

Mothers As Learning Agent: Empowering Community Groups for Educational Independence in Kepetingan Hamlet

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Dikirim : 10 November 2025

Direvisi : 29 Desember 2025

Diterima : 30 Desember 2025

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran ibu sebagai agen pembelajaran di Dusun Kepetingan serta menganalisis strategi dan bentuk kegiatan pemberdayaan yang mereka jalankan. Keterbatasan akses terhadap pendidikan formal yang dipengaruhi oleh kondisi geografis, ekonomi, sosial, dan budaya mendorong para ibu di wilayah ini untuk mengambil peran aktif melalui inisiatif pembelajaran berbasis komunitas. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan *community-based research*. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi. Temuan penelitian mengidentifikasi empat bentuk kontribusi utama para ibu, yaitu: (1) pembentukan komunitas belajar sebagai upaya memperluas akses pendidikan bagi anak-anak, (2) pemanfaatan dukungan pihak eksternal, termasuk program pengabdian mahasiswa, (3) pengelolaan waktu yang efektif dalam menyeimbangkan peran domestik dan pendidikan, serta (4) kemampuan berinovasi dengan memanfaatkan media lokal sebagai sarana pembelajaran. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa peran ibu melampaui fungsi pendamping belajar semata, melainkan mencakup peran sebagai fasilitator, inovator, dan penggerak kegiatan pembelajaran di tingkat komunitas. Kontribusi tersebut tidak hanya berdampak pada peningkatan kualitas pembelajaran anak, tetapi juga berperan dalam pemberdayaan perempuan serta penguatan solidaritas sosial. Dengan demikian, para ibu memiliki peran strategis dalam mendorong kemandirian pendidikan dan transformasi masyarakat berbasis komunitas.

Kata kunci: ibu sebagai agen pembelajaran, kemandirian pendidikan, pemberdayaan komunitas, pendidikan berbasis masyarakat

Abstract: This study aims to examine the role of mothers as learning agents in Kepetingan Hamlet and to analyze the strategies and forms of empowerment activities they implement. Limited access to formal education caused by geographical, economic, social, and cultural factors has encouraged mothers in this area to take an active role by initiating and implementing community-based learning activities. This study employed a qualitative method using a *community-based research* approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. The findings identify four main forms of mothers' contributions: (1) the establishment of learning communities to expand children's access to education, (2) the utilization of external support, including student community service programs, (3) effective time management in balancing domestic responsibilities and educational roles, and (4) creativity in utilizing local media as learning tools. These results indicate that mothers' roles extend beyond that of learning companions to include functions as facilitators, innovators, and drivers of community-level learning activities. Such roles not only contribute to improving the quality of children's learning but also promote women's

empowerment and strengthen social solidarity. Thus, mothers play a significant role in fostering educational self-reliance and transforming community-based societies.

Keywords: *community-based education, community empowerment, educational independence, mothers as learning agents*

1. Introduction

Community-based education becomes one of a proper approach, because it does not just stress on knowledge transfer, but also skill improvement, and an individual's potency in the social context. According to Bray (2001), community-based education is an educational approach that involves communities directly in decision-making and management, fostering ownership and sustainability in education. Community-based education opens chances for learners to improve leadership skills, communication, teamwork, which is important to effectively manage public health needs and push problem solving collaboratively (Kumari *et al.*, 2024). Through community-based education, the learning process is unlimited in formal spaces, but also involves interaction with society, so learners could improve critical thinking, creativities, and skills in facing real problems. Collaborative learning in a community environment pushes high level thinking skills by going with learners to analyze, evaluate, and create solutions to real problems (Muawiyah, 2023). Moreover, education has a crucial role in developing public welfare for empowering individuals with relevant skills with their community needs.

In context of community-based education, mothers' role as learning agents become crucial. As part of a community, mother does not just play a role in supporting children's education at home but also build a wider learning environment. A mother's role often becomes an influential factor in learning success to children. A mother's education level significantly influences children's academic performances, because it forms behavior and children's self-regulation competency (Weis *et al.*, 2023). It could be said that a mother has a crucial role in children's education, either emotionally or academically. A mother-child preparation program in preschool improves significantly emotional connectedness and regulation of children's good behavior at home or at class (Welch *et al.*, 2023).

The role of mothers as learning agents becomes a crucial foundation for building learning capacities within the community. According to Epstein (2011), mothers as learning agents are mothers who actively facilitate and strengthen children's learning at home through family, school, community partnerships. Research shows that mothers are the first educators for their

children, not only teaching knowledge but also shaping behavior, morals, and character through daily guidance, role modeling, and motivation (Perwitasari *et al.*, 2025). In other words, the role of a mother as a learning agent includes facilitating learning, providing motivation, and inspiring children in both cognitive and affective domains. This role goes beyond simply teaching but includes the ability to create a conducive learning environment and be a good role model for children.

This process subsequently fosters community empowerment. Freire (2005) states that community empowerment is a process of developing critical awareness through education, enabling people to become active subjects who can transform their social reality. Maschi *et al.* (2021) add that empowerment also involves a psychological dimension, including increased control, capacity, and self-confidence for individuals and communities to act independently.

Educational independence can be achieved with effective empowerment. According to Zimmerman (2002), educational independence is the learner's ability to regulate and take responsibility for their own learning through goal setting, strategy use, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation. Research indicates that the family, school, and community environment significantly influence students' independence in learning, highlighting the importance of creating conditions where communities can take active responsibility for their educational processes (Anriani *et al.*, 2024).

Even though, mothers' role as learning agents in the community are crucial, there are few challenges that must be faced in achieving educational independence. In the context of community, the community in Kepetingan Hamlet faces challenges, where it becomes the main factors that influence the mothers' role as learning agents, especially in the geographical, social, cultural, and economic factors. As the isolated hamlet and has a limited access to educational facilities, the mothers in Kepetingan Hamlet as learning agents face difficulty in getting adequate learning resources for their children. As the isolated Hamlet and a limited access, it also triggers to social problems, where teaching staff like a teacher is reluctant to teach in school. The limitedness of this teacher enables the children in Kepetingan Hamlet to lack of qualified knowledges. This condition is primarily caused by geographical factor, as access to Kepetingan Hamlet is difficult due to damaged road conditions and the fact that most routes consist of narrow footpaths, as well as the long distance from the main village, which hinders community mobility. Then, the economic conditions that depend on the fisheries sector that makes many mothers must divide the role between earning a living and going with the

children's education. The limitedness can hamper the mothers' involvement in producing the conducive learning environment in the community. In addition, many children in Kepetingan Hamlet also tend to feel enough, if they have finished their last study in junior high school. This attitude reflects the influence of local cultural factors. The matter is influenced by the environment or local cultures. In this case, the mothers' role as learning agents are really needed in changing the children's mindset. Therefore, this study aims to dig further into how the mothers can be empowered as learning agents that are able to trigger a community to educational independence.

Some researchers had conducted about the mother's role in an informal education and its impact on children's growth. In study of maternal informal learning experiences that shape parenting practices highlight that mothers' informal learning experience, either in social interaction or media, really influence their way to nurture children (Coolman *et al.*, 2023). This study shows the seven main themes that contribute to mothers' making-decision in educating their children. However, this study does not deeply discuss how economical and cultural factors could influence mother's informal learning process. Other study in motherhood efforts as informal educators in stimulating early childhood motor development in Kedung Jaya Village shows that mother has a crucial role in stimulating motor skill in early childhood (Cahyani *et al.*, 2021). This study stresses that a mother's active involvement in giving stimulation could improve children's skill motor significantly. However, the study just focused on skill motor growth and does not discuss cognitive and social aspects that influence children's growth.

Meanwhile, in study of The Role of Mother's Education and Child Gender for Children's Vocabulary and Math Skills in Norway show that mother's education level has a strong correlation with children's math and vocabulary skills (Lenes *et al.*, 2022). This study highlights mother's different influence on education to boys and girls. However, this study just focused on the context of Norway and does not study how this dynamic happens in countries with education systems and different cultures. The last study of Honing, Loving, and Nurturing: A Study of Mothers' Role in Family confirmed that mother has dominant roles in family, it is not just in taking care of children, but also form children's character (Aziza, 2020). This study stresses the importance of affection and family-based education in growing children's personality. However, this study does not discuss specifically how a mother's role as an informal educator can be influenced by social and economic factors.

Other recent research offers a broader perspective on how mothers learn and teach

informally. Digital platforms have become an important channel for parents to get parenting knowledge; a recent systematic review shows that social media can provide peer support while also spreading misleading information that influences parenting practices (Mertens *et al.*, 2024). Engagement with parenting influencers has likewise been shown to affect health decisions and caregiving patterns, although the ways mothers evaluate source credibility remain under-explored (Chee *et al.*, 2024). Beyond media influences, maternal education and cognitive capacity play a crucial role in child development.

