



Realizing an Educational and Religious Environment at Az-Zahra Orphanage Through the Recognition Community Service Program

Winda Aulia¹, Yulia Arwiah Nst², Rina Pembriana³

^{1,2}Department of Islamic Religious Education, Raden Fatah State Islamic University Palembang

³Raden Fatah State Islamic University Palembang

Corresponding Author e-mail: Windaauliasp3@gamil.com

Article History:

Received: 21-01-2026

Revised: 26-01-2026

Accepted: 30-01-2026

Keywords: Emotional awareness, Mood Station, mental health in the workplace, soft skills development, media employees

Abstract: *The Recognition Community Service Program (KKN Rekognisi) at Az-Zahra Orphanage aimed to create a simultaneously educational and religious environment through participatory, educational, and applicative approaches. The program was implemented in three stages: (1) preparation, comprising needs assessment and focus group discussion (FGD); (2) core implementation, including the arrangement of study rooms, establishment of a book bank, evening Qur'an recitation, juz 'amma memorization, and mini sermons; and (3) monitoring and evaluation. The results indicated significant improvements: Qur'an reading proficiency increased from 23% to 69% of children achieving fluency; active participation rose from 40% to 82%; and a permanent learning space with structured activity schedules was established. Key challenges included spatial limitations, caregiver resistance to innovative methods, and power outages, which were addressed through zone rotation, comparative demonstrations, and cross-sector coordination. This program demonstrates that a locally need-based Recognition KKN model is effective in transforming orphanages into environments that foster knowledgeable and morally virtuous generations.*

Introduction

Orphanages play a strategic role as social welfare institutions (Lembaga Kesejahteraan Sosial Anak/LKSA) responsible not only for meeting the basic needs of orphaned, fatherless, and underprivileged children, but also for serving as a family substitute in shaping personality, character, and both spiritual and intellectual intelligence. The existence of trained social workers within LKSA constitutes a key determinant of the quality of care and education received by children in these institutions (Hakim, 2022). However, field realities reveal that many orphanages in Indonesia continue to face multifaceted challenges, including limited human resources for mentoring, inadequate learning support facilities, and weak integration of religious values in a structured manner. This situation is further compounded by the absence of optimal synergy among orphanage administrators, local communities, and universities in creating an environment that is simultaneously educational and

religious. A conducive environment, physically, psychosocially, and spiritually, constitutes the fundamental foundation for the growth and development of foster children, enabling them to become a generation that is knowledgeable, of noble character, and independent.

Awareness of this urgency underscores the need for real and sustainable interventions, one of which is the Community Service Program (Kuliah Kerja Nyata/KKN), designed not merely as a ceremonial activity but as a form of recognition of the specific needs of orphanages through a participatory and action-research-based approach. Previous community service research has confirmed the effectiveness of structured educational interventions in the orphanage environment. Sudirman et al. (2026), in their study on character strengthening and learning motivation for orphanage children, found that intensive educational guidance programs using peer tutoring and joyful learning approaches significantly improved academic motivation, discipline, and self-confidence among foster children. Their study confirmed that educational and character programs that combine academic assistance with value internalization through storytelling and role playing are more effective when designed to address the specific psychological and social contexts of orphanage life.

Meanwhile, Pratama et al. (2025), in their study "Implementation of Character Education Through Art and Environmental Activities in Orphanages: A Case Study in Blitar Regency," demonstrated that art-based activities and the management of the orphanage's physical environment can serve as effective media for instilling character values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and tolerance (Silitonga et al., 2023). Both studies provide a crucial foundation that a holistic approach combining cognitive, environmental, and social educational aspects yields positive impacts. Nevertheless, neither study explicitly integrated religious formation as a structured and measurable central pillar.

Departing from this gap, the KKN Recognition program at Az-Zahra Orphanage adopts a distinct approach, striving to create an environment that is simultaneously educational and religious rather than partial. Az-Zahra Orphanage, located in Sukajaya, Sukarami, Palembang, accommodates approximately 35 foster children aged 7 to 18 years. Based on initial observations by the program team, fundamental problems were identified: (1) the absence of a well-organized dedicated study room and a shortage of learning support materials; (2) inconsistent implementation of religious activity schedules such as Qur'an recitation and congregational prayers due to supervisor limitations; and (3) interpersonal tensions among foster siblings arising from social jealousy and unequal attention from administrators. The KKN Recognition program, implemented over two months, was designed in three phases: participatory assessment; simultaneous intervention encompassing the arrangement of educational spaces, establishment of a book bank and structured study schedules, and the strengthening of religious activities; and sustainability evaluation through cadre training for administrators and foster parents (Rahman & Huraerah, 2023).

