
THE PREVENTION OF CHILD MARRIAGE THROUGH THE WOMEN'S SCHOOL TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE (SEKOPER PKH) IN MENGEN VILLAGE, BONDOWOSO REGENCY

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ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS

Child Marriage;
SEKOPER PKH;
Community
Development;
Bondowoso.

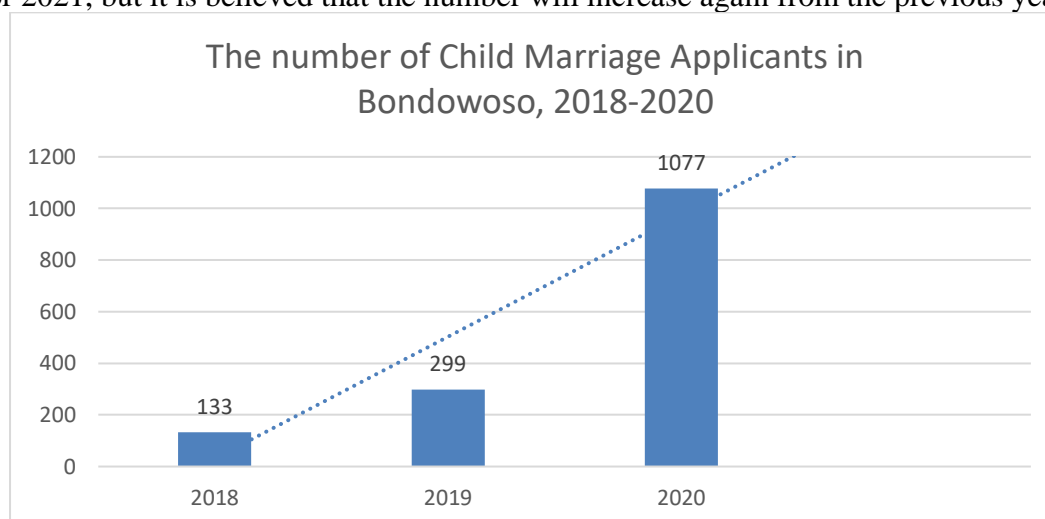
Child marriage is one of the serious problems faced by Bondowoso Regency. As a district with the lowest economic level and high child marriage rates, the quality of life and generations in Bondowoso Regency are threatened and vulnerable because of socio-economic problems such as poverty and high divorce rates, health problems such as increased maternal and child mortality, increased stunting rates, and malnutrition. One of the villages in Bondowoso which has problems with child marriage is Mengan Village. To overcome these problems, the Department of Social Affairs of Bondowoso which focused on the empowerment of women and protection for children (P3AKB) launched the Women's School program to improve the quality of life or Sekolah Perempuan Peningkatan Kualitas Hidup (SEKOPER PKH) which aims to improve the quality of PKH (Program Keluarga Harapan, Government Incentive Program) beneficiaries. SEKOPER PKH has been up and running since 2018 and focuses on household financial management. The presence of a community development grant scheme by the Institute for Research and Community Service (LP2M) University of Jember can help solve the problem of child marriage in Bondowoso. The approach used to solve this is the grounded method with the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method to collect data and evidence as the basis for preparing textbooks and modules. After the module and reference book has been published, the team will conduct Training of Trainers (ToT) to improve the ability of teaching for voluntary teachers. When the voluntary teachers have the ability to teach and implement the teaching module properly, the module will be implemented to the PKH beneficiaries.

INTRODUCTION

Various social and economic issues in Bondowoso Regency have had a large social impact. These social and economic includes (1) Bondowoso has 31% stunting rate (third highest rate in East Java) due to high number of child marriage (Bahri, 2022b), and (2) Bondowoso is the ninth poorest regency in East Java with 14,73% poverty rate (Jalil, 2022). According to the poverty indicators published by Ministry of Social Affairs Indonesia, Poverty in Bondowoso mainly caused by three supporting factors, (1) Malnutrition, (2) Low participation and quality of education, and (3) Low awareness among its people (Hermawati et al., 2015). To this day, Bondowoso remains as one of East Java's most underdeveloped regency in the regards of social and economic problems (Statistik, 2020).

In Bondowoso Regency, the number of requests for dispensation letters for child marriage during the COVID-19 pandemic has been increase. Prior to the pandemic, namely in 2018, the number of applications for letters of dispensation for child marriage registered at the Bondowoso religious court was only 133 application letters. During the pandemic, this number increased by 124 percent to 299 in 2019. Two years later, this figure increased sharply by 709

percent, or 1.077 child marriages in 2020 (Izza, 2022). The government has not yet released data for 2021, but it is believed that the number will increase again from the previous year.



