

# Women Empowerment in Indonesia: Community Learning Activity Center Programs

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## Women Empowerment in Indonesia: Community Learning Activity Center Programs

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### Article Info

### Abstract

#### Keywords:

*Women Empowerment;  
Community Learning  
Activity Center;  
Educational Programs*

One of the factors that support the progress of a nation is the participation <sup>21</sup> women in community development. Educated women are crucial aspects in improving the quality of human resources. The government together with the community, have responsibility <sup>1</sup> and play an essential role in facilitating educational activities for women. **Community Learning Activity Center (PKBM), as an institution established and managed <sup>1</sup> by the society to increase knowledge, skills, expertise and talents, is responsible for preparing community members to be more independent in meeting their needs, especially in the program for marginalized women empowerment.** Among the programs, Women's Life Skills Education Program (PKHP) presents as an alternative solution to provide facilities for women to grow. Many researchers documented the activities in this program and published them in Community Service journals or scientific journals. Therefore, the current study would shed light on the efforts they made by implementing a literature study. By analysing using narrative synthesis studies, the findings reported on diverse activities that were created to develop women's life skills by utilizing the local natural resource potential as well as the methods of delivery and prospected outcomes. This study also provides some practical implications and future recommendations.

#### Abstrak

#### Kata kunci:

*Pemberdayaan Wanita;  
Pusat Kegiatan Belajar  
Masyarakat;  
Program Pendidikan*

Salah satu faktor yang mendukung kemajuan suatu bangsa adalah partisipasi perempuan dalam pembangunan masyarakat. Perempuan terdidik merupakan aspek krusial dalam peningkatan kualitas sumber daya manusia. Pemerintah bersama masyarakat memiliki tanggung jawab dan berperan penting dalam memfasilitasi kegiatan pendidikan bagi perempuan. Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat (PKBM) sebagai lembaga yang didirikan dan dikelola oleh masyarakat untuk meningkatkan pengetahuan, keterampilan, keahlian dan bakat, bertanggung jawab untuk mempersiapkan anggota masyarakat agar lebih mandiri dalam memenuhi kebutuhannya, khususnya dalam program pemberdayaan perempuan yang terpinggirkan. Di antara program tersebut, Program Pendidikan Kecakapan Hidup Perempuan (PKHP) hadir sebagai sebuah solusi alternatif untuk memberikan fasilitas bagi perempuan yang ingin berkembang. Banyak peneliti yang mendokumentasikan kegiatan dalam program ini dan mempublikasikannya dalam jurnal Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat maupun jurnal ilmiah. Oleh karena itu, studi kali ini akan menjelaskan upaya yang mereka lakukan dengan menerapkan studi literatur. Melalui analisis menggunakan studi sintesis naratif, hasil penelitian ini melaporkan bahwa beragam kegiatan diciptakan untuk mengembangkan keterampilan hidup perempuan dengan memanfaatkan potensi sumber daya alam setempat, juga metode yang digunakan untuk menyampaikan program dan hasil yang diharapkan dicapai setelah program selesai. Studi ini juga menyajikan beberapa implikasi praktis dan rekomendasi untuk penelitian selanjutnya.

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## INTRODUCTION

In facing the current advanced global competition, the development of human resources becomes a prominent capital of existing in international relations. Human Resources (HR) can form a more resilient, insightful, superior, and skilled nation based on local cultural, religious, and environmental values. In an effort to improve the quality of human resources, two important things need to be considered, namely improving the quality of physical human resources by improving the quality of health and physical fitness, as well as the quality of community nutrition and improving education and skills, mental and spiritual development, and increasing work productivity (Tohani, 2010; Darmanto, Darmawan & Bukirom, 2020). Regarding this issue, Bhardwaj (2016) maintains that among those considerations, education comes as the top priority since it leads to the holistic development of individuals, societies, and nations. With this in mind, advancing the quality of education to support development in all aspects is extremely crucial.

Education is one way to accelerate various aspects of development. With educated human resources, equitable development can be carried out properly. In Indonesia, education is divided into three main lines, namely formal, non-formal, and informal. Education is also divided into four levels: early childhood, elementary, middle, and high (Sunarsi, 2018). Moreover, Hatimah (2006) maintains that education functions as an institution that carries out the preservation of socio-cultural values. In every society, an indigenous learning system has resilience in maintaining the balance of social life. Through the concept of community-based education, educational programs outside of school are expected to be able to adapt and take advantage of technological developments and be adapted to the conditions of the socio-cultural environment of the community. It has a wide enough opportunity to teach the community, whose targets can be based on age, socio-cultural environment, gender, livelihood, education level, as well as special groups for the community and belongs to the community, embodied in the Community Learning Activity Center (PKBM).

