

KelasMimpi: Early Marriage Prevention Program through Self-Realization Awareness at Wongsorejo Village, Banyuwangi

Hemalia Kusumadewi*, Wishnu Mahendra Wiswayana
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Brawijaya, Malang, 6514, Indonesia

*Correspondence should be addressed to Hemalia Kusumadewi; hemalia.kd@gmail.com

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Abstract

This community service project centered on the urgent need to reduce and prevent early marriage cases in Wongsorejo Village, Banyuwangi Regency. This is due to the high number of early marriage cases and its devastating effects on Wongsorejo citizens, especially children and teenagers, such as school dropouts, higher divorce rates, higher youth pregnancy complication rates, and even stunting. Since girls are highly likely to be victims of early marriage, gender inequality is a concern that needs to be addressed immediately. This community service aims to eliminate the potential factor of extra-marital pregnancy, which is one of the early marriage main causes in Wongsorejo. This is due to the root causes of low awareness about early marriage and young pregnancy among children and teenagers. Thus, KelasMimpi provides a solution by enhancing teenagers' awareness of early marriage, emphasizing the importance of self-realization, and demonstrating how to apply it in their daily lives. This program is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 5, 'Equality,' Target 5.3, 'Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.' This program employs a service learning approach with three implementation methods: informative education sessions, focus group discussions, and interactive discussions. Questionnaires were used as the main impact evaluation method. KelasMimpi yields significant results in changing teenagers' perceptions of early marriage and their self-realization ability.

Keywords: *early marriage, gender equality, self-realization, Wongsorejo Village*

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Introduction

Early marriage is an ongoing issue in Indonesia and has long been recognized as one of the challenges to development globally through Sustainable Development Goals. Early marriage has been considered a violation of human rights, as addressed in the Convention on the Rights of the Children (Suhariyanto, Haryanto & Probowati, 2019). Unfortunately, its prevalence remains quite high globally, including in Indonesia. Early marriage refers to a union involving at least an individual aged 0 to 18 (Batyra & Pesando, 2021). This is also the definition used in Indonesian law to recognize a case of early marriage. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported an early marriage prevalence rate of 11.21% in Indonesia (2018), ranking second highest among Southeast Asian countries (Kusumadewi & Wiswayana, 2024; UNICEF, 2020). Specifically, this research focused on East Java Province, one of the provinces in Indonesia with the highest number of early marriage cases. The community service took place in Wongsorejo Village of Banyuwangi Regency because Banyuwangi Regency ranks second in the highest number of early marriage dispensation requests among cities and regencies in East Java from January to July 2024 (*Direktorat Jenderal Badan Peradilan Agama*, 2024).

Wongsorejo Village is known for its high incidence of early marriages. The author conducted field research in the village, confirming this information by finding that 24 girls and 1 boy were involved in early marriages from January to June 2024. Early marriage in Wongsorejo has led to collateral issues such as school dropouts, a higher rate of divorce, and pregnancy complications for young mothers. Most importantly, early marriage is a gender inequality issue, given how much more girls tend to suffer and are highly likely to become victims compared to boys (Ratnaningsih et al., 2022). This fact is also proven true in Wongsorejo Village, where the early marriage ratio between girls and boys is as drastic as 24:1. These phenomena are relatively similar to those observed in other regions with high rates of early marriage, even among East Java cities and regencies (Suyanto et al., 2023; Muhith & Fardiansyah 2018). In Wongsorejo Village the primary causes of early marriage are two factors: societal beliefs aimed at preventing indecency and teenage extramarital pregnancy. No programs or policies were addressing these causes; therefore, immediate intervention is necessary to prevent further cases from arising. The program targeted adolescents as the demography that is the most vulnerable of early marriage.

The intended purpose of this community development program is to cultivate awareness about the negative consequences of both extramarital relationships and early marriages, which may adversely impact participants' self-realization and future endeavors. *KelasMimpi* was designed to be conducted in classes, employing Informative Education, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), and Interactive Discussion among participants. These methods were often used in early marriage prevention programs and similar community development initiatives (Rahman et al., 2023; Malla, 2022; Ihza & Fadhilah, 2022). A comprehensive approach combined with measurable outcomes has significantly enabled *KelasMimpi* to influence efforts to prevent early marriage and enhance teenagers' knowledge and capacity for self-realization in Wongsorejo Village. This program is also designed to fulfill Sustainable Development Goal 5, 'Gender Equality,' and Target 5.3, which aims to eliminate all harmful practices such as child, early, and forced marriage, as well as female genital mutilation. This target is also integrated into the Indonesian national and local development plans. Therefore, this project is expected to contribute to the inclusive local development of Wongsorejo Village and Banyuwangi Regency.