Statistic 1

The number of Child Marriage Applicants as recorded in the Department of Religious Affairs, Bondowoso

This figure is the number of requests for dispensation that were formally filed with the religious court. In addition, there are still many couples who marry children without going through the state's official marriage, namely by carrying out a formal marriage (religious marriage) without any official registration from the state (Pinem, Amini, & Nasution, 2021). Bondowoso Regency in East Java Province is one of the poorest regions in Indonesia until 2020 (Molasy, Zemła, Mrowiec, & Kusnierz, 2022), this predicate is due to various factors including the high number of child marriages. Child marriages in Bondowoso Regency are caused by various reasons, ranging from economic difficulties to reluctance to continue their studies (Bahri, 2022). This is a serious problem because the increase in child marriage rates will reduce the quality of the next generation. Child marriage has the potential to cause stunting, domestic violence, divorce, maternal mortality, poverty, and malnutrition (Eriyanti & Makmur, 2019).

Interventions to improve the quality of life for families, especially the poor in Bondowoso, have been initiated by the research team at the University of Jember by involving a number of institutions in Bondowoso (Istiawan, 2017). The intervention was carried out by initiating the SEKOPER PKH (*Sekolah Perempuan*) program in collaboration with the Government of Bondowoso Regency, especially the Department of Social Affairs Bondowoso. SEKOPER PKH is a School for Women to Improve the Quality of Life for poor families (MemoIndonesia, 2022). This program has been started since 2018 by establishing a non-formal school aimed at mothers who are recipients of government social assistance (Program Keluarga Harapan) (Yusnita, Adeni, & Anwar, 2022).



Figure 1

Focus Group Discussion 2: Curriculum Development SEKOPER PKH (Bondowoso, 2nd August 2022)

The SEKOPER PKH program is directed at supporting the UNESCO program, that is 'lifelong learning', where every community regardless of age has the right to education (Aspin & Chapman, 2000). This program is intended to improve the welfare and economic empowerment of poor families. In addition, this program is also aimed at raising awareness of the poor on the importance of education for children.

Currently, as many as 63.062 mothers from poor families are enrolled as PKH SEKOPER students. Apart from that, there are more than 200 volunteers who are registered as teachers in SEKOPER PKH. This program is jointly managed by the Bondowoso Regency Social Service and the University of Jember academic community. Moreover, several departments and institutions are also involved in the preparation of curricula and modules. Among them are the Department of Education Bondowoso, Department of Health Bondowoso, Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bondowoso, NGOs and elements of the surrounding universities (Eleanora, Ismail, & Lestari, 2022).

Since 2018, this program has been successful in improving people's welfare, such as helping to reduce the stunting rate from 38.2% in 2018 to 12.3% in 2020. In fact, in 2021 this program has succeeded in bringing Bondowoso Regency to reduce stunting. SEKOPER PKH has also succeeded in helping Bondowoso Regency reduce the poverty rate from 14.39% in 2018 to 13.33% in 2019. In fact, in 2021, SEKOPER PKH received an award from the Bondowoso Regent as the most innovative program.

Unfortunately, the problem of high child marriage has not been part of the curriculum taught in SEKOPER PKH's. In fact, this problem is quite crucial in Bondowoso Regency. Through assistance from several devotion grants, such activities are currently being carried out to improve the SEKOPER PKH curriculum by incorporating materials on preventing child marriage for SEKOPER PKH students. In addition, this assistance activity from the Australian Government will also design a module on preventing child marriage which will be taught to mothers of SEKOPER PKH students.

To provide support for the program invented, through the community development grant scheme, this proposal is directed at providing training to PKH teacher/facilitator volunteers. Apart from that, this proposal is also aimed at implementing this program in one

class in Mengen Village, Tamanan District. Regardless of being a foster village for the University of Jember for a long time, this village was chosen because the number of early marriages in Mengen Village is very high.

Thus, SEKOPER PKH is expected to help reduce the number of child marriages in Bondowoso Regency, especially in Mengen Village, Tamanan District, Bondowoso with the help of the community development grant scheme.

METHODS

This study collects data through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) activities, it requires clear and specific answers in solving problems and include experts who can provide the socioeconomic and cultural context regarding the problems. By using FGD method, the data collected will be more systematic and focused with relevant sources.