The Community Learning Activity Center (PKBM) is one of the non-formal education units (PNF) which is conceptually community-based and is always required to innovate to produce newer community empowerment programs with transformative character and can become best practice without leaving the characteristics of local wisdom and excellence as added values to educate and at the same time improve people's lives (Setiawan, Nurbarkah, Nugraha, Solihin, Sopyan & Kurniasari, 2020). Meanwhile, Hatimah (2006) and Ibrahim, Rifai & Dewi (2018) define that PKBM is a community-based educational institution designed by the community to expand learning opportunities in the community so that they are empowered and have the power to build themselves through interaction with their environment. To support, Yuliantoro (2008) and Hermawan & Suryono (2016) state that PKBM is a place of learning that provides educational services in the form of various kinds of skills by utilizing existing facilities, infrastructure, and potentials around the community, which are intended so that the community can improve and improve their standard of living. Meanwhile, Putra (2017) contends that PKBM is established as an effort to expand the opportunities for the community to obtain educational services. Another limitation was also defined by Istiqomah et al. (2017), mentioning that PKBM is a place that provides lifelong learning opportunities for everyone in the community to empower people to become independent, improve their quality of life, and develop communities in society. In short, PKBM can be the main organizer of educational programs that are able to answer the needs of the community truly. This can be ascertained because the learning process organized by PKBM is a fun learning program (Almaidah, 2017; Danial, Hamdan & Karwati, 2020).

PKBM is basically a place where the community can participate in independent learning activities through strengthening educational empowerment. By Law no. 20 of 2003 concerning national education, which stipulates PKBM as one of non-formal education. The basic meaning of the community learning activity centre is the centralization of management in terms of finding

solutions in empowering resources, which are held with a learning background so that the outputs generated from these learning activities have an impact on increasing soft skills and hard skills. Thus, it is expected that learning citizens who make PKBM as an alternative have equality with the knowledge and skills obtained by the community from formal education.

As mentioned earlier that the targeted community of PKBM programs can be based on age, socio-cultural environment, gender, livelihood, education level, as well as special groups for the community and belongs to the community. Thus, PKBM also provides activities that are beneficial to improve the quality of marginalized women as an effort on women empowerment. Women's empowerment is defined as a process by which women gain the ability to organize themselves in order to increase their own self-reliance, assert their independent right to make decisions and control resources in order to challenge and eliminate their own subordination (Keller and Mbweve, 1991). As multitasking individuals, women have powerful potentials to support family financial independence (Duflo, 2012; Mehra, 1997; Sohail, 2014). Very unfortunately, they only have limited opportunities to develop their potentials. Instead, they often get injustice treatments from society. Women have suffered the most from all of the world's disadvantaged groups, according to history. Their anguish was not limited by culture, race, geography, or religion. They have been subjected to abuse, molestation, assault, rape, poverty, hunger, and improper treatment, to name a few (Mandal, 2013). Understanding this situation, PKBM often holds programs that can help women boost their capacity as individuals that can be beneficial to make them independent. These programs aim to develop their life skills through several activities that can improve their competence, namely education.

Life skills education is a skill that is given to prepare to face life's problems so that women can stand and work independently. Life skills are defined as skills possessed by a person to be willing and brave to face life and livelihood problems naturally without feeling pressured, then proactively and creatively seek and find solutions so that they are finally able to overcome them. In the other word, life skills are the abilities needed to interact and adapt to other people or the community in which they are located, including problem-solving decision-making skills, critical thinking, creative thinking, effective communication, fostering interpersonal relationships, awareness Self-esteem, empathy, overcoming emotions, and coping with stress are part of education (Ramadani & Syuraini, 2018 Endang, 2019; Yanti & Mardiyah, 2020). The Ministry of National Education divides life skills education into four types, namely: a) personal skills, which include self-awareness and thinking skills; b) social skills; c) academic skills (academic skills); d) vocational skills (vocational skills). The purpose of life skills education, according to Kinasih (2015), is to improve the skills, knowledge, and attitudes of learning residents in certain occupations/businesses according to their talents, interests, physical and mental development as well as the potential of their environment, so that they have the ability to work independently which can be used as provisions to improve the quality of life. Therefore, organizing activities that are specifically directed to improve women's life skills are inevitably pivotal.