Recent research on digital parenting also highlights how mothers informally acquire technological knowledge to manage their children's device use (Hernandez *et al.*, 2024). Socioeconomic conditions are equally important: several systematic reviews confirm that mothers' income and education affect children's cognitive and language development through pathways such as home stimulation, family stress levels, and the quality of the home environment (Rakesh *et al.*, 2025). Cultural factors likewise play a significant role; comparative studies show that collectivist and individualist values lead to different socialization goals and levels of verbal stimulation (Lansford, 2022). Longitudinal evidence further shows that developmental gaps linked to maternal education tend to persist but can be reduced through family-based interventions and preschool programs (Houweling *et al.*, 2022).

Although some earlier studies had discussed mothers' involvement in informal education and its impact on child development, there is still a significant research gap. Few studies specifically examine how mothers function as learning agents in remote communities that simultaneously face geographic, economic, and cultural challenges, particularly in rural Indonesian contexts such as Kepetingan Hamlet. Earlier research has focused on early childhood skills or the influence of parents in formal education and rarely considers how cultural norms and limited access to education shape mothers' roles as informal educator. So, this study purposes to describe the mothers' roles as learning agents in Kepetingan Hamlet and analyze the strategies and empowerment activities they undertake.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus, framework, and contextual contribution. First, unlike most earlier studies that examined mothers' influence in formal or early childhood education, this research explores how mothers function as learning agents in geographically isolated and economically limited communities, an area that is still underexplored in both Indonesian and international contexts. Second, this study introduces the concept of mothers as community-based learning innovators, showing how they creatively use local resources, build

informal collaboration, and initiate community learning to overcome educational limitations. This perspective shows that innovation and empowerment in education can appear from grassroots female leadership rather than relying solely on formal institutions. Third, this study integrates the perspectives of informal education, community empowerment, and educational independence into a single analytical framework. The findings reveal that mothers' initiatives not only enhance children's access to learning but also strengthen women's leadership, social solidarity, and community transformation. Hence, the novelty of this study is positioned in its contextual focus on rural educational settings, its integration of gender and empowerment dimensions, and its empirical evidence that informal, mother-driven learning practices can lead to collective educational independence at the community level.

The study focuses on mothers actively engaged in community educational activities in Kepetingan Hamlet, and the research does not measure formal academic achievement of children; it centers on mothers' actions and community effects. Therefore, the researcher formulates the main problems that will be a focus on this study. The problems are how mothers act as learning agents to empower the community toward educational independence, and how the mothers' role as a learning agent in facing the problem are. The contribution of this study is to serve as a model for empowering women to take leadership roles in education and offer strategies that mothers and community groups can adopt to improve learning opportunities in areas with limited access to formal schooling and open avenues for further qualitative and comparative studies on family-based and community-driven education in other remote regions.

2. Methods

This study uses qualitative with Community-Based Research (CBR) approach. Community-based research is a collaborative research approach that equitably involves community members and researchers in all phases of the research process to produce knowledge that leads to action and community empowerment (Israel *et al.*, 1998). Community-Based Research (CBR) to emphasize community participation and collaboration. In this sense, mothers and local figures are not merely respondents but active partners in finding issues, sharing experiences, and reflecting on educational practices within the community.

The main subjects of this study are ten active mothers involved in community-based educational activities. In addition, three community figures (including the head of the Hamlet) and five children are included as supporting informants to enrich the data. Informants were

selected purposively based on their active participation in community learning activities.

The data collection techniques used in this study consisted of participatory observation, in which the researcher attended community learning sessions, mentored children, and engaged in local educational activities while observing interaction patterns, the use of local learning media, and the roles of mothers. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted using semi-structured and detailed questions to obtain rich insights and systematically classify the information. Documentation, including photographs, videos, and attendance lists, was also collected as supporting data. This study was carried out in Kepetingan Hamlet from December 2024 to January 2025.

