The Role of Tutors as Learning Facilitators with a Psychosocial Approach Based on Character Education in PKBM Lingkaran

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the role of tutors as learning facilitators with a psychosocial approach based on character education in the Circle Community Learning Activity Center (PKBM). The background of this research is based on the high dropout rate and the importance of non-formal education that is responsive to the psychosocial needs and character of learning citizens. This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, and data is collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation studies of tutors, students, and PKBM managers. The results of the study show that tutors play a role not only as material presenters, but also as mentors, motivators, and role models in building character values such as discipline, responsibility, and cooperation. Tutors are also able to flexibly adjust learning strategies according to the heterogeneous backgrounds and needs of students. Institutional support and the use of contextual psychosocial approaches also strengthen an inclusive and empowering learning process. This study recommends strengthening the capacity of tutors through character-based and psychosocial training to improve the quality of adaptive and transformative non-formal education.

1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of dropping out of school is still a major challenge in the education system in Indonesia, especially among marginalized communities and disadvantaged areas. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows that in 2022, the Dropout Rate (APS) at the Junior High School (SMP) level reached 1.03%, and at the Senior High School (SMA) level at 1.39%, with an increasing trend after the COVID-19 pandemic (BPS, 2023). Children who are

disconnected from formal education often experience gaps in knowledge, character, and skills, loss of motivation to learn, and loss of future orientation.

Then the sustainability of school dropouts is also seen in local level data in North Sumatra Province, recorded 39,553 school dropouts at the elementary and junior high school levels during 2024 (Lintas Sumatra net, 2025). Based on data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) also in 2023, Deli Serdang Regency together with the City of Medan recorded the highest number of school dropouts in North Sumatra for elementary and junior high school levels, with a total of 7,600 students. It is in this context that the Center for Community Learning Activities (PKBM) is present as an alternative solution to provide flexible and inclusive access to non-formal education, as mandated in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 81 of 2013 concerning Equality Education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013).

The Community Learning Activity Center (PKBM) is a non-formal educational unit as a place of learning and information source formed and managed by the community that is oriented towards empowering local potential to improve knowledge, skills and attitudes of the community in the economic, social and cultural fields. PKBM is an alternative solution for those who drop out of school, have limited time, or come from an underprivileged economic background. Data from the Directorate of Community Education and Special Education (DitPMPK) of the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2023 noted that the number of people studying in equality education programs increased by 12% compared to 2022, reflecting the increasing need for educational services based on flexibility and an individualized approach in the midst of social dynamics of society (DitPMPK, 2024).   (Zaifullah et al., 2023)

In the context of implementing learning in PKBM, tutors play a central role. Tutors not only deliver material, but also act as facilitators who help students manage their learning process independently and contextually. The role of this facilitator is crucial considering the characteristics of PKBM students who are very heterogeneous in terms of age, work experience, educational background, and learning motivation.

Various previous studies have raised the importance of active learning with tutors acting as facilitators and reflective mentors, which indicates optimal learning management. They also provide supportive learning conditions and various strategies to encourage learning motivation despite the inhibiting factors of student attendance   (Bagus Fikri &   Wind   Nugroho, 2025) (Kilana Sari Sukma   Brawijaya   &   Soedjarwo , 2022) . And they act as facilitators who are able to foster the spirit of learning for residents to learn.

Thus, the role of tutors as facilitators and reflective mentors proves crucial in creating active, adaptive, and motivating learning, despite being faced with various challenges such as limited attendance and learning environment conditions. (Iyosri Sushana Ancient et al., 2023)

The urgency of the above research is getting stronger with the emergence of the Freedom of Learning policy which emphasizes the importance of education that is in favor of students. In the past two years, global discussions have also highlighted the importance of flexibility-based education and lifelong learning. At the international level, UNESCO emphasizes the need to strengthen the role of non-formal educators as drivers of social transformation. Therefore, discussing the role of tutors as facilitators in learning management with a psychosocial approach based on character education in PKBM is very relevant, both theoretically and practically. (UNESCO–UNFCCC, 2024)

