

KOMPAK (Youth Community of Care and Anti-Poverty): Youth Community Role to Encourage the Underprivileged Students and Youth Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

Abstract: KOMPAK (Youth Community of Care and Anti-Poverty) is a dynamic youth organization committed to eradicating poverty. With a strong focus on learning and education, this article sheds light on the invaluable role played by the youth community in empowering underprivileged students in Bunulrejo, Malang city. The primary objective of this study is to examine how KOMPAK (Youth Community of Care and Anti-Poverty) promotes educational advancement and citizen empowerment. The research adopts a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, ensuring a deep understanding of the subject matter. To ensure data validity, the study employs the source triangulation method. The participants include community administrators, students, alumni, and parents. The findings of the study reveal the following key outcomes: Firstly, the youth community plays a pivotal role in financing school fees for underprivileged students. Secondly, it offers free tutoring to cater to the academic needs of these students. Finally, the community provides career coaching to guide students towards a successful future. Moreover, citizen empowerment is fostered through active engagement, encouraging citizens to contribute as donors to the community. Additionally, poverty reduction efforts are made by organizing educational and learning activities specifically tailored for underprivileged students. As a result, both citizens and parents express immense gratitude for the myriad benefits provided by this community, which have had a profound positive impact on their lives.

INTRODUCTION

Many children on the street are denied their fundamental right to pursue education (Aliyyah et al., 2019) due to social and economic conditions, despite education being a constitutional right that should be granted to all individuals equally (Labaree, 2011). An analysis of the education flow among individuals aged 21-24 in 2019 revealed that approximately 93.84 percent of them had completed elementary school, while only 85.52 percent were able to continue their education at the junior high school level. Furthermore, out of the 85 percent who managed to complete junior high school, only 61.60 percent were able to proceed to high school (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2019). Consequently, there exists a disparity and inequality preventing many individuals from continuing their education beyond certain levels.

The varying quality of education received by Indonesian children has inspired youth to contribute to the government's efforts by providing scholarships to underprivileged students. The youth residing in similar environments can serve as motivators for others, encouraging them to participate individually or as a community in initiatives aimed at rectifying the situation (Ardoin et al., 2014). Involving the youth in community efforts (Castrechini & Ardoin, 2011) can enhance reliability and trust (Garcia et al., 2014). One such emerging youth community, committed to addressing educational challenges, hails from Malang.

The definition of "youth" varies across governments and international institutions. For instance, UNSCR (prior to the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution) defines youth as individuals aged eighteen to twenty-nine years (Ebenezer-abiola & Moore, 2020). Malang is also home to an educational youth organization. In a preliminary study conducted in October 2020, a youth community organization called KOMPAK, focused on combating poverty, aimed to equalize formal and informal learning opportunities for underprivileged children. The establishment of KOMPAK was initiated by economically average citizens and led by a local youth group known as Karang Taruna. This community operates with permits and without financial investments, driven by the goal of assisting underprivileged students in completing their education.

In another perspective, Nagy et al. (2010) argue that civil youth organizations possess a unique characteristic in that their constituency is "time limited." While individuals can engage in environmental or human rights activism throughout their lives, they will eventually "age out" of youth organizations. As a result, the world of civil youth organizations is constantly evolving. Therefore,

youth empowerment holds immense significance. According to data from the Badan Pusat Statistik (2019), the number of youth organizations in East Java remains relatively low. From 2015 to 2017, there were only 64 youth organizations in the region, indicating a slow growth in the movement and youth empowerment. Hence, the establishment of pioneer organizations like KOMPAK, focused on fostering youth communities, becomes crucial.

KOMPAK is a community-based organization offering various social and educational programs. Extensive research by Baldrige (2020) and Rogoff et al. (2016) reveals that many social organizations effectively empower the youth. KOMPAK, being an established community for 17 years, has demonstrated long-term commitment. Several youth organizations face challenges exacerbated by racism, urban restructuring, low wages, and the struggle to sustain themselves in the field (Fusco et al., 2013). Consequently, consistent implementation of youth community programs is vital. Baldrige (2014) asserts that community-based youth initiatives should be recognized for their value in mainstream education, surpassing their role as mere supplements to academic success.

In contemporary times, numerous young individuals take an active role in building education through empowerment. Empowerment is a theoretical construct closely associated with the youth movement (Gullan et al., 2013), emphasizing active participation and granting individuals and groups greater control, rights, and reduced marginalization (Peterson, 2014). However, individual influence and control have their limitations. Empowerment is often equated with social development, which involves engaging in activities to enhance one's own circumstances (Fulford & Thompson, 2013). Psychological empowerment comprises three essential components: (a) a sense of control, (b) a comprehensive social environment, and (c) concerted efforts to utilize this control (Zimmerman, 2000). Empowerment revolves around accessing resources through psychological components to support personal growth and success.