The primary objective of this program is to describe the process and outcomes of efforts to create an integrated educational and religious environment at Az-Zahra Orphanage. Specifically, this article addresses: (1) What forms of intervention were implemented in the KKN Recognition program in educational and religious dimensions? and (2) To what extent did the orphanage environment and children's behavior change following the program? This article is expected to contribute best practices for other orphanage managers while also enriching the body of literature on KKN models grounded in local needs recognition that systematically integrate religious character education (Gunawan & Syamsudin, 2023).

Research Methods

This community service research employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a participatory action research (PAR) design, emphasizing three core pillars: (1) educative, oriented toward enhancing the knowledge and skills of foster children; (2) participatory, actively involving all orphanage residents including administrators, foster parents, and foster siblings at each stage; and (3) applicative, ensuring that each intervention is designed for immediate practice and continuation beyond the program's conclusion.

The partner in this activity is Az-Zahra Orphanage, located in Sukajaya, Sukarami, Palembang, with a target population of 35 foster children aged 7 to 18 years and five permanent administrators. Implementation proceeded through three systematically organized stages. The first stage was a one-

week preparation phase comprising coordination with orphanage leadership, initial observation of physical and non-physical environmental conditions, focus group discussions (FGD) with administrators and foster child representatives to map priority needs, and the preparation of activity modules integrating educational elements—such as book banks and lesson schedules—with religious elements such as Qur'an recitation, congregational prayer, and sermons.

The second stage was a six-week core implementation phase organized in a weekly cycle: Monday through Wednesday focused on educational interventions including tutoring for school subjects, literacy activities, and skill-based learning; Thursday through Saturday concentrated on religious interventions including maghrib recitation using the halaqah system, tahfidz juz 'amma using the tikkar method, and mini-sermon training; and Sundays were dedicated to joint participatory actions such as cooperative arrangements of study rooms and prayer corners. The participatory approach was realized through the formation of small working groups (pokja) consisting of three foster siblings as daily coordinators, fostering a sense of ownership of the program. The applicative approach was evident in each session, accompanied by demonstrations and hands-on practice opportunities for foster children. The final one-week stage consisted of evaluation and sustainability activities, including post-assessment of Qur'an reading ability, perception questionnaires, structured interviews with administrators, and cadre training. Data analysis was conducted thematically by grouping findings into three main categories: changes in the physical environment (educational), changes in the intensity of worship (religious), and changes in children's attitudes and participation.

Results and Discussion

Preparation Stage

The preparation stage, spanning the first week, served as a critical foundation for the entire KKN Recognition program at Az-Zahra Orphanage. Initial observations revealed concerning conditions: the existing study area was limited to a 3×4-meter corner of the living room with an old folding table and inadequate chairs for 35 children; the book collection comprised merely 12 general copies with no subject-specific textbooks; and the 4×5-meter prayer room lacked an organized Qur'an shelf. Of 35 children, 15 were not yet proficient in reading the Qur'an (iqro level 2–3 category), and congregational maghrib-isha prayer was attended by only an average of 40% of foster children. These preliminary findings are consistent with Pratama et al. (2025), who established that an unorganized orphanage physical environment is directly correlated with low children's participation in religious activities and learning.

Focus group discussions (FGD) with administrators and foster child representatives identified four priority needs: (1) arrangement of representative learning spaces; (2) availability of religious textbooks and children's reading materials; (3) enjoyable and tiered recitation methods; and (4) structured yet flexible daily activity schedules. This participatory discussion produced a consensus that intervention should not be top-down but must involve foster siblings as cadres (Damayanti, 2025). The most significant outcome was the formation of a written joint commitment among the KKN team, administration, and five foster siblings as daily coordinators. This commitment included an agreement to convert a vacant 5×6-meter former warehouse into a permanent learning room. These preparatory findings confirm that the success of social intervention programs in orphanages is substantially determined by the quality of initial assessment involving all stakeholders (Hakim, 2022).



Figure 1. Learning Assistance Process

Implementation and Analysis Stage

The core implementation phase spanned six weeks with an integrated weekly cycle combining educational and religious interventions simultaneously. Concerning the educational approach, the arrangement of a permanent learning space and the establishment of a book bank collecting 75 volumes successfully increased foster children's frequency of independent learning. Field diary data indicated that prior to the program, children averaged only 1–2 hours of independent study per week outside school. Following the study room's operation under a foster sibling picket schedule, this figure rose to 7–9 hours per week, with peak activity between 19.00–20.30 WIB. These findings reinforce Sudirman et al. (2026), who established that a supportive physical environment constitutes a strong determinant of orphanage children's learning motivation, as it creates a psychological setting distinguishing "study time" from "rest time."