This study aims to describe in depth the role of tutors as facilitators in learning management for learning residents at the Circle Community Learning Activity Center (PKBM), especially in an effort to increase the effectiveness of non-formal learning with a psychosocial approach based on character education. The focus of this research is formulated into three main questions, namely: (1) What is the role of tutors as facilitators in managing learning with a psychosocial approach based on character education in PKBM; (2) What strategies are used by tutors in adapting learning approaches to the needs and characteristics of diverse learning residents in PKBM; and (3) What are the challenges faced by tutors in carrying out the function of facilitators in organizing character-based non-formal education in PKBM.

This article presents a scientific novelty in the form of a strategic mapping of the role of tutors as learning facilitators with a psychosocial approach based on character education in PKBM, which is still minimally explored in the academic literature. While most previous research has only highlighted the role of tutors descriptively or technically in the delivery of material. This article explores the psychosocial dimension and character values built in the non-formal learning process. The findings of this study are expected to make a real contribution to the development of equality education policies and practices in Indonesia in a more responsive and student-centered manner.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Equality Education/ PKBM

Equality education is an integral part of the non-formal education pathway which aims to provide access to educational services equivalent to formal education, including the development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of students). In Indonesia, this service is facilitated through the Package A, B, and C programs organized by the Center for Community Learning Activities (PKBM), providing opportunities for school dropouts and adults to obtain nationally recognized educational qualifications (Law No. 20 of 2003). In its implementation, PKBM's operational curriculum is required to be designed based on the specific needs of students and based on local wisdom, so as not only to strengthen national and regional values, but also to be able to improve the quality of graduates in a sustainable manner This approach places PKBM as an institution that is responsive to social dynamics and community learning needs, as well as a strategic means in realizing inclusive and equitable education. (Hidayati et al., 2025 (Ade Stuart et al., 2023)

Students at Community Learning Activity Centers (PKBM) generally consist of adults, adolescents who have dropped out of school, or individuals who are working, so they need time flexibility and a practical and contextual learning approach PKBM as a non-formal educational institution has a strategic role in providing alternative educational services through a curriculum that is flexible and adaptive to local conditions and student needs. Along with the implementation of the "Merdeka Belajar" policy, PKBM has proven to be able to adapt the non-formal curriculum in a participatory manner, paying attention to the socio-cultural context of the local community. However, challenges in optimizing the role of tutors are still obstacles, especially in terms of personalized and sustainable learning assistance. Therefore, strengthening the capacity of tutors and developing learning models based on the needs of learning citizens is an important aspect in improving the quality of educational services in PKBM. (Sudarsono & Abad, 2023). (Syamsuri et al., 2024). By because that , Strengthening capacity tutor and development type Learning Based necessity citizen learn become aspek penting dalam peningkatan mutu layanan pendidikan di PKBM.

The Role of Tutors in Learning at PKBM

In the context of PKBM, tutors play the role of facilitators who prioritize the learning process rather than just transferring information. They guide participants in learning by offering emotional mentoring such as

encouragement and confidence and organizing support in small groups to increase a sense of community. Effective communication is also key for tutors to actively monitor participants' learning difficulties and adjust strategies to be more personalized and solution-oriented.   (Sudarsono & Abad, 2023)

In PKBM classes that apply the concept of "Freedom of Learning", tutors use flexible and adaptive methods to adapt learning to the needs and conditions of students. One of the strategies used is the preparation of interactive modules and the use of learning videos. Videos are used as visual and audio stimuli that help strengthen conceptual understanding, while interactive modules are designed to encourage participants to learn independently with a practical and contextual approach This method has proven to be effective in increasing the learning motivation of learners because the material presented becomes more relevant, accessible, and in accordance with the learning styles of participants who generally have limited time due to busy work or responsibilities others.   (Yuli Yulianti et al., 2023).