The data were analyzed thematically using the Miles & Huberman (1984), which involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Thematic analysis emphasizes a structured coding process based on the research questions, allowing the emergence of themes that explain the phenomenon of mothers as learning agents in community-based educational empowerment (Heriyanto, 2018).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Mothers' Role as A Learning Agent in Achieving Educational Independence

1. Motivator

The interview's result shows the mother's deep awareness of the value of education despite limited resources. This attitude aligns with the concept of intrinsic motivation, where mothers play a crucial role in nurturing children's enthusiasm and perseverance in learning actions, encouraging the children to learn, assisting them when they face difficulties, and organizing group study at the Al-Qur'an Education Park (TPQ) demonstrate how motivation is transformed into concrete collective learning activities. By creating a supportive environment and sometimes involving teachers, she fosters social motivation, encouraging the children to learn collaboratively and confidently. This practice reflects Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in developing knowledge and motivation.

2. Facilitator

As a facilitator, the mothers provide guidance, resources, and a supportive learning environment, enabling children to engage in collaborative learning. This aligns with the principles of sociocultural theory, which emphasizes that learning is enhanced through guided

social interaction. Her efforts help children build discipline, support focus, and adapt to group learning routines, showing that facilitation from parents or community members can significantly support education even in contexts with limited resources.

Parental involvement in education, including organizing group learning activities, enhances children's academic motivation and achievement. Similarly, Wright *et al.* (2023) highlights that active parental participation in home learning fosters both motivation and engagement in children's studies. Moreover, community-based learning models, such as those described by Yohani *et al.* (2023), show that facilitators in community learning groups create spaces for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and skill-building, which strengthens learning outcomes in resource-limited contexts. Thus, the mother's role as a facilitator not only supports individual children but also fosters a collaborative learning culture in her community, bridging educational needs with social engagement.

3. Innovator

Based on the result of mothers' interview, it highlights their role as an innovator in the community's learning activities. Although they are not a formal teacher, they actively develop creative learning methods to make studying more engaging for children. By using everyday objects as learning media and collaborating with other mothers, they show initiative and creativity in addressing the limitations of local educational resources. Their approach shows that innovation in education can appear from committed community members who find problems and develop practical solutions. Through the introduction of new learning tools and the organization of collaborative study sessions at the TPQ, the mothers do not only enrich the learning experience but also motivate other mothers to take part actively in supporting education.

Recent studies support the importance of such community-driven innovation. Chowdhury & Alzarrad (2025) emphasize that community-based educational approaches enhance collaboration among students, educators, and local stakeholders, fostering deeper understanding through practical problem-solving. While, Wright *et al.* (2023) highlight that active parental involvement, even by non-formal educators, increases student motivation and engagement and Rey & Nasrudin (2025) note that community-led educational initiatives create culturally relevant and inclusive learning environments, improving student participation and outcomes. Through her innovative actions, the mothers contribute to creating a sustainable

learning environment in the Hamlet, helping children develop regular study habits and a cheerful outlook toward learning despite limited resources.

3.2 Mothers' Role as A Learning Agent in Facing the Problem

1. Community Learning Group



Figure 1. The Movers of Community Learning Group

The Figure 1 illustrates the role of mothers as innovators in fostering educational participation and community-based learning initiatives in Kepetingan Hamlet. Their actions prove how mothers can transform awareness into concrete educational practices that respond to local needs. The establishment of a weekend learning community at the local TPQ stands for a grassroots educational innovation. The mothers find a social concern that children rarely attend school and collaboratively create an informal learning space to address it. This reflects their ability to start community-driven educational solutions without external direction. Such initiative aligns with the concept of social innovation, where local actors generate new methods to improve social welfare through collective learning (Schröer, 2021).

2. Use of External Assistance



Figure 2. Students go with their mothers to enhance their teaching abilities.

The Figure 2 reveals the significance of collaboration and external partnership in enhancing local educational innovation in Kepetingan Hamlet. The involvement of university students and literacy communities acts as a bridge between formal education and local learning

practices, promoting the exchange of ideas, teaching methods, and educational materials. The mother's experience shows that the presence of students who help organize study schedules and bring storybooks creates new enthusiasm among children and parents. This situation proves how university and community collaboration can foster creative learning models and pedagogical renewal at the grassroots level. According to Leach & Bradbury (2024), teachers in rural settings who thrive are those capable of adapting, collaborating, and drawing on external partnerships to enrich their teaching practice. This finding aligns with the mothers' experience, where students serve as facilitators of new educational ideas that stimulate the children's interest and inspire the local tutors to innovate.