Literature Review

This article utilizes three main reviews as references for early marriage definition, conducting community development programs to prevent early marriage cases, and defining self-realization. Early marriage has several main causes, including economic motives, religious beliefs and culture, gender inequality, adolescent issues, low educational level, ethnic tradition, and others. *KelasMimpi* was designed to tackle the challenges of early marriage in Wongsorejo Village. It specifically aims to prevent teenage extra-marital pregnancies, which occur due to the low awareness of consequences among teenagers. The concoction of this project is based, inspired by previous programs conducted by Rahman, et al. (2023) that utilize direct intervention to targeted participants and a community response survey post-program; and a program in Maulina & Fadhilah (2022) that utilizes a psychoeducation approach, combining transfer of knowledge and raising critical awareness among participants. One of the main parts of community development is the education of self-realization, which is defined as the process of developing one's potential, capabilities, and inclinations through adequate efforts to expand them (Maksimendo & Serdiuk, 2016).

Methods

This project uses service learning as its main approach. According to Cs (2022), Service learning is a methodology that combines academic strategies with practical problem-solving in community service, enabling college students to engage in community service activities. Cs also explains that service learning can be implemented in many ways, including workshops, seminars, education, and discussions. This project follows several stages of implementation; target observation; planning; education and workshop; evaluation and conclusion, as seen in Figure 1.

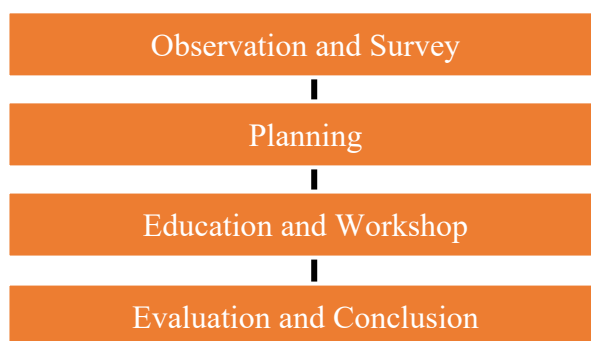


Fig. 1. Stages of implementation for *KelasMimpi*

1. Observation and Survey

Observation was done through two methods: literary study and field survey. Literary study was done through examining available information on internet as a pre-eliminary study to determine the goals of field survey. Field survey was done with the aim of locating a village with high concentration of early marriage in Banyuwangi Regency, which was Wonosobo Village, and finding partner institution that would have the age range of targeted participants.

2. Planning

Planning was done through analyzing data gathered from pre-eliminary study and field survey, reflecting on past community programs, and determining the key determinant of early marriage in Wongsorejo Village. These are done to ensure the necessity of intervention and its efficiency on field, along with consideration of the program design to ensure the immediate, measurable change after the program was conducted.

3. Education and Workshop

This was the main part of the project, which consisted of three elements. First, there was informative education, which consisted of two sessions discussing the dangers of early marriage and the importance of self-realization. The second element was a Focus Group

Discussion (FGD), which included three sessions with students. Each group comprises 5 to 7 students who discuss the potential negative impacts of early marriage, the possible significance of self-realization, and how each student can incorporate self-realization into their daily lives. The third element was interactive discussion, conducted so that all conversations were not one-sided throughout the program, allowing for a continual back-and-forth between the facilitator and the participants.

4. Evaluation and Conclusion

Evaluation was conducted by reflecting on the program's execution through discussion among project members. Conclusion was reached with utilizing pre-and post-test questionnaires to assess whether there were any immediate effects or changes.

Results and Discussions

Results

KelasMimpi was successfully held at MTS Islamiyah on July 20, 2024. The participants were middle school students aged 14 to 15 years old. There were 25 participants in this program. Middle school students were chosen as the main participants due to the significant prevalence of early marriage at that age. Participants were eager to share their opinions and learn new things, a key factor in the project's success. This project was implemented in a conducive environment, a class, which also played a significant factor in its success, as seen in Figure 2.