The Women's Life Skills Education Program (PKHP) is a program of the Ministry of Education and Culture through the Directorate General of Early Childhood Education and Community Education (Dirjen PAUD and DIKMAS). This program is implemented as one of the steps for developing human resources in sustainable education, including equality education program literacy education, women's empowerment education and vocational education. Women's empowerment education can be done through various programs, one of which is a life skills education program for women as a means to facilitate women to develop skills and knowledge to involve themselves by thinking ahead and developing amid intense global competition. The careful aspects of this planning consist of 7 research indicators: the steps in preparing the PKHP program plan, identification of learning needs, determination of learning programs, planned learning components, determination of learning strategies, determination of tutors, and recruitment of learning citizens.

Previous studies concerning the issues of PKBM programs as efforts to empower women to be independent have been relatively mushrooming recently (Affandi, 2018; Hastuti, Zulfida, Revika & Salman 2021; Juhana 2018; Jusmita & Frinaldi 2021; Muchtar & Yanuarsari 2017; Nazar, 2020). For instance, the study conducted by Affandi which attempted to develop women's financial independence by giving them training in making wedding gifts, reported that there had been mindset and attitude shifts after joining the trainings and mentorship. The women have improved their knowledge, attitudes, insights, as well as awareness and skills to be economically independent. Another example was also informed in the study of Hastuti et al. (2021) which concerned on the developing women's income through processing plastic waste becomes handcrafts which have more economical values. They similarly agreed that this activity has opened women's horizons to be more creative and independent. All in all studies solely reported the conduct after treatments. None ever listed the efforts in a systematic way of literature. Therefore, to document such efforts, this current study employs a literature study or library research to provide general depictions of Indonesian governments' movements in supporting programs that boost women empowerment. The research question formulated to guide this study is "What are the efforts conducted by PKBM to increase marginalized women's potentials to be creative and economically independent embodied in their programs specified to women empowerment?". The primary objective of this study is to provide enlightenment that women's contributions in social development would impact on positive changes of a nation. More importantly, this study is also expected to give motivation to educators, practitioners, and policy makers to continue programs that can explore women's potentials. Therefore, they can compete equally in the work fields and help the family sustainability.

## METHODS

This research used the method of literature study since it attempted to seek a comprehensive overview of the research that has been done on a specific topic to show the reader what is already known about the topic and what is not known, to seek rationale from research that has been done or for further research ideas (Denney & Tewksbury, 2013). To ensure that the findings were comparable and representative to document the attempts of PKBM programs in supporting women empowerment in Indonesia, this study tried to scrutinize the articles as varied as possible. As a result, a computerized literature search was carried out. First, the information was gathered from a variety of sources. The data used in this study came from the results of research that has been conducted and published in online national journals. In conducting this research, the researcher utilized a search for the articles published on the internet using search engines such as ProQuest, PubMed, Research Gate, SagePub and Scholar. The search terms included: 'women empowerment', 'Indonesian women empowerment' 'PKBM', 'PKPH', 'women empowerment and economic development', 'women in society', 'marginalized women', 'life skills', 'Women's Life Skill', 'Community Learning Activity Center', 'Community Learning Center', and 'Community Service'. At the outset, the selection criteria were used broadly. The search terms could exist in any part of the article. Because of the large number of hits, only article titles, abstracts and keywords were screened broadly, using the predefined criteria. The criteria for journal collection are as follows; The year of the literature sources taken from 2017 to 2021, the diverse activities conducted by PKBM to represent particular programs, the suitability of the writing keywords, and the relevance of the results of writing and discussion. In addition, a snowballing strategy was utilized to locate further relevant studies by reviewing all of the reference lists of the selected publications. Finally, there were filtered 11 articles published in 3 scientific journals and 8 community service journals. For narrative synthesis studies, Petticrew and Roberts (2006) were used. The analysis steps given were intended to find out activities implemented by PKBM in different contexts across Indonesian society and identify the important themes that relate to the process of activities and the projected results they expected after doing the community service.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The current study revealed several activities conducted by PKBM in boosting women participation and contributions in social development. Besides that, the description of each way of program delivery is also discussed. Moreover, the final expectations conveyed by the programs' organizers are also portrayed. Those three aspects are summarized in the following table.