In addition, group methods combined with play and personal discussions have proven to be effective, especially for early age participants such as those applied at Pos Dumpit. Tutors at Pos Dumpit develop learning through a combination of play methods, group work, discussions, and lectures that are tailored to the needs of each student. This approach is not only able to increase attendance and enthusiasm for learning, but also significantly helps improve basic skills such as reading, writing, and numeracy in children from limited economic backgrounds. This shows that fun and meaningful learning can be the right strategy in improving the quality of education in a non-formal environment   (Ancient   , 2020).

Psychosocial Approach in Learning

The term *psychosocial* is a combination of two keywords, namely psychology and social, each of which has a fundamental meaning in understanding human behavior and development. Psychology is a discipline that studies mental processes, behavior, and human interactions scientifically. In line with the understanding of the research that psychology is a branch of science that requires a reflective foundation in understanding the relationship between mental structures and complex human experience. This approach emphasizes the importance of examining thoughts and behaviors not only from a scientific-empirical perspective, but also from a subjective and cultural point of view.   (Märtsin   , 2020)

The *Encyclopedia of Behavioral Medicine* defines psychological disorders as patterns of behavioral and cognitive symptoms that clinically significantly

interfere with personal and social functioning, as a result of certain psychobiological dysfunctions. These definitions affirm that psychology is a science that touches on various dimensions of human life, both individually and collectively. (Holmqvist, 2020)

Then, the term social is closely related to all forms of interaction that occur in social life. Social aspects in psychology examine how societal structures, norms, and cultures affect an individual's behavior and mental health. This shows that the social aspect cannot be separated from the existence of humans as living beings in relational and cultural contexts. (Aspinwall & Pengchit , 2020)

In the realm of the study of human behaviour, the term 'social' is not only understood as a general interaction between humans, but also includes the complex cognitive processes behind it. Social psychology and social neuroscience, state that social encompasses an individual's cognitive ability to understand, interpret, and respond to social stimuli, known as *social cognition* (Adolphs, 2020). This is a fundamental ability in human interaction from an early age. In the study of mental health, social concepts often refer to factors such as social support, interpersonal connectedness, and group dynamics that affect a person's psychological well-being. It is also explained that the term "social" in psychological research can include social determinants, social roles, and complex social support networks. In the realm of social identity, it is emphasized that social identity is part of the self-concept formed through a person's membership in a group and the emotional attachment born from it. Thus, the term social not only describes human relationships in general, but also includes the cognitive, affective, and structural dimensions that shape the dynamics of individual social life in society. (Speed et al., 2020) (Signore et al., 2024)

Thus, the psychosocial approach refers to the interaction between an individual's psychological state (emotions, motivation, self-confidence) and his or her social context (family support, stigma, social relationships). One of the fundamental theories is Erikson's theory of psychosocial developmental stages, which shows how psychosocial conflicts shape identities and beliefs in the development of children to adolescents (By Luh Drajati Ekaningtyas , 2020).

The psychosocial approach in learning focuses on the interaction between individual psychological conditions such as learning motivation, self-efficacy, and resilience with social factors such as environmental support, interpersonal relationships, and school climate. Psychosocial skills including sense of belonging, academic self-efficacy, and social self-efficacy were positively

correlated with academic outcomes at the higher education level, highlighting the importance of reciprocal interactions that signal that they are truly cared for Systematic studies in ethopia found that psychological factors such as stress, self-esteem, and sleep quality, as well as social factors such as peer support and financial condition, significantly affects academic achievement (Tesfaye et al., 2024). Thus, the psychosocial approach encourages holistic efforts in education, which focus not only on the academic aspect, but also on strengthening mental well-being and social support in the learning environment. (Swanson et al., 2021).