KOMPAK is a community that actively encourages youth to participate in the development of education. It believes that the State of Colombia not only has the opportunity but also the duty to recognize and motivate young people to become key players in transforming their country and working towards sustainable development. Neglecting youth, as highlighted by Petcu (2020), can perpetuate a cycle of violence, polarization, frustration, and mistrust in the peace process. Therefore, the community has set numerous hopes and goals to actively contribute to nation-building, with a particular emphasis on educational activities aimed at underprivileged students. Another noteworthy youth community is the Youth Movement in Alsace, which seeks to demonstrate how youth organizations in Alsace have significantly contributed to the empowerment and development of young people, particularly with regard to regional or national planning dynamics (Fuchs, 2015).

Empowerment plays a pivotal role in providing opportunities for youth to drive social development. As defined by Zimmerman et al. (2011), empowerment encompasses the process of equipping individuals with cognitive and behavioral skills necessary to critically comprehend their social environment, enabling them to become independent problem solvers and decision makers. Moreover, youth communities have the ability to foster skills development, knowledge acquisition, civic engagement, empowerment, and positive changes in self-concept (Sarah Fletcher et al., 2016). By actively participating in the youth community, individuals can significantly contribute to organizational and community life by designing solution-oriented programs.

As researchers, we serve as key instruments in understanding the realities of the community. Within this community, there are several intriguing programs and activities. Our research focuses on two main areas: understanding the roles of the community and exploring KOMPAK's initiatives in empowering youth and communities to support its purpose. By examining these aspects, we aim to shed light on the contributions of the community and its efforts to empower the youth while supporting KOMPAK's overarching mission.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to explore and understand phenomena based on experiential accounts in natural settings. This approach allows for an unrestricted comprehension and interpretation of the phenomenon at hand (Auliyah, 2014). Phenomenology strives to uncover the truth of a problem, describe phenomena, and capture the unique essence of individuals' life experiences (Webb & Welsh, 2019) by staying grounded in reality (Stolz & Stolz, 2020). The focus of this research was the youthful anti-poverty community known as KOMPAK, which actively engaged in education and social affairs. Originating from several youth groups involved in regional activities, they were commonly referred to as the "Youth of the Youth Organization." The study addressed two primary research objectives: 1) exploring KOMPAK's role in empowering community education, and 2) investigating community empowerment through cohesion. To ensure data validity, triangulation was employed. This involved two types: method triangulation and data source triangulation. By employing qualitative data analysis techniques, the researchers effectively described the research findings. The process encompassed organizing data, breaking it down into meaningful units, coding the data, synthesizing information, and identifying patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). This rigorous data analysis aimed to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information collected from the field. The final stage involved presenting the data in a comprehensive manner.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

KOMPAK (Komunitas Muda Mudi Peduli dan Anti Poverty) is a dynamic youth community movement dedicated to social education. Established on October 1st, 2003, KOMPAK is located at Konto Street number 35, Bunulrejo, Malang City. The organization's primary objective is to mobilize young individuals in their community to provide free, high-quality education. Recognizing the financial burdens faced by many students leading to dropout rates, KOMPAK was formed as an alternative initiative to Karang Taruna, offering additional programs and support. As Tyas (2020) stated, "KOMPAK is a community where compassionate youth come together to make a difference, and teaching is one of their key activities."

KOMPAK aims to empower youth by addressing educational disparities. One inspiring example of youth-driven empowerment is the organization Youth Creating Disaster Recovery and Resilience (YCDR2), established by Fletcher et al. (2016) in Canada and the United States. Similarly, KOMPAK was born out of the concern of young individuals for the underprivileged children, particularly in the realm of education. Adolescents face various challenges in accessing education, such as the requirement to pay school fees in full to receive report cards. Unfortunately, many teenagers come from financially disadvantaged families unable to meet these financial obligations. Recognizing this gap, KOMPAK was established by like-minded youth with the shared mission of providing educational opportunities to those in need. By establishing KOMPAK, these youth demonstrate their commitment to social responsibility and their aspiration to make a positive impact on society.

KOMPAK operates under the guidance and permission of the local government, led by Mr. Bernad. The organization primarily focuses on providing educational funding and free courses. However, KOMPAK employs a qualification system to ensure that resources are allocated to the most deserving individuals. As Mrs. Tyas, one of the founders and a teacher, explained during an interview, "Brilliant underprivileged students have an easier time securing scholarships, but the same opportunities may not be as readily available to average or low-achieving students" (Tyas, 2020). Therefore, KOMPAK's mission extends to assisting underprivileged students as well as those with average or low intelligence, ensuring that each group receives appropriate support and opportunities for growth.

Day by day, KOMPAK goes beyond providing financial support and extends its reach by offering free courses to students. As stated by Tyas (2020), this community not only provides financial assistance but also offers valuable educational courses. Their commitment to supporting and financing education has remained unwavering. Typically, these courses are conducted through study groups at KOMPAK's basecamp from 18:00 to 21:00. However, due to the ongoing Corona pandemic, in-person learning activities at KOMPAK had to be temporarily halted, requiring students to continue their studies from home.

KOMPAK faced initial challenges in finding a permanent location or office when it was first established. The basecamp had to be relocated three times. Initially, they rented a property to carry out their activities. When the rental period expired, they moved to a government hall. Eventually, they were able to settle in their current basecamp on Konto Street. The committee responsible for running KOMPAK primarily consists of young individuals. Over time, the management experiences regeneration, with high school or vocational school graduates joining the committee. Students from high school or vocational school levels also have the opportunity to become teachers in study groups for elementary and junior high school students. It is important to note that teaching or becoming a committee member is voluntary, and all volunteers offer their services without monetary compensation. Furthermore, KOMPAK never forces students to join their community. If a student feels they no longer require the privileges provided by KOMPAK, they are free to leave the community.

Empowerment, according to Zimmerman et al. (2011), involves enabling effective participation in the community by developing cognitive and behavioral skills necessary for critical understanding of the social environment. This allows individuals to become independent problem solvers and decision makers. Through their various activities, KOMPAK has demonstrated the ability to empower youth. Their empowerment efforts include financing education for underprivileged students, offering free courses, and providing career coaching. Additionally, the community encourages community empowerment by involving them as donors and facilitating learning activities. A more comprehensive explanation of these initiatives is provided below.

With the approval of the local government, led by Mr. Bernad, KOMPAK was established. Its primary focus lies in providing educational funding and offering free courses. However, it is important to note that the organization does not extend its support to all underprivileged students without proper qualification. Scholarships and free courses from KOMPAK are typically awarded based on merit. In an interview with Mrs. Tyas, one of the founders of KOMPAK and a teacher, she mentioned that "brilliant underprivileged students have an easier time securing scholarships, but the same opportunities may not be as readily available to students with average or lower intelligence" (Tyas, 2020). As such, KOMPAK's primary aim is to assist underprivileged students, including those with average or lower intelligence, by providing them with specialized support and opportunities.

KOMPAK Roles in The Community

KOMPAK is dedicated to its primary objective of uplifting underprivileged students' education. This organization carries out two key activities to achieve this goal: providing financial support for education and offering learning assistance. These crucial initiatives are undertaken by a group of passionate young individuals who are active members of the community.

KOMPAK Roles in Providing Financial Supports to Community

Education financing for underprivileged students is meticulously carried out by the community, encompassing various aspects such as tuition fees and uniform expenses. One KOMPAK student shared their experience, stating, "I became a part of KOMPAK in 2004 when I was in first grade. They funded my schooling, and I am proud to say that I have now graduated as a teacher within the organization" (Wibowo, 2020). KOMPAK goes beyond financial support by purchasing school books, providing facilities for thesis work, and offering other resources that contribute to the educational development of its students.

Membership in this organization entails a thorough selection process overseen by KOMPAK management, including administrators like Mrs. Tyas who actively participate in the student selection. Priority is given to underprivileged students and those with academic challenges. The selection process involves home visits and assessment of the parents' work situation. Students meeting the established criteria receive assistance from KOMPAK. This meticulous selection process ensures that the funds and support provided by the organization align with their intended goals.

To facilitate the direct payment of school fees and related expenses, the KOMPAK committee visits schools and handles the necessary transactions. Schools are aware of KOMPAK's role as a community delivering scholarships (Anggar, 2020). In addition to financial assistance and academic support, KOMPAK offers free courses that spark the interest of students. These study groups convene from Sunday to Thursday, allowing students to attend based on their individual schedules, with sessions held from 6pm to 9pm. The courses are tailored to different grade levels, accommodating up to 40 students per day. Elementary school students study from 18:00 to 19:30, while junior high school students continue from 19:30 to 21:00. These study groups take place at the KOMPAK basecamp.

This community, with a 17-year history, provides numerous facilities to its students. Fadillah (2020) expressed gratitude, saying, "KOMPAK provides books, free WiFi, and printers. Moreover, it gave me the opportunity to teach elementary school students, which significantly contributed to my personal growth." The organization relies on volunteer teachers, consisting of administrators and upperclassmen. Additionally, since 2016, several volunteers from Polinema Malang have dedicated their time to tutoring activities, further enriching the educational experience for students.