**Table 1. Summary of PKBM Programs in Women Empowerment**

<b>Writer(s)</b>	<b>Programs</b>	<b>Processes</b>	<b>Expected Results</b>
Affandi (2018)	wedding gift making	Training and mentoring	Improved knowledge, attitudes, insights, and skills to be economically independent
Hastuti, Zulfida, Revika & Salman (2021)	Plastic waste craft	Mentoring, Training, practice	Processing plastic waste to create economical values
Juhana (2018)	Community Reading Garden	[not mentioned]	Improved women's ecological literacy
Jusmita & Frinaldi (2021)	Virgin Coconut Oil Program	[not mentioned]	The ability to be creative and independent
Muchtar & Yanuarsari (2017)	Embroidery skills	Lecture, demonstration, question and answer, and monitoring	Improving the family economy
Nazar (2020)	independent business literacy	Lectures, brainstorming, and discussions	Awareness to choose and develop business
Nugroho (2017)	Waste Processing Program	Mentoring	Awareness to create healthy and clean environment
Ratnasari, Saripah & Ahyadi (2021)	Sewing entrepreneurship program	Hard skill and soft skill trainings	Creating business opportunities to improve the economic standard
Susanti, Irwan, Nainggolan & Zati (2019)	Banana Skin Waste Program	Motivational speech	Using natural potential to increase women's capacity
Uthartianty (2018)	Cullinary Arts	80% practice; 20% theory	Improve the family economy through culinary business
Wardani, Hendrawijaya & Indrianti (2017)	Batik skillstraning	Traning mentoring and monitoring.	Independent entrepreneurship

**Organizing activities to improve soft skills and hard skills**

Community-based education is a model of providing education carried out from the community, by the community and for the community. In this context, the community is marginalized women required to have a role and participation in the programs and were empowered to design, plan, finance, manage, and assess their own needs as an effort to make them become independent individuals. From Table 1, it can be seen that there are nine activities conducted to develop women's hard skills, namely wedding gift making, plastic waste craft, virgin coconut oil programs, embroidery skills, waste processing program, sewing entrepreneurship program, banana skin waste program, culinary arts, and batik skills training. The main talents that produce anything that can be seen and observed immediately are known as hard skills (Wibowo, Badi'atib, Annisa, Wahab, Jamaludin, Rozikan, Mufid, Fahmih, Purwanto & Muhain (2020). Hard skills are those that are reasonably simple to assess. Widoyoko differentiates between two types of

hard skills: academic and vocational. Academic talents include the capacity to define, count, explain, describe, classify, identify, describe, predict, analyze, compare, discriminate, and draw conclusions from numerous concepts, data, and facts connected to the subject (Widoyoko, 2009). By presenting these programs, the organizers expect to equip women with various hard skills that will help them become creative and independent individuals. In the future, these women would have opportunities to open a business in the area of their interests or be workers in a particular business.

Meanwhile, only two programs focus on improving soft skills, namely community reading garden and independent business literacy. Soft skills, often known as interpersonal skills, are soft abilities that are employed in dealing with and collaborating with others. Soft skills, according to BahrumSyah, are a person's ability to interact with others (interpersonal skills) and self-control (intrapersonal abilities) that may be developed to perform optimally. There is a resemblance of thought about the concept of soft skills between the two opinions listed earlier (Wibowo et al., 2020). Soft skills play a significant influence in the development of a person's personality. Every woman must develop skills that go beyond academic or technical knowledge. Furthermore, soft skills are also vital in enabling social competency and complementing hard skills, which are job-specific technical requirements. As a result, soft skills are just as important as hard skills, but they should not be exploited to mask a person's lack of knowledge in specific areas (Schulz, 2008). According to the obtained data, the programs initiated to increase women's soft skills were relatively fewer than hard skills. This implies that there is still a lack of awareness of the importance of developing soft skills as one of the women's life skills.

To sum up, soft skills and hard skills are the two forms of knowledge categorization (Polanyi, 1966) and it is important to develop those two skills in order to shape a strong personality. Because hard and soft skills are complementary and balance each other, they have a very close and inseparable relationship. Hard skills are deemed good for all categories of job, although skills in using information and communication technologies have not fully supported the other hard skills. Because each main of soft skills has gone hand in hand with one another in producing integrated soft skills, the competence of soft skills in any categories of work is deemed good (Setiana, Setiawati & Mustaqim, 2019). Therefore, PKBM must integrate programs that involve hard skills and soft skills simultaneously in the future.

