

## Improving Skills and Empowering Women Community through Gayatri Womens' School in Grenden Village, Jember, Indonesia



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**ABSTRACT:** Womens' empowerment plays an important role in improving family welfare. Womens' empowerment can be done through increasing access to education, skills, economic opportunities, health, and participation in decision-making in various fields. This study aims to improve the skills of Womens' groups in Grenden Village, Jember, Indonesia through non-formal education, namely the Gayatri Womens' School. The Gayatri Womens' School was established with the main objective of providing training and non-formal education to women in Grenden Puger Village to face various challenges in terms of skills and employment opportunities for women. This study uses a descriptive qualitative research approach to explore the research subjects. The subjects of this study include Womens' groups in Grenden Village who are members of the Gayatri Womens' School, consisting of one person representing each study group, family welfare empowerment (PKK), and Integrated Service Post cadres. The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Hubberman interactive model which consists of 4 stages, namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The implementation of the Gayatri Womens' School activities consists of the stages of planning, implementation, evaluation, and sustainability. Gayatri Womens' school training activities were carried out in 6 study groups, namely Krajan 1 class, Krajan II class, Kapuran class, Kunitir class, Karangsono class, and Karetan class. Gayatri Womens' school activities were able to increase income and improve the environment through the utilization of local potentials such as corn silk tea, fertilizer from corn cobs, corn husk crafts, hair clips, and photo frames from shells, eco print batik, hanging pots from coconut shells and corn milk. Gayatri Womens' school activities can empower skills to foster an independent and creative attitude in achieving sustainable human resource development.

**KEYWORDS:** Family Welfare Empowerment, Gayatri Womens' school, Womens' Empowerment, Non-Formal Education

### I. INTRODUCTION

The progress of a nation is largely determined by the quality of its human resources. Unemployment and poverty are still major problems of the Indonesian nation that have not been solved until now. The high unemployment rate in Indonesia occurs not only in urban areas but also in rural areas (Septriani et al., 2023). The lack of skills and knowledge of women is one of the factors in the low standard of living and welfare of a family. Women are a potential resource that plays an important role in various aspects of life, especially the sustainability of a family. There are still many families who experience limited household economic capabilities that make women become housewives to help the family economy (Jumiati, 2023). The low ability and skills of women are crucial problems that occur in the community. Womens' empowerment programs are a top priority in improving the quality of life of a family.

Womens' empowerment is an important issue that needs to be addressed. Patriarchal culture has viewed women as subordinates leading to harassment, discrimination, marginalization, exploitation, and violence against women. This is a factor that causes poverty which places women in a disadvantaged position in society. Womens' empowerment needs to be carried out because several research results state that women hold more responsibilities (Sukwani et al., 2023). Womens' empowerment is a process that allows women to gain power and control over their own lives. Womens' empowerment can be done through increasing access to education, skills, economic opportunities, health, and participation in decision-making in various fields (Ratnasari et al., 2023). Womens' empowerment aims to address structural and social barriers that prevent women from reaching their full potential and contributing effectively to social and economic development.

Womens' empowerment can be carried out through entrepreneurship training activities for disadvantaged Womens' groups by utilizing local natural potential in the environment (Ariyanti, 2022). Training is a very specific educational role because it involves

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how to teach residents to do something (Hartati, 2021). Training activities require mentors to help and assist the community in discovering their potential. Mentoring activities will be more optimal when the mentors come from the local community because in terms of time, place, and distance they will be easier to reach (Puspita, 2020). Womens' empowerment activities through skills training aim to help women improve their role and capacity to help solve the problems they face. Training activities for various skills in Womens' empowerment programs must be by the interests and needs of women so that they are more useful and on target. Womens' empowerment can be carried out by combining lecture methods, questions and answers, demonstrations, and direct practice (Wulandari, 2021). Womens' empowerment can be done through non-formal education.