Character Education as a Cornerstone of Values

Character education is a planned, systematic, and directed educational process to instill moral, ethical, and ethical values in students. Character education is carried out through consistent interaction between the family, school, and community environment to form individuals who have good dispositions, are able to behave positively, and make constructive contributions to others (Paperity, 2024). Character education also contains a philosophical dimension, especially in the axiological aspect, which aims to form the integrity, responsibility, and moral awareness of students in living life in the digital era. In addition, character education must be directly integrated into the learning process in schools, with the active involvement of teachers, students, and parents, in order to form productive, innovative, and critical attitudes. Overall, character education is not only the process of teaching values theoretically, but also the habituation of noble values in daily life which is manifested through positive attitudes, behaviors, and school culture. (Komalawati & Syllabus , 2024) (Abduloh , 2020)

Related to character education, in the study "Character Education for Children in Indonesia" it is stated that character education is not a separate subject, but moral values that are instilled holistically through subjects such as science, social studies, and language, and supported by the family and school environment. This means that collaboration between teachers, school staff, and parents is essential to create an ecosystem that supports the internalization of moral values in early childhood. (Agustini , 2021)

The integration of character education in the learning process is not only in the form of separate modules, but also inherent in routine activities, learning models, and collaboration between tutors, students, and parents. In a study at PKBM, Aditya Karawang noted that a planned learning structure, tutor involvement in exemplifying character values, and participatory planning have succeeded in internalizing values such as discipline and responsibility in the daily lives of learning participants. Inseparable also in the study entitled

"Character Formation Through Education: A Review of Educational Philosophy on Values and Virtue" explains that character education must be able to Responding to social challenges and technological advances by continuously adapting He advocated continuous evaluation of character education programs and adjustments to learning methods to remain relevant to the diversity of students' characters in the classroom. (Ariq Rahmanianto et al., 2021). (Star R. Symbolon , 2024).

In the current era, especially in the digital era, character education has undergone a significant transformation in terms of approach and implementation. Ideally, through learning, students should still be able to instill values such as responsibility, empathy, and cooperation, which strengthen their mental toughness and discipline in the face of uncertain situations. This is supported by research, that educational institutions are able to maintain the character of student discipline through policy adaptation based on active family involvement in character education. The urgency is increasingly clear in facing the challenges of the digital era and globalization, where the basic values of society are vulnerable to erosion. The character habituation program in PKBM Package C involves five main values, namely religion, nationalist, independent, mutual cooperation, and integrity with routine activities such as recitals, national day commemorations, and class pickets which have been proven to significantly strengthen the personalities of learning residents (Fadhillatie Azizah & Marzuki, 2021) (Dadan Darmawan & Ila Rosmilawati , 2020).

3. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological study. Through a phenomenological approach, researchers can explore the meanings and patterns of interaction that occur in learning practices, especially in terms of strategies, approaches, and challenges faced by tutors when managing learning citizens with diverse backgrounds. (Kox et al., 2020) This approach was chosen because the main purpose of the research is to understand in depth the subjective experience of tutors in carrying out their role as learning facilitators in PKBM.

This research was carried out on one of the PKBMs in Deli Serdang Regency, namely PKBM Lingkaran, which has been organizing equality education programs (Packages A, B, and C) for more than five years. The subjects of the study include tutors as the main informants, students as perception triangulators, and PKBM managers as supporting informants to provide institutional context. The technique of taking subjects was carried out by purposive sampling, namely the selection of participants who are considered

to have relevant and in-depth information related to the focus of the research. Tutors selected are those who have taught for at least two years and are active in learning activities.   (Palinkas et al., 2015)

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques, namely in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation studies. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore the personal experience of the tutor in facilitating learning. Participatory observation was carried out to obtain contextual data on learning interactions between tutors and learners in real-world situations (Adams & Cox, 2021). Meanwhile, documentation studies are used to examine written data that support research (O'Leary, 2021).   (Richards & Hemphill, 2018)

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that the role of tutors in PKBM Lingkaran is very central in supporting learning that emphasizes character values and psychosocial development of students. Tutors not only play the role of teachers, but also role *models* who show discipline, responsibility, communication ethics, and enthusiasm in building motivation to learn. This view is reinforced by the statements of students who feel that the tutor has guided them with care, patience, and is able to create a comfortable and participatory learning atmosphere.