Beyond academic pursuits, KOMPAK actively fosters motivation among its students through various extracurricular activities. These include community birthday celebrations, collective fasting during Ramadan, and group outings to the beach for swimming (Wilujeng, 2020). Such activities aim to strengthen the sense of camaraderie and joy within the community. The students express immense happiness and gratitude for being part of the KOMPAK organization.

Career Consultation Service

By joining the community, students can enjoy numerous benefits that enhance their educational journey. One significant advantage is access to education funding, which includes financial assistance for students aspiring to pursue higher education levels,

such as transitioning from junior high school to SMA or SMK. In addition, the community offers invaluable support through free courses and career guidance, catering to students' needs and aspirations.

Moreover, the community extends its assistance by facilitating the search for scholarships for college-bound high school students. It actively aids students in finding opportunities to reduce their school fees, ensuring that financial constraints do not hinder their academic pursuits. In an enlightening interview with Wibowo (2020), it was revealed that the community even provides resources regarding job vacancies and equips students with essential skills for job interviews. Furthermore, should any issues arise at work, the community stands ready to assist students in resolving them effectively.

In summary, students who join the community benefit greatly from the myriad opportunities it provides. They receive support in securing education funding, invaluable guidance for higher education pursuits, and aid in finding scholarships and reducing school fees. Additionally, the community offers valuable resources for job hunting and equips students with the necessary skills to succeed in interviews. Its commitment to assisting students extends beyond academics, as it remains available to resolve any work-related challenges that may arise.

Citizens Empowerment: Involving Citizens to Provide Financial Support for Students

KOMPAK, a community that offers scholarships to underprivileged students, has successfully facilitated financing activities with the generous contributions from donors. The donations received are utilized to address various community needs, including school fees, building expenses, uniforms, textbooks, and more. In fact, the community goes above and beyond by even providing bags and shoes for these disadvantaged students. These funds are acquired through donations from various sources, including co-founders and local residents. To empower the community further, local residents are encouraged to participate in community activities and provide financial support. Tyas (2020) highlights the involvement of residents in financing community activities, where individuals contribute amounts such as Rp. 15,000 or Rp. 10,000 per month. Regular financial reports are shared with all donors on a quarterly basis.

Efforts to Alleviate Poverty through Financial Support

KOMPAK is an organization dedicated to assisting underprivileged students (Rachmanto, 2020), born out of the altruistic nature of young individuals who strive to help others. The focus of their aid provision lies in poverty alleviation through education. The community extends its support to less fortunate local residents, ensuring that children's educational expenses are taken care of. Dewi (2020), one of the guardians of students enrolled in KOMPAK, emphasizes the immense help received from the community. Parents benefit greatly from this initiative, receiving free tuition, uniforms, building fees, and even access to free tutoring services. The provision of free tutoring is particularly appreciated by parents, as it lightens their burden of teaching school lessons.

Positive Responses from Parents and Citizens

KOMPAK offers scholarships and free courses to underprivileged students, as confirmed by interviews conducted with students and parents. After school, students can participate in these free courses at the community's basecamp. Mrs. Dewi, a parent whose children are part of KOMPAK, expresses immense gratitude, stating, "We feel greatly helped by the financial support provided by KOMPAK. Our children receive a quality education thanks to the funding." Dina, Mrs. Dewi's daughter, has been involved with KOMPAK since primary school, and her younger brother, Davin, also benefits from the community's scholarships and free courses. Dewi (2020) further adds, "I am unable to teach my children, and private tutoring is costly. The free courses help parents in educating their children. We feel truly blessed."

The impact of this community's efforts extends beyond just the students. Anggar, Wibowo's parent (2020), explains, "Aside from the free courses, our children receive essential school supplies such as books, uniforms, shoes, and more. It's not just the children; parents are also thrilled to receive these provisions." These educational funds have left all parents satisfied, as the burden of educational expenses is eased. Wibowo et al. (2020) express their joy, saying, "We feel delighted to be part of this community and enjoy the privileges it offers. We can attend free courses with our friends. This program has been a tremendous help." KOMPAK's support

throughout the learning process benefits parents, students, and citizens alike, ensuring that children can pursue their education conveniently.

CONCLUSION

KOMPAK (Youth Community of Care and Anti Poverty) is a community founded by youth with the main goal of reducing poverty through education. In order to achieve this goal, the community engages in various activities, including education funding and free tutoring. KOMPAK plays a crucial role in empowering education by financing the school fees of underprivileged students and providing them with free tutoring. Additionally, the community focuses on the career development of KOMPAK students. The empowerment of the community is achieved through involving the community as donors, contributing to the reduction of poverty through educational and learning activities for underprivileged students. As a result, the citizens and parents feel a sense of assistance and joy due to the numerous benefits provided by this community.

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