### **Conducting Diverse Processes in Program Delivery**

In Table 1, it is depicted the processes of program delivery to the women as participants of the programs, which vary from lectures to demonstrations, from mentoring to training, and many other techniques. The selection of this delivery process was based on the characteristics of the participants and also the programs. For instance, the lecturing method that was chosen to deliver materials in embroidery program and independent business literacy aimed at giving an explanation about the basic concept of the programs, usually done at the beginning of the activity. This is in line with what Charlton (2006) argues that for many students in many situations, lectures are undoubtedly the ideal teaching approach, especially for imparting conceptual knowledge and a considerable knowledge gap between lecturer and participants. Another example was a demonstration, which was suitable for implementation when the tutor was willing to show an authentic model or example. Demonstration learning, often known as 'imitation learning,' and 'teaching by showing,' is a significant and applicable method to teach hard skills to participants (Schaal, 1997). These two examples were seen implemented since they were suitable with the participants' circumstances.

Among the techniques, mentoring and training were the most selected methods utilized by the program organizers. This is because those two methods provide opportunities to explore the participants' competencies. In many corporations, it is training even become a customary program that sets to increase the quality of employees. Training is defined as a "structured activity aiming at

imparting information and instructions to improve the recipient's performance or to help him or her acquire a required degree of knowledge or ability," according to Business Dictionary (training, n.d.). Training is a set of planned and systematic actions aimed at improving a person's skills, knowledge, and competency (Nassazi, 2013). It is the process of communicating key skills and programmed behavior to become aware of norms and procedures that will control their own conduct to efficiently do their work (Rodrigues & Walters (2017). In short, pieces of training are mostly preferred to conduct the PKBM programs because of its benefits in providing an authentic learning experience.

The achievement of the expected performance cannot be separated from the PKBM management process. In that process, there are management functions that must be carried out. Management is a typical process, including planning, organizing, directing and controlling. Planning is an important part of the management process because, at this stage, the goals and objectives of the organization to be achieved through the use of existing resources will be determined. So in the implementation of the PKBM program, careful planning is needed. From the results of interviews with managers, it was explained that the PKBM planning process includes collecting data on needs and supporting resources, setting priorities for program needs for each field, compiling service activity programs, and compiling PKBM annual work programs

At the planning stage, it is done by setting the vision and mission and the goals of the institution, which must be clear, realistic, and achievable, and in accordance with the functions and roles of PKBM in the community. The following are the types of planning determined by PKBM a) recruitment of learning residents, b) identification of the types of programs needed by learning residents, c) preparing learning programs, d) forming study groups based on the needs of learning residents, e) preparing learning materials, and f) develop a schedule of activities. Based on the information provided by the PKBM manager, there are obstacles in recruiting learning residents. The community's interest around the PKBM location to take part in learning is still relatively low; from year to year, the number is quite fluctuating (Sutisna, 2013; Verawati, Indriani & Hikmawati, 2021).

Meanwhile, the learning materials are adjusted to the educational curriculum set by the government. Meanwhile, the material for skills is adjusted to market needs. This is done to improve the quality of the abilities and skills of learning citizens. The schedule for learning activities is a deliberation between learning residents and PKBM managers. In determining the schedule, it is not uncommon for obstacles to occur because of the difficulty in adjusting the time offered by the manager with the readiness of learning residents to take their time to follow the learning process. The learning method used in learning is adjusted to the characteristics of learning citizens as adults so that it is not the same as learning in formal education. Implementation of learning, the women's life skills education program is carried out in a relaxed but serious manner. Learning residents are involved based on their respective experiences, both in entrepreneurship or in processing cassava into food worth selling. The challenge for tutors in adult learning, in this case, is women who are classified as poor and have low learning motivation, namely tutors must be able to stimulate learning citizens to continue to follow learning activities so that the mindset of learning citizens is more open, especially in this case, citizens are willing to learn for entrepreneurship through processing cassava into *kecimpring*. To simulate a change in the mindset of citizens, tutors always motivate according to the experiences they have experienced through *cimpring* entrepreneurs that can survive and develop to date.

