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PSM Mengajar Community Service Program: Strengthening Children's Basic Literacy and Numeracy at Ransel Book

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ABSTRACT

*This community service program was implemented through **PSM Mengajar**, a non-formal learning activity conducted in collaboration between the author and the Student Choir Activity Unit (UKM Paduan Suara Mahasiswa) of Universitas Palangka Raya. This activity was carried out as a form of student contribution to supporting children's education through a community-based learning space. The partner of this activity was Rumah Belajar dan Membaca Ransel Buku, located in Petuk Ketimpun, Jekan Raya District, Palangka Raya City. The program was conducted offline in four meetings on October 4, 11, and 25, and November 1, 2025. The target participants were 31 elementary school-aged children. The learning materials were arranged progressively, namely coloring in the first meeting, reading in the second meeting, writing in the third meeting, and arithmetic in the fourth meeting. Each meeting included ice-breaking activities such as singing and simple games to create an enjoyable learning atmosphere. The evaluation was conducted through documentation, facilitator notes, and internal committee reflection on the implementation process. This program indicates that community service based on student organizations can serve as a means of strengthening children's literacy, numeracy, and creativity, as well as a social learning space for students to develop care, communication skills, and teaching experience in the community.*

Keywords: *Community service, non-formal education, PSM Mengajar, Ransel* Book

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INTRODUCTION

Children's education does not only take place in formal classrooms, but can also be strengthened through non-formal learning activities within the community. Non-formal learning has a more flexible character because it can adjust materials, time,

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methods, and the learning atmosphere to the needs of learners. In the context of elementary school-aged children, non-formal learning spaces are important because not all learning needs can be fulfilled only through regular school instruction. Children need additional spaces to practice reading, writing, arithmetic, self-expression, and confidence building through activities closer to their daily experiences.

Community-based learning spaces play an important role in providing additional access to learning, especially for children who need a more open, familiar, and enjoyable environment. The existence of community spaces allows children to learn without excessive academic pressure, so that the learning process can be developed through interaction, play, creativity and personal assistance. In this context, community service activities can bridge higher education institutions, student organizations, and the educational needs of the community. Higher education institutions do not only function as academic centers, but also as institutions that contribute directly to social issues through student involvement.

The Student Choir Activity Unit (UKM Paduan Suara Mahasiswa) of Universitas Palangka Raya is a student organization engaged in the development of vocal arts and student character developmen. In addition to being a forum for interests and talents, UKM PSM also has space for social contribution through community service programs. One form of this service is PSM Mengajar, a learning activity with children at Ransel Buku using a learning-through-play approach. This program is in line with the spirit of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, particularly in terms of community service. Through this activity, students not only channel their organizational abilities but also train social awareness, communication, cooperation, and responsibility in direct interaction with children and the community.

Ransel Buku is a community-based learning space that organizes educational, literacy, and learning activities for children in Petuk Ketimpun Indonesia. A study on the services of the Community Reading Center (Taman Bacaan Masyarakat/TBM) Ransel Buku shows that community literacy spaces can support public interest in learning through educational, creative, and learner-centered activities (Darlan et al., 2020). Therefore, the implementation of PSM Mengajar at Ransel Buku is highly relevant because this activity not only assists children's learning processes but also strengthens the function of the community as a literacy growth space. Activities of this kind also show that student community service programs can expand the carrying capacity of community literacy spaces through additional learning facilitators, varied activities, and a more interactive learning atmosphere.

The main materials in this activity were directed toward strengthening children's basic skills, namely reading, writing, and arithmetic (commonly referred to in Indonesian as calistung), and creativity through coloring activities. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are important foundations for elementary school-aged children because they are directly related to their readiness for subsequent learning. Children with better reading, writing, and arithmetic skills will more easily understand instructions, complete tasks, and participate in learning in different subjects. Conversely, limitations in basic skills may hinder children's confidence and participation in learning. Learning assistance in basic literacy and numeracy within community service activities has been shown to be relevant in strengthening children's

literacy, numeracy, and learning motivation, especially when provided through close and communicative assistance (Farhan et al., 2024).

In addition to strengthening basic literacy and numeracy, coloring activities in PSM Mengajar functioned as an introductory activity suitable for children's characteristics. Coloring is not only related to creativity, but also trains fine motor skills, concentration, carefulness, and children's courage to produce work. This activity is important as an initial stage because it can build closeness between facilitators and learners before children are directed toward reading, writing, and arithmetic activities. Thus, the arrangement of PSM Mengajar materials was not random, but was developed gradually from creative activities toward the strengthening of basic skills.

In addition to the core materials, PSM Mengajar also used ice-breaking activities such as singing and simple games. This strategy is important because elementary school-aged children need an enjoyable learning atmosphere to grow their attention, courage, and involvement. In non formal learning, learners often come with different levels of focus and learning readiness therefore , light opening activities are needed to create a more relaxed atmosphere. Studies on ice-breaking activities among elementary school students show that such activities influence learning motivation because they can reduce boredom and build a more active learning atmosphere (Wana et al., 2024).