Fig. 2. *KelasMimpi* at MTS Islamiyah

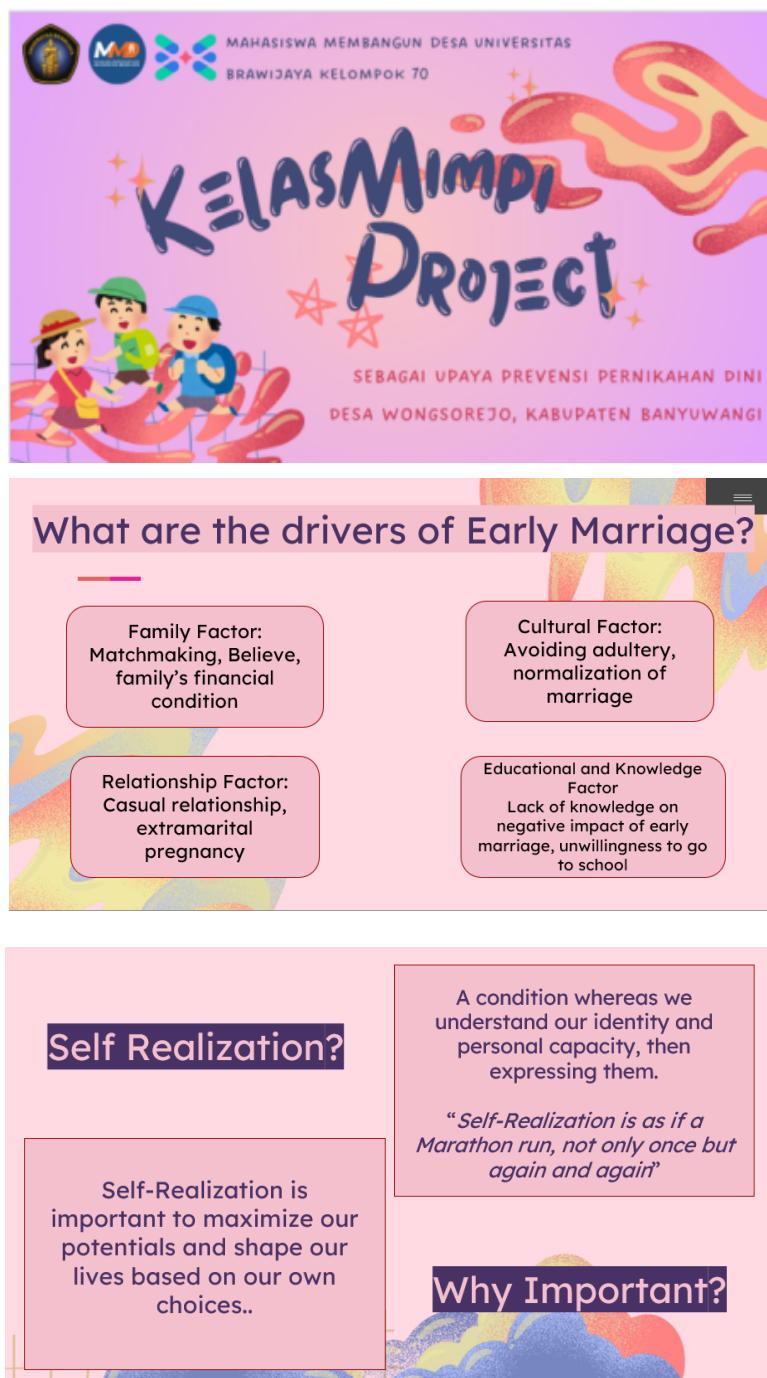


Fig. 3. Slides for informative education sessions' material

The informative education session has explained the importance self-realization the main tool to prevent early marriage, by depicting early marriage drivers and how significantly self-realization relate to that, as seen in Figure 3. *KelasMimpi* has created immediate change and impact. With 25 participants, the community service has significantly affected teenagers' views on early marriage, its negative consequences, the importance of self-realization, and *KelasMimpi*'s role in discouraging them from marrying early. There was the informative

session, which focuses on early marriage and the importance of self-realization to raise awareness about future consequences.



