) and the emphasis on blended learning approaches by Garrison and Vaughan (2008).

While the program demonstrated significant successes, challenges were also encountered. Limited access to technology for virtual sessions, language barriers, and varying levels of participant engagement were identified as challenges. These challenges underscore the importance of ongoing needs assessment and flexibility in program design to cater to the evolving needs of PMI.

The challenges encountered during the program resonate with the insights of Patton (2014), emphasizing the dynamic nature of community engagement initiatives. Continuous evaluation and adaptation are crucial to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of programs targeting migrant workers.



Figure 1. Community Service Activities

CONCLUSION

The community engagement program, "Strategies for Self-Development among Indonesian Migrant Workers in Malaysia in the Digital Era," demonstrated significant success in enhancing the digital literacy, psychological well-being, and cultural integration of PMI. The results highlight the relevance and effectiveness of a holistic approach in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by migrant workers. As the global landscape continues to evolve, the program serves as a model for future initiatives aiming to empower PMI and contribute to their well-being and resilience in the digital era. The lessons learned and recommendations provide valuable insights for shaping the trajectory of community engagement efforts, ensuring their sustained impact on the lives of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Malaysia.

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