Based on the above explanation, this article aims to describe the implementation of PSM Mengajar as a form of student community service in non formal education, with a focus on basic literacy and numeracy assistance, strengthening children's creativity, the dynamics of activity implementation, and lessons learned for the development of similar programs in the future. This article also illustrates that simple community service activities, when carried out consistently, purposefully, and based on partner needs, can provide benefits for learners, the community, and student implementers.

METODE

This community service activity was carried out through the PSM Mengajar program, a non-formal learning activity conducted by the author in collaboration with the Student Choir Activity Unit (UKM Paduan Suara Mahasiswa) of the Universitas Palangka Raya. The activity was implemented offline at Rumah Belajar dan Membaca Ransel Buku, Petuk Ketimpun, Jekan Raya District, Palangka Raya City. The implementation method used an activity-based learning assistance approach, in which students served as teachers and facilitators who assisted children with creative activities, reading, writing, and arithmetic.

The program was implemented in four meetings, namely on October 4, 11, and 25, and November 1, 2025. The target participants were 31 elementary school-aged children who participated in learning activities at Ransel Buku. The activity was designed using a learning-through-play approach so that learners could participate in the learning process in a light, active, and enjoyable environment. This approach was



chosen because the learners were in an age range that requires concrete, interactive, and less formal activities to become more easily involved in the learning process.

Figure 1. Photo documentation with Ransel Buku students on the first day (Opening Ceremony).

The preparation stage was conducted before the activity began through internal committee coordination, coordination with the partner, preparation of learning materials, preparation of supporting tools and materials, and the distribution of committee tasks. At this stage, the committee adjusted the materials to the characteristics of learners at Ransel Buku and prepared supplies such as stationery, coloring materials, simple learning media, and activity refreshments. Task distribution was carried out so that each meeting had teachers, facilitators, equipment coordinators, documentation staff, and personnel responsible for managing the flow of activities.



Figure 2. The writing learning process of Ransel Buku students was assisted by PSM Mengajar members.

The implementation stage was conducted in four meetings with the materials arranged progressively. The first meeting focused on coloring activities to build creativity, fine motor skills, concentration, and an enjoyable atmosphere. The second meeting focused on reading activities through assistance in recognizing letters, words, or simple texts according to participants' abilities. The third meeting focused on writing activities to train the children to copy, arrange, or write simple words and

sentences. The fourth meeting focused on arithmetic activities as a strengthening of basic numeracy, as well as a closing activity. In each meeting, the teachers conducted ice-breaking activities in the form of singing and simple games to build children's learning readiness before entering the core material of the lesson.

The general flow of each meeting consisted of preparing the place and participants, a brief opening, ice-breaking, explanation of activity instructions, core material assistance, simple reflection, and closing. During the process, students assisted participants flexibly, both individually and in small groups, according to the children's needs. Assistance was provided by giving examples, helping children who experienced difficulties, providing positive reinforcement, and maintaining a learning atmosphere that was orderly but not rigid.



Figure 3. Ice-breaking activities during or after the learning session together.

Activity evaluation was conducted through implementation documentation, facilitator observation notes, and internal committee reflections. The evaluation was not directed toward measuring the individual academic achievement of the learners, but toward program implementation, general participant responses, smoothness of committee coordination, readiness of tools and materials, effectiveness of task distribution, and technical improvements for future activities. The evaluation data were used as a basis for assessing the strengths and constraints of implementation, especially in terms of activity management, inter-division communication, and sustainability of the PSM Mengajar program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of PSM Mengajar shows that community-based service activities can become a simple but relevant intervention to support children's learning outside of formal classrooms. This activity did not use a rigid instructional pattern but presented activities close to children's world, such as coloring, reading, writing, arithmetic, singing, and playing. This pattern made the learning process easier to accept because children were not immediately confronted with academic demands but were first invited into an enjoyable learning atmosphere. In the context of non-formal education, a comfortable learning atmosphere is an important factor because learners are not situated within the formal classroom structure with rules, schedules, and assessments such as those found in schools.

Figure 4. Assistance in numeric practice guided by PSM Mengajar members.

The involvement of 31 elementary school-aged children in this activity indicates that community learning spaces still have a real need for simple and consistent



learning assistance for children with disabilities. The presence of students as teachers and facilitators provided additional support for partners in managing educational activities. In practice, the children did not only received learning materials and interacted directly with facilitators through instructions, question-and-answer activities, games, and creative activities. This shows that the success of the program lies not only in the materials provided, but also in the quality of the interaction between facilitators and learners.

The first meeting, which focused on coloring, had an important function in the conditioning stage. Coloring was not merely a recreational activity, but also helped children train fine motor skills, concentration, color recognition, carefulness, and courage to produce work. In the context of community service, an initial activity such as this is important because it can build closeness between facilitators and learners before entering more directed basic literacy and numeracy materials. Coloring activities are also relevant to the function of community learning spaces, which not only provide reading materials but also stimulate interest in learning through creative activities (Darlan et al., 2020).