Fig. 4. FGD session at MTS Islamiyah



Fig. 5. Informative education session

The project was successfully implemented due to its direct, engaging, and participative communication in class that emphasize the two-ways communication between the mentor and participants, as well as mentor that push forward and empowering message to self-realize everyone's dream and aspiration, as seen in Figure 4 and Figure 5. Impacts are then measured based on pre-and post-test results, determining the purpose of each section, the questions, and

the comparative percentage between pre-and post-test results, which is summarized in the table below:

Table 1. *KelasMimpi* pre-test and post-test

Purpose	Question	Pre - test	Post - test	Conclusion
Measuring participants' understanding of Early Marriage and How <i>KelasMimpi</i> affects it	'Do you know what Early Marriage is?'	54% Yes	84% Yes	<i>KelasMimpi</i> increases participants' understanding of early marriage concepts.
		46% No	16% No	
	'Elaborate definition of early marriage that you know'	Elaborative answer per participants		
	'Do you know about early marriage's bad impact?'	36% Yes	90% Yes	<i>KelasMimpi</i> increases participants' understanding of bad impacts of early marriage toward children and teenagers
	64% No	10% No		
Measuring participants' understanding of Self-Realization and How <i>KelasMimpi</i> affects it	'Do you know what Self-Realization is?'	8.2% Yes	80% Yes	<i>KelasMimpi</i> increases participants' understanding of and interest to do Self-Realization.
		91.8% No	20% No	
	'Do you want to self-realize?'	22% Yes	80% Yes	
		78% No	20% No	
Measuring participants' reaction and sentiment toward <i>KelasMimpi</i>	Are you interested in the <i>KelasMimpi</i> Project?	94% Yes		Participants have positive reaction toward <i>KelasMimpi</i> and influences participants' change of perception toward early marriage, realizing self, and achieving one's dream as a form of self-realization
	Does <i>KelasMimpi</i> deter you from marrying early?	90% Yes		
	Does <i>KelasMimpi</i> motivate you to know yourself more?	100% Yes		
	Does <i>KelasMimpi</i> motivate you to realize your dream?	96% Yes		

To summarize, Table 1 shows few key findings based on the tests conducted as a part of the project's measurement. First, the result shows a significant change in understanding and

knowledge of definition and impact early marriage after the project was conducted, showing an increase from 54% to 84% understanding of definition, and an overwhelming increase from 36% to 90% of understanding the impact. Second, the result shows how participants change from not knowing to knowing, and incentivize them to self-realize, with an increase of knowing 'self-realization' concept from 8.2% to 80%, and the willingness to self-realize from 22% to 80%. Thirdly, the result shows the effectiveness of *KelasMimpi* by displaying participants' interest and direct influence to them, with 90% affirms that *KelasMimpi* deters them to not do early marriage, and 100% affirms that *KelasMimpi* motivates their interest on self-exploration. To conclude, the table shows how *KelasMimpi* increases participants' knowledge on early marriage and self-realization, and go beyond it by confirming how the project deters participants in doing early marriage and motivate them to self-realize.

Discussion

The results of the pre-and post-tests demonstrate the significant impact of *KelasMimpi* on participants, transforming their mindsets and perceptions regarding early marriage and self-realization. This also illustrates how introducing self-realization as a solution could help prevent more cases of early marriage in Wongsorejo Village.

This is shown in three sections of the test, which aims to assess three factors: 1) participants' understanding of early marriage, 2) participants' understanding of self-realization, and 3) participants' reaction and sentiment toward *KelasMimpi*. The first section is measured by four questions, which shows significant results in increasing early marriage understanding before and after *KelasMimpi*. This is illustrated by, for example, the increase from 36% to 90% of participants' understanding of the negative impacts of early marriage.

The second section is measured with two questions, with the result also being significant. This is illustrated by increased self-realization understanding from 8.2% to 80% among participants. The last section is measured by four questions, which show the overwhelmingly positive reaction toward *KelasMimpi*. This is shown in 94% of participants being interested in the *KelasMimpi* program. Therefore, it can be inferred that *KelasMimpi* has demonstrated significant progress in achieving its key purpose.

Conclusion

Wongsorejo Village has long faced the challenge of early marriage without significant intervention. Still, *KelasMimpi* offers a highly effective solution that demonstrates its immense impact and can be sustained over time. *KelasMimpi* has fostered an immediate understanding and behavioral change among teenagers regarding early marriage and self-realization implementation. Thus, it can be argued that *KelasMimpi* was a successful program that helped Wongsorejo Village take a step forward in the fight against early marriage. The author understands there are limitations, such as the uncertainty of how effective this prevention would be and how this program does not directly affect early marriage statistics. The author suggests that future efforts could target other relevant stakeholders, such as parents, society, or even the government, and also craft a program that could directly reduce the number of early marriages over a specific period. The author suggests developing a long-term project that requires a significant amount of time, unlike *KelasMimpi*, which can only be completed in a very limited timeframe.

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