Figure 2. Class Implementation

The participatory approach was realized through three working groups led by foster siblings: the Literacy Working Group managing book circulation and reading schedules; the Religious Working Group guiding foster children through ablution and prayer; and the Hygiene Working Group managing the picket schedule for study rooms and prayer areas. As a result, foster children's active participation

rate increased from an average of 40% in the first week to 82% by the fifth week. This phenomenon indicates that when children are given genuine responsibility rather than merely being the objects of a program, a sense of ownership emerges that encourages voluntary participation. This is consistent with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978) that peer tutoring is more effective than adult authority in the context of peer communities such as orphanages.

Regarding religious interventions, the maghrib recitation program using the halaqah system with groups of 3–4 children per small ustadz drawn from trained foster siblings yielded measurable improvements. Of the 15 children initially not proficient in reading (iqro level 2–3), after six weeks: 5 children advanced to Qur'an juz 30 level; 7 children progressed to iqro level 5–6; and only 3 children remained at iqro level 4 due to visual impairment requiring specialized assistance. The tahfidz juz 'amma program with a target of one short surah per week was successfully memorized by 28 out of 35 children. Analysis reveals that memorization success was most strongly determined by the consistency of pre-dawn memory depositing (05.00–05.30) accompanied by foster parents, rather than by cognitive intelligence alone. These findings confirm the argument of Pratama et al. (2025) that direct practice-based activities with contextual reward systems enable religious values to be perceived not as a burden, but as an enjoyable and meaningful activity.

The most innovative aspect of this implementation stage was the integration of educational and religious activities within a single program series. In thematic literacy sessions conducted every Friday morning, children read Islamic storybooks and were asked to write a summary and extract a moral lesson (hikmah) for group presentation. Analysis of children's written outputs revealed an improvement in summarization ability, from an average of 2–3 disjointed sentences to 5–7 structured sentences. In mini sermon sessions scheduled every Monday and Thursday evening, two children alternated in delivering 5-minute lectures on noble character, honesty, or respect for parents. By the fourth week, a 10-year-old child voluntarily performed. Obstacles identified during implementation included schedule conflicts with school extracurricular activities and the tendency of some adolescents to play online games until late at night. The team responded by negotiating schedule flexibility, allowing affected children to attend afternoon substitute sessions accompanied by a foster sibling.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation were conducted continuously throughout the six weeks and deepened in the final week. Monitoring employed two approaches: participatory monitoring, with weekly Friday reflections; and indicator-based monitoring, with quantitative recording of attendance, memorization target attainment, and biweekly written test results. Second-week monitoring revealed that participation among 7–10-year-olds was high at 95%, while 15–18-year-olds fluctuated at 60–70% in maghrib recitation. Informal interviews revealed that adolescents found the peer-group halaqah insufficient and desired more advanced material. The program was adjusted: adolescents were separated into a dedicated halaqah targeting longer surahs (At-Tin, Al-Insyirah, Ad-Dhuha) plus a brief study of tafsir. By the fourth week, adolescent participation increased to 85%, and three adolescents independently initiated additional tadarus sessions before dawn. These findings reinforce Pratama et al. (2025), demonstrating that responsive monitoring enables adaptive interventions that genuinely improve program effectiveness.

Summative evaluation employed three instruments: (1) a Qur'an reading ability test assessing fluency, makhraj, and basic tajweed; (2) a perception questionnaire using a smiley-face scale; and (3) structured interviews with administrators and foster parents. Results demonstrated significant improvements. Prior to the program, only 8 children (23%) were categorized as fluent; following the program, 24 children (69%) achieved fluency. An additional 7 children (20%) were at iqro level 5–6 but had begun reading the Qur'an with guidance, while only 4 children (11%) remained at iqro level 3–4 and were recommended for remedial programs. Perception questionnaire results indicated that 31 out of 35 children (89%) reported being "happy with the new orphanage atmosphere," "more enthusiastic about learning because of the organized reading room," and "feeling closer to Allah because recitation has become routine" (Handayani, 2021). Qualitatively, the administration reported a decline in children going out at night without permission, from an average of five incidents per week to one or two, and an increase in children's initiative to clean the prayer room without being instructed. This confirms the

behavior change theory that a structured environment with positive activities will naturally displace negative or passive behavior, not through prohibition but by providing more attractive alternatives.