Education can not only be obtained from formal educational institutions but also non-formal education. National Education System Law Number 20 of 2003 explains that "Non-formal education is provided for citizens who need educational services that function as a substitute, addition and/or complement to formal education to support lifelong education". Latipah et al. (2020) explained that the goal of national education based on Law Number 20 of 2003 is to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe, are devoted to God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent and become democratic and responsible citizens. The national education system in Indonesia has 3 paths, namely formal education, non-formal, and informal education.

Formal education is an education system organized by school institutions that have legality and formality as well as several requirements that must be met. Informal education is education that someone obtains from everyday experiences consciously or unconsciously, from birth to death. In this case, the family plays a very important role. This education occurs in the family who are not aware that the activity is an education. Not only a father or mother, but both play a very important role in educating their children in the family. Non-formal education is all types of education that take place outside of school in a structured manner. The role of non-formal education is as a complement, addition, and replacement for formal education. Non-formal education as a complement to formal education is held to complement if, in the implementation of the education, there is a deficiency in the programs implemented. Non-formal education is given to someone who has not received formal education and has never been received by the student himself (Faiqoh, 2021).

Women have great potential to improve their entrepreneurial abilities and skills in non-formal education. The potential for women to become entrepreneurs is supported by the required competencies and characteristics such as being patient and diligent (Kospa, 2023). In addition, good social skills make it easier for women to develop marketing networks and are coupled with the ability to see business opportunities that are often considered trivial by men. The character of being patient and not giving up easily when facing failure is also the basic capital for women when empowered and improving their abilities through entrepreneurship.

Womens' empowerment is one of the important focuses in efforts to improve community welfare, especially in rural areas such as Grenden Puger Village located in Jember Regency, East Java, Indonesia. Grenden Village is a village that is famous for being a former localization site that was once legalized by the Jember Regency government. Observation results show that similar activities are still taking place today even though the area has been officially closed. This condition is exacerbated by the high rates of stunting and illiteracy in Grenden Village which are caused by the lack of community literacy. These challenges occur amidst the abundant natural potential in Grenden Village. One of the great potentials of Grenden Village is its agricultural land which is spread almost throughout the village area. This is reinforced by the 2023 Central Statistics Agency Data which states that the agricultural land of Grenden Village is the largest agricultural land in Puger District. The people of Grenden Village utilize agricultural land with corn plants. However, the remaining post-harvest waste in the form of corn husks is often left alone which can hurt the environment.

Based on these problems and challenges, a Womens' empowerment program was created through the Gayatri Womens' School which aims to improve the skills and empowerment of women in Grenden Village. Gayatri Womens' School was established to provide non-formal training and education to women in Grenden Puger Village so that they can acquire the skills needed to improve their standard of living and that of their families. The programs offered include various practical skills based on local potential to improve the life skills of women in Grenden Village.

## **II. METHOD**

This study uses a descriptive research method with a qualitative approach. This study aims to describe real phenomena found in the field and conduct a literature study related to the research subject. The subjects or targets of this study include the Womens' group of Grenden Village who are members of the Gayatri Womens' School, consisting of one person representing each study group, family welfare empowerment (PKK), and Integrated Service Post cadres. The implementation of activities from the Womens' School consists of the stages of planning, implementation, evaluation, and sustainability which can be seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1. The Implementation Activities of Womens' School Gayatri

The primary data collection technique used in the study was through direct observation, activity documentation, and interviews. The secondary data collection technique was through literature studies related to local potential and previous research examining Womens' empowerment. The data obtained were then analyzed using the Miles and Hubberman interactive model which was carried out by data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification as in Figure 2.