In general, students also said that tutors succeeded in building emotional closeness with students, as well as adjusting learning approaches based on the background and learning style of each individual. Tutors are considered to be able to pay special attention to participants who have obstacles such as limited study time due to work, school dropout experiences, and difficulty understanding the material. The approach is flexible and humane, which is in line with the principles of learning in non-formal education.

Individual and group learning is applied in a balanced manner. The tutor conducts an initial assessment to identify the character and needs of the participants, then develops differentiated learning. This is in accordance with the findings of the interview, where the students said that the tutor used various media such as visual aids, hands-on practice, and group discussions to facilitate the understanding of the material. This process not only transfers knowledge, but also strengthens character values and social cooperation between participants.

Character values such as discipline, responsibility, and cooperation are instilled through habituation, example, and strengthening positive behavior.

Students said that tutors encourage active involvement in group work, as well as give appreciation for small achievements. Tutors also create an inclusive environment where students with different age backgrounds and abilities can learn together equally.

In terms of management, PKBM Lingkaran institutionally provides concrete support for the implementation of psychosocial-based character learning. This support includes the provision of indoor and outdoor facilities such as gazebos, musical instruments, dance equipment, as well as entrepreneurial facilities such as sewing machines and barista tools. This allows tutors to use contextual and multisensory approaches in learning activities, so that learning becomes more meaningful and relevant to students' lives.

The PKBM manager also emphasized the importance of tutor creativity in managing the learning process. Tutors are encouraged to apply learning methods that are not monotonous and adapt to diverse classroom conditions. One student, mentioned that the tutor made the class not boring by holding open discussions and practical activities outside the classroom. This strategy is effective in increasing participants' participation and enthusiasm for learning.

Thus, this research also has a number of challenges. Among them is the heterogeneity of participants that demands high flexibility from tutors. Some tutors said that tutors face a little difficulty in equalizing the rhythm of learning due to differences in age, educational background, and life experience of learning residents. That way, tutors continue to try to build confidence and revive the learning spirit of the participants, especially those who previously experienced failures in formal education.

In terms of evaluation, tutors use a combination of formative and summative assessments. Academic assessment is carried out through quizzes, assignments, and practice, while affective evaluation is carried out through behavioral observation and self-reflection. Personal feedback from tutors is an important part of strengthening participants' character and accompanying their psychosocial development process.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that the success of psychosocial-based character learning in PKBM Lingkaran is highly determined by the interpersonal competence of tutors, institutional support, and inclusive and participatory learning policies. The role of tutors not only shapes academic achievement, but is also key in building students' character, confidence, and social awareness. The collaboration between psychosocial approaches and active learning strategies has been proven to be able to create empowering and

transformative learning spaces for students who were previously disconnected from the formal education system.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion of the research, it can be concluded that the role of tutors as facilitators in individual and cooperative learning management in PKBM Lingkaran greatly determines the success of the non-formal education process oriented to a psychosocial approach based on character education. Tutors not only function as material presenters, but also as mentors, motivators, and role models who are able to create an inclusive, flexible, and contextual learning atmosphere according to the heterogeneous backgrounds of learning residents. Through adaptive and participatory learning strategies, tutors succeed in fostering character values such as discipline, responsibility, and cooperation, while supporting the psychosocial development of students holistically. PKBM's institutional support in providing contextual learning facilities also strengthens the effectiveness of the tutor's role in creating empowering learning spaces. This research makes an important contribution to the development of equality education practices that are responsive to the needs of students, and emphasizes the importance of collaboration between psychosocial approaches and character education in improving the quality of non-formal education services in Indonesia.

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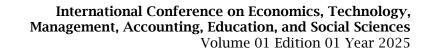
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