Other management functions regarding organizing, which is the activity of coordinating various available resources to achieve organizational goals in PKBM, are carried out by establishing an organizational structure that shows each section's lines of authority and responsibility. PKBM managers usually consist of a chairman, treasurer, secretary, and a number of program coordinators. Not infrequently, managers also double as educators and/or tutors in certain



educational programs according to their respective competencies. Meanwhile, institutions usually bring in experts from outside the institution for educational programs in the form of courses.

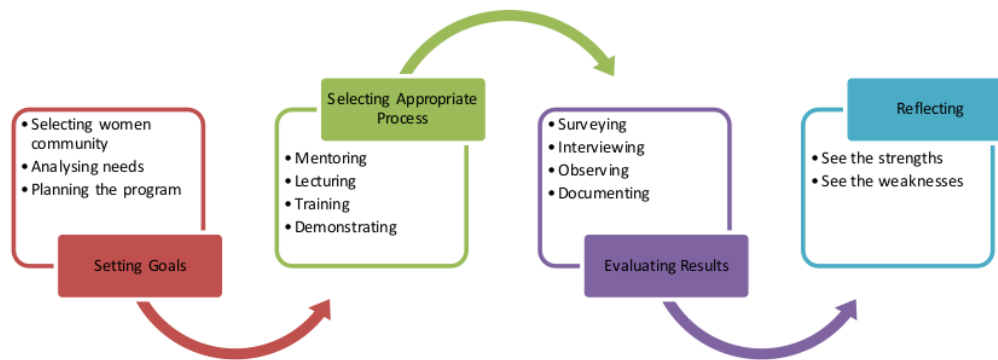
The following management function is supervision, which assesses performance based on a set standard. Activities in the supervisory function include evaluating the success of program implementation run by PKBM, making corrections if errors occur, and providing alternative solutions if problems occur in the program implementation process. The PKBM Chair carries out supervision activities on the tasks carried out by the management and the implementation of learning, including the activities of learning citizens. This is done with the aim of knowing the extent to which PKBM learning has been implemented.

### ***Prospecting Results-Oriented on Economic Independence***

The evaluation must always be conducted to measure the success of activities carried out by PKBM in providing community-based education. The major goals of PKBM programs mainly include increasing awareness of learning participants and the community around PKBM on the importance of education. In this context, based on the database seen in Table 1, the primary goals were directed to create independent women. This movement is considered a positive action to strive for equal rights for Indonesian women. Since the 1950s, development agencies have responded to disadvantaged women's need for income by investing small amounts of money in income-generating projects. Such projects frequently fail because they are motivated by welfare rather than development concerns, providing women with transitory and part-time jobs in traditionally feminine professions like knitting and sewing, which have limited markets. In contrast, certain nonprofit organizations, such as the Self-Employed Women's Association in India, have been successful in improving women's economic position over the last two decades because they began with the concept that women are essential to economic development (Mehra, 1997). Given these facts, it is necessary to consider involving more women in any social stratifications and positions.

Another indicator of program success is the increasing number of women who take part in empowerment programs in PKBM, although the increase is still relatively low. After evaluating the former program, the increase in the number of learning residents is shown in the following programs. Meanwhile, the number of learning residents for the course class is still relatively fluctuating, increasing the knowledge and skills of learning residents and the community. The indicator is the increasing number of graduates produced. Meanwhile, learning residents who take part in skills education programs also feel the benefits. For example, people who take courses in make-up, sewing, or making souvenirs, can take advantage of the skills for entrepreneurship, the distribution of skilled workers produced by PKBM to work for PKBM partners, especially for those who have not been able to open their own business due to limited funds. Implement management functions in carrying out their functions and roles. The indicator is the implementation of developed educational programs and their sustainability.

In conclusion, this study illustrates the critical stages that PKBM organizers need to conduct when conducting programs for women empowerment. The description of the stage can be viewed from the following figure.



**Figure 1. Model of Conducting PKBM Programs for Women Empowerment**

## CONCLUSION

Figure 1 illustrates the common stages that the PKBM program organizers conducted based on the selected literature. They initially began the program by setting the goals, choosing the women community as the target, analysing their needs, and planning the program. Moreover, the programs were done by facilitating the participants with appropriate methods based on their characteristics. Furthermore, they monitored the success after the programs ended by evaluating surveys, interviews, documentation, or observation. Last but not least, the reflection included in the figure is only a suggestion given to the further program organizers to yield better performance in the following programs. The present study has several weaknesses, specifically in relation to the limited database. Therefore, future researchers are recommended to provide more corpus to serve more comparable and comprehensible findings.

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