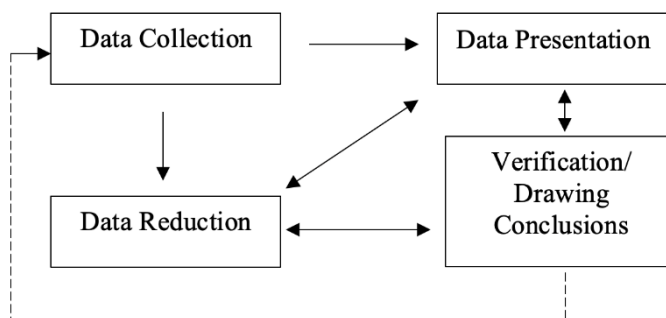


Figure 2. The analyzed data using the Miles and Hubberman

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Gayatri Womens' School is a non-formal education initiative carried out to empower women to improve the skills and welfare of the Grenden Village community. The implementation of the Gayatri Womens' School activities begins with the planning stage which is carried out by coordinating with the implementation team, determining partner villages, to planning the formation of the Gayatri Womens' School. The second stage is the implementation stage which is carried out by mobilizing the implementation team, implementing the program according to the plan, and providing training to the community on skills in utilizing the local potential of Grenden Village. The third stage is the evaluation stage which is carried out by measuring implementation based on the established indicators, monitoring program deficiencies, conducting activity analysis, making improvement plans, and compiling reports. The fourth stage is sustainability, including the formation of the Gayatri Womens' School management, giving full responsibility to partner villages to take monitoring related to the management of the Gayatri Womens' School, and handing over sustainability to relevant stakeholders. At the Gayatri Womens' school, 6 study groups have different activities adjusted to the interests and needs of the community. The types of activities in each study group can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Activities at Gayatri Womens' School

No	Study Group	Activity
1	Krajan I Class	Training on processing corn waste into corn silk tea, corn cob fertilizer, and corn husk crafts
2	Krajan II Class	Training on utilizing shell waste to make shell crafts
3	Kapuran Class	Training on the use of papaya and cassava leaves to make eco-print batik
4	Kumitir Class	Training on utilizing coconut shell waste in plant pots
5	Karangsono Class	Training for the eradication of illiteracy
6	Karetan Class	Training in making food products to eradicate stunting cases and Womens' reproductive health literacy



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Training activities are carried out alternately in each hamlet in Grenden Village targeting unemployed women so that they can improve their skills according to the activities in each study group. Documentation of activities in each study group is as follows:



3a. Corn waste processing training



3b. Training for the eradication of illiteracy



3c. Training for the eradication of illiteracy



3d. Training on the use of papaya and cassava leaves



3e. Food product manufacturing training to eradicate stunting cases



3f. Training in the utilization of shell waste

**Figure 3. Documentation of Training and Mentoring Activities at Gayatri Womens' School**

## DISCUSSION

Gayatri Womens' school is a non-formal education for women that aims to improve the skills or life skills and life skills of the Grenden village community. Non-formal education through womens' schools is a form of program to raise the status and dignity of women (Hanis & Marzaman, 2019). The stigma attached to society towards women is that they can only carry out tasks related to household affairs, even though in reality women also have a very important role and are intermediaries in community empowerment (Jayanta et al., 2022). Community empowerment is a process of growing and developing businesses that include skills, independence, and courage (Ratnasari., et al., 2021). Women have been considered as equal partners with men who should be able to maximize their strategic role in development. Therefore, strong support is needed to encourage women to empower and provide equal opportunities between women and men (Jumiati, 2023).

This womens' school consists of 6 study groups which are divided based on the local potential of each hamlet. The division of study groups is adjusted to the number of hamlets in Grenden Village, which consists of 6 hamlets. Gayatri Womens' School participants are Womens' groups consisting of PKK mothers, Posyandu cadres, and unemployed housewives. Womens' schools can strengthen Womens' leadership and change Womens' mindsets to be more creative by utilizing local potential in each of their environments (Kurniawan & Melati, 2022). The Gayatri Womens' school program has high hopes that the achievements and results obtained will be by the wishes of all parties involved. Some of the achievements that are important points in the implementation and achievement of Gayatri Womens' school empowerment activities based on Faiqoh and Desmawati (2021) are as follows:

### 1. Improvement of Life

Increasing income and better environmental conditions, aiming to improve the standard of living in each family

### 2. Improvement of Action

The existence of improvements in life will certainly provide better action efforts in the future

### 3. Improvement of Education (Non-Formal)

The emergence of this improvement in education provides new enthusiasm for increasing the creativity and skills of the community

### 4. Improvement of Accessibility

Improvement of accessibility plays a major role in the scope of information and innovation such as sources of financing in implementing non-formal schools to provide all needs

### 5. Improvement of the Environment

Community empowerment mostly always takes advantage of the conditions of their original environment, so that people will be more aware when they understand how to utilize environmental conditions and protect the environment

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### 6. Improvement of Income

When all aspects can be achieved, of course, it has good reciprocity for the community itself and each family

### 7. Improvement of Society

All elements are important points in achieving high human resource conditions. If human resources can be improved, of course, the community will get something in return for themselves, starting by improving their mindset, actions, and also income.

Womens' empowerment is an effective step to reduce poverty and improve skills. This activity is also carried out as a step in achieving sustainable human resource development. Advanced and superior human resources are certainly the hope of all of us together. Several indicators show that women are said to be empowered women as well as a form of achievement in the implementation of Womens' school activities based on Marofah (2023), including the following:

1. Able to think realistically
2. Independent and creative attitude
3. Have a skilled attitude
4. Dare to try new things
5. Always dare to face a problem

The training conducted has several products according to the local potential of each of the 6 hamlets. In the first study group in Krajan I produced corn silk tea, fertilizer from corn cobs, and corn husk crafts. The main product of the first study group, namely the corn silk tea product, has the benefit of preventing diabetes mellitus (Arini & Eka, 2018). The second study group in Krajan II produced shell crafts such as hair clips and photo frames decorated with shells. The third study group in Kapuran produced an eco-print batik printed on a piece of cloth and a tote bag. The fourth study group in Kunitir produced hanging plant pots from coconut shells. The fifth study group in Karangsono conducted training for people with illiteracy. The study group in Karetan conducted training on the eradication and prevention of stunting by making a product, namely corn milk.

The products produced by each study group increased the knowledge and skills of women in Grenden Village. This can be seen in that of the 6 products made, it was something new for several mothers who were divided into study groups. The high enthusiasm of the mothers who attended the womens' school can be seen from the number of mothers present in several learning activities in each study group. In addition, several mothers were also enthusiastic about participating in learning activities from other groups, such as mothers from the Krajan I study group participating in training activities in the Krajan II study group. The womens' school that was established became the center of attention of several communities in Grenden village. The implementation of the activities of the 6 study groups was carried out in 16 meetings each. This aims to ensure that in each training the mothers can mature their skills.

## CONCLUSION

Women are important potential resources to be involved in various aspects of life. This includes increasing access to education, skills, economic opportunities, health, and participation in decision-making in various fields. Womens' schools are the first step in realizing and implementing a form of empowerment for women. The establishment of the Gayatri Womens' School is the answer to the needs of the Grenden Village community, Puger, Jember. The Gayatri Womens' School was established with the main objective of providing non-formal training and education to women so that they can acquire the skills needed to improve their standard of living and that of their families. Various problems and appropriate solutions as well as collaboration involving various parties are factors in the implementation of the Gayatri Womens' School. The establishment of this non-formal school institution can improve the skills of the community and also provide other alternatives for the community in terms of finding daily income. The activities of the Gayatri Womens' School can increase income and improve the environment through the utilization of local potentials such as corn silk tea, fertilizer from corn cobs, corn husk crafts, hair clips, and photo frames from shells, eco print batik, hanging pots from coconut shells and corn milk. In addition, the Gayatri Womens' school can also provide knowledge such as literacy training and training in overcoming and preventing stunting in children. The activities of the Gayatri Womens' school have a positive impact on the local community in achieving sustainable human resource development.

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