The second meeting was directed toward reading activities. At this stage, reading assistance was not only interpreted as an activity of introducing letters or words, but also as an effort to build children's courage to try reading in front of facilitators. In non-formal activities, some children may show different levels of ability, so facilitators need to adjust instructions, provide examples, and give positive reinforcement. This approach is important so that children do not feel afraid of making mistakes when reading.

The third meeting focused on writing. Writing activities playe a role in training children to connect sounds, letters, words, and meanings in written form. Through assistance, children could be helped to copy, arrange, or write simple words and sentences according to their ability. This activity strengthened previous reading activities because children not only recognized language symbols but also tried to produce them in written form.

The fourth meeting was directed toward arithmetic activities as a reinforcement of basic numeracy. Arithmetic became an important part of learning assistance because

numeracy is needed by children in daily life and across various school subjects. Thus, the sequence of materials from coloring, reading, writing, to arithmetic formed a gradual learning flow: creative activities were used as an entry point, followed by the strengthening of basic literacy and numeracy. Basic literacy and numeracy assistance in community service activities is important because these abilities serve as a foundation for children's learning success at the next level. Farhan et al. (2024) explain that basic literacy and numeracy learning assistance can contribute to improving children's basic skills, motivation, and enthusiasm for learning when conducted through educational approaches and direct assistance.

Ice-breaking activities conducted at every meeting, such as singing and playing, became an important element in maintaining children's attention. In non formal activities, learners arrive with different emotional conditions, levels of focus, and learning readiness. Therefore, light opening activities help create a relaxed atmosphere, reduce boredom, and build positive interactions between facilitators and learners. Ice-breaking activities also help facilitators observe children's readiness before introducinge the core material. This finding is in line with Wana et al. (2024), who showed that ice-breaking activities can influence elementary school students' learning motivation because they help create a more active and enjoyable learning atmosphere.

From the students' perspective, PSM Mengajar is an important social learning space. Students were not only present as committee members but also as learning facilitators who had to communicate with children, adjust instructions, manage the atmosphere, and respond directly to learners' needs. This experience developed non-academic abilities such as social care, empathy, responsibility, teamwork, and public speaking. Thus, the benefits of the activity were experienced not only by the children as learners but also by the students as community service implementers.

This activity also shows that student organizations have the potential to become community service drivers that are close to the society. UKM PSM, which is engaged in vocal arts, was able to expand its role into the field of non formal education. This indicates that organizations based on interests and talents can contribute socially when their work programs are designed according to partner needs and members' abilites. This experience can become a foundation for student organizations to develop more sustainable community service programs that are not merely ceremonial but also provide an educational impact for the community.

In terms of activity management, the implementation generally ran well, although there remains room for improvement in some areas. Internal evaluation showed that committee coordination was relatively solid, but inter-division communication needeeds to be strengthened so that information and technical changes could be delivered more quickly. The event division was able to keep the activity running even when some members were unavailable, while the documentation and publication division was able to produce activity documentation but still needeeds to improve the timeliness of content processing and publication. This finding shows that volunteer-based community service programs require clear work management, especially in terms of role distribution, communication flow, and implementation time targets.

From a sustainability perspective, activity publication is an important aspect to consider. Good documentation does not only function as an organizational archive,

but also as a medium to disseminate program information, build partner trust, and open opportunities for collaboration with other parties. Therefore, delays in processing publication content should be viewed as part of managerial evaluation, not merely as a technical problem. Sustainable community service programs require organized documentation, reporting, and publication so that the benefits of the activities can be seen and replicated.

The limitation of this activity is the absence of a specific instrument to systematically capture children's learning progress in the study. Therefore, the results of this activity are more appropriately interpreted as a description of program implementation and general participant responses rather than as quantitative evidence of improvement in basic literacy and numeracy skills. For future implementation, the activity can be equipped with simple, ethical, and non-stigmatizing instruments such as reading progress notes, participation notes, simple work portfolios, or observation sheets. In this way, the program will not only be documented as a social activity, but will also have developmental data that can be used to design subsequent assistance materials for the children.

CONCLUSION

PSM Mengajar is a form of student organization-based community service that is relevant for supporting non-formal learning in community spaces, particularly through assistance in creativity, reading, writing, and arithmetic for elementary school-aged children. Based on the implementation of the activity, the learning-through-play approach was able to create a learning atmosphere that was more open, enjoyable, and appropriate to children's characteristics, allowing basic materials to be delivered without creating rigid academic pressure. This activity also benefited students as community service implementers because they gained direct experience in communicating with children, managing learning activities, working in teams, and building social care. From the organizational perspective, the program ran well, but still requires improvement in inter-division communication, task distribution, documentation management, and activity publication. Therefore, PSM Mengajar should be continued sustainably with a more structured material design, the use of simple observation notes to ethically monitor learners' development, and strengthened cooperation with Ransel Buku and other community partners so that the impact of the activity can become broader, more directed, and more measurable.

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