Focus Group Discussion in this study was conducted four times. The first FGD, held on June 8 2022 in Bondowoso, this FGD discussed the preparation of the curriculum for Quality-of-Life Improvement Women's Schools (SEKOPER PKH). The second FGD, held on 2 August 2022 in the Nahdlatul Ulama Bondowoso High School Hall, discussed the preparation of the SEKOPER PKH module through a religious perspective with Religious Leaders in Bondowoso. The third FGD, held on 18 August 2022 at the IsDB Building, University of Jember, discussed the development of teaching modules which were re-enhanced, especially in the arguments of religion and the Marriage Law, this FGD was attended by the SEKOPER PKH coordinator and the University of Jember team. The fourth FGD, held on 9 September 2022 in Bondowoso, discussed module development through suggestions and input from various experts in the fields of religion, education, health, and social matters.

Beside FGD, this project also uses training method for the Training of Trainers (ToT) activities. The training of trainers activity will include facilitators and voluntary teachers from SEKOPER PKH who will implement the teaching module at Mengen Village, Bondowoso. The team focused on how to empower women as participants of SEKOPER PKH, because one of the models of development in the relations of increasing women's role is through empowerment (Eriyanti, 2016).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were held to construct a new curriculum and develop teaching module for SEKOPER PKH. The new curriculum discussed about preventing child marriage, nutrition for family, financial management, and the function of the family. The FGD was held for five times to maximize the output of this activity. This activity will have two outputs, (1) Reference Book, and (2) Teaching Module.

On June 8 2022, the first FGD was held in Bondowoso. The FGD involved many stakeholders such as Department of Social Affairs Bondowoso, Department of Health Bondowoso, Department of Education Bondowoso, Coordinator of PKH Program, Local Ministry of Religious Affairs, and Religious and Public Figures. The FGD focused on curriculum development which would later be used in making the teaching modules The discussion covered curriculum materials and delivery methods. besides that it also discussed the number of meetings of SEKOPER PKH.

The second FGD was then held on August 2, 2022. After the first FGD, a module draft was produced which later became the focus of discussion in this FGD meeting. Where in this discussion stakeholders such as religious leaders highlighted one of the contents of the

module which discussed the purpose of marriage through religious arguments. The contents of the religious propositions used in the module discuss a lot about the adequacy of marriage age. From this content, many reflections from religious leaders resulted in an agreement that the content regarding the adequacy of marriage age would not be discussed in depth because it would open up space for debate between students and the facilitator.

The third FGD was held on August 18 2022. The meeting was attended by PKH Facilitators. In this FGD, on this event, the stakeholders discussed the religious argument that contained in the reference book. These religious views are still needs to be discussed and filtered because the religious culture in Bondowoso is still implemented fully. To avoid controversy and public debate, the agreed follow-up action is not to include names of scholars from certain sect.

Then, FGD 4 was held in Bondowoso on September 9th. The FGD involved the ministry of religion and also the ministry of health. The Ministry of Religion also highlighted the selection of religious sources. Therefore it resulted in an agreement to re-correct the arguments used so that during implementation it could be accepted by PKH Sekoper participants. After that the 5th FGD was held on Tuesday 25 October 2022. Where this FGD was the last FGD before the Training of Trainers. This FGD resulted in an agreement regarding the ToT plan and a focus on discussing ToT technicalities. Such as the selection of places and also the selection of participants from 3 districts of the SEKOPER PKH object.

There are two outputs of this activity, which is the reference book and teaching module. The teaching module contains (1) Function of the family, (2) Phase of Psychological and Reproductive development of Children, (3) Family management, (4) Impact of Child Marriage, (5) The Function of Marriage, and (6) Nutrition and Financial Management of a Family.



Figure 2
Reference book and Teaching Module SEKOPER PKH

2. Training of Trainers (ToT)

The SEKOPER PKH journey was continued with the ToT to provide provisions for the Trainers. The ToT activity was carried out for 3 days on November 18-20 2022. This activity provided training to 18 trainers from 3 sub-districts, namely Tamanan, Grugugan and Maesan sub-districts. The ToT activities also present experts to provide material. Like Mrs. Ellyda, an expert in economics who provides material on financial management to the trainers. Apart from that, there is also a lovely lady who provides material in the field of Psychological and Reproductive Development of Children as well as Parenting and Family Functions. Not only that, the implementation of the ToT was also filled by Mr. H. Mas'ud as one of the religious leaders who also gave his role. Mr. H. Mas'ud gave material regarding the purpose of marriage from a religious perspective.



Figure 3
Training of Trainers SEKOPER PKH

CONCLUSION

The expected outcome of this ToT activity is that the trainers and voluntary teachers of SEKOPER PKH will have the knowledge regarding the reference book and teaching module, and how to present it towards the SEKOPER PKH students. Therefore, the intensive activity was held for three days to make sure that the trainers will qualify to train the SEKOPER PKH students.

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First publication right:

Devotion - Journal of Research and Community Service



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