3. Time Management

The mothers' statements reveal the essential role of mothers in time management and emotional engagement in supporting their children's learning at home. Both illustrate how domestic and educational responsibilities can coexist harmoniously, turning daily routines into meaningful learning experiences that nurture children's motivation and discipline. The mother's effort to accompany her child during homework, despite her limited educational background, reflects a strong sense of intergenerational learning, where mothers not only guide their children but also enhance their own understanding through shared learning experiences. This aligns with Moreira *et al.* (2023), who found that active parental involvement in home-based learning contexts significantly enhances children's learning motivation and performance, as it fosters a sense of emotional support and belonging.

Similarly, the mother's experience emphasizes the value of maternal presence and emotional support in building children's enthusiasm for studying. She believes that when mothers dedicate time to go with their children, it strengthens their study habits and engagement. This supports the findings of Guo & Zhao (2025), who reported that consistent parental involvement and emotional connection are key factors influencing children's cognitive and motivational development in home-learning environments. Furthermore, the mothers' experiences highlight that time management is not merely about balancing daily chores, but about integrating educational values into everyday life. Activities such as reading together or aiding with homework become informal yet powerful learning opportunities that cultivate a family-based learning culture. In conclusion, it exemplifies how mothers function as learning facilitators who merge caregiving and teaching within the home environment. Through their dedication, emotional support, and commitment of time, they foster a sustainable learning habit that

promotes children's educational independence and strengthens the foundation of community-based education.

4. Use of Surrounding Objects as Learning Media



Figure 3. Creative learning activities using simple materials.

The Figure 3 reveals that mothers in the community apply creative, low-cost, and context-based learning strategies using locally available materials such as marbles, pebbles, or cartons. These everyday materials are transformed into learning tools that make the process of counting, writing, and playing more engaging for children. Instead of relying on formal textbooks, the mothers create a playful and enjoyable learning atmosphere that encourages curiosity and motivation. The mother's approach of teaching counting through marbles ("take five marbles, then minus two") reflects a form of game-based learning, a method proven to enhance children's cognitive and emotional engagement. This aligns with Alotaibi (2024) findings that game-based learning significantly improves children's motivation and understanding compared to traditional teaching.

Based on the research findings, the role of mothers as learning agents is evident not only in educational practices within the family and community but also in its broader implications. Mothers' active involvement in informal and community-based learning has been shown to significantly expand children's access to education and enhance the quality of learning, particularly in geographically isolated areas such as Kepetingan Hamlet. This indicates that educational access is not solely dependent on formal institutions, but can be strengthened through family and community initiatives that function as complementary learning spaces supported by strong social capital and parental engagement. From a theoretical standpoint, these findings extend discussions on parental involvement by highlighting the importance of integrated family-community learning environments that contribute to improved learning quality, motivation, and children's social-emotional development. Furthermore, community-based education serves as an effective avenue for women's empowerment and the strengthening of social solidarity, as mothers' participation in organizing learning activities

fosters leadership, self-efficacy, and social participation while reinforcing trust, collaboration, and long-term social capital. At the same time, mothers' roles as role models and emotional guides are crucial in supporting children's intrinsic motivation, learning discipline, and emotional security. By balancing guidance with autonomy, mothers create learning environments that promote both independence and emotional well-being, underscoring the importance of family-based emotional support as a fundamental foundation for children's sustainable educational development.

4. Conclusion

The mothers in Kepetingan Hamlet play a crucial role as informal learning agents who actively contribute to improving education within their community. Their involvement is not only limited to the home but also includes efforts to expand children's access to education, cultivate a learning culture within families, creatively utilize simple learning media, manage time effectively, and form community learning groups that strengthen social solidarity. These initiatives demonstrate that local wisdom and maternal leadership can serve as solutions to geographical, economic, and social challenges in education. The findings further indicate that empowerment models based on mothers' roles and community collaboration have the potential to be adopted in other remote areas facing similar challenges. Mothers' roles as drivers of education are proven to be sustainable alternatives in contexts with limited institutional support. Therefore, support for literacy programs targeting mothers and the strengthening of community-based education is strongly recommended. Such interventions can enhance mothers' capacities as educators and foster an inclusive educational ecosystem, thereby contributing to educational self-reliance and long-term community resilience

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express his deepest gratitude to all parties who have supported the completion of this research. Special thanks are given to the residents of Kepetingan, the mothers who took part as informants.

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