The evaluation also identified two program limitations: the six-week duration was insufficient for deepening tahsin and tahfidz material for middle and lower-level groups, and administrators on average over 50 years of age experienced difficulty adapting to picture book and sticker reward methods. Nevertheless, overall monitoring and evaluation demonstrate that the Recognition KKN program successfully created fundamental changes in the physical environment, activity system, and psychosocial climate of Az-Zahra Orphanage, with realization rates exceeding initial targets by 6–20 percentage points across various indicators.

Obstacles and Solutions

The team identified obstacles across three categories during implementation. The most prominent operational technical obstacle was infrastructure limitations. The 5×6-meter study room accommodated a maximum of 25 children, while the total foster population was 35. The team implemented a time-based zone rotation system: the 7–11 age group used the study room from 19.00–19.45, followed by the 12–18 age group from 19.45–20.30, while the waiting group read books on the prayer room terrace. For air circulation, the team raised limited funds through personal social media channels and procured two wall fans and one portable air cooler. Monitoring in the fourth week showed an increase in study focus duration from an average of 25 to 40 minutes per session.

Human resource constraints arose from two directions. Internally, the team of eight students from different disciplines held differing approaches to managing problematic behavior. This conflict was resolved through internal mediation facilitated by the field supervisor, establishing a handling protocol: persuasive approach for minor violations and a behavioral contract for repeated absences. Externally, administrators were initially resistant to visual media and sticker reward methods, viewing them as "spoiling children." Comparative demonstration showed that in the new method sessions, active participation reached 85% compared to only 35% in the old method. These findings are consistent with Pratama et al. (2025), who established that administrator resistance to innovation can be overcome through visual empirical evidence. External constraints included rotating power outages, a flash flood in the third week, and school examination schedule conflicts. The team responded with generator loans for critical schedule periods, temporary relocation of activities to higher floors during the flood, and flexible make-up sessions on Sunday mornings for exam schedule conflicts (Sudirman et al., 2026). Overall, flexibility, intensive communication, and negotiation capacity are key competencies required by KKN teams in orphanage-based programs.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The Recognition Community Service Program (KKN Rekognisi) implemented at Az-Zahra Orphanage successfully fostered an integrated educational and religious environment through participatory, educational, and practical approaches. The program contributed to significant improvements in children's learning motivation, Qur'an reading proficiency, religious engagement, and active participation in daily activities. The establishment of a permanent learning space, a book bank, structured educational and religious programs, and peer-based working groups strengthened both the physical and psychosocial environment of the orphanage. Despite challenges related to infrastructure limitations, caregiver resistance, and external disruptions, adaptive solutions and continuous monitoring ensured the achievement of program objectives. Overall, the findings demonstrate that a needs-based and locally responsive KKN model can effectively transform orphanages into sustainable environments that support the development of knowledgeable, disciplined, and morally responsible generations.

References

- Damayanti, E. (2025). Peran panti asuhan yayasan gerakan bunda berbagi dalam membentuk karakter anak panti di Pasaman Barat. *Jurnal Studi Tindakan Edukatif*, 1(6), 89–102.
- Gunawan, Y., & Syamsudin. (2023). Strategi pembentukan karakter religius di Lembaga Kesejahteraan Sosial Anak (LKSA) Panti Asuhan Muhammadiyah Tuksono Kulonprogo. *JIPSI: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan dan Sains Islam Interdisipliner*, 2(1), 52–62. <https://doi.org/10.59944/jipsi.v2i1.110>

- Hakim, F. N. (2022). Eksistensi pendamping sosial di Lembaga Kesejahteraan Sosial Anak. *Sosio Konsepsia: Jurnal Penelitian dan Pengembangan Kesejahteraan Sosial*, 11(2), 311–322. <https://doi.org/10.33007/ska.v11i2.3082>
- Handayani, R. (2021). Karakteristik pola-pola pengasuhan anak usia dini dalam keluarga. *Kidido: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini*, 2(2), 159–168. <https://doi.org/10.19105/kidido.v2i2.4797>
- Pratama, F. R. P., Azka, R. S., Madarina, N., Syarifah, M. Z., Rahmawati, Y. R., Sari, Y. W., & Akbar, M. N. R. (2025). Implementasi pendidikan karakter melalui kegiatan seni dan lingkungan di panti asuhan: Studi kasus di Kabupaten Blitar. *Pelayanan Unggulan: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Terapan*, 2(3), 30–41. <https://doi.org/10.62951/unggulan.v2i3.1980>
- Rahman, R., & Huraerah, A. (2023). Peran pengasuh dalam mengembangkan minat dan bakat pada anak di Yayasan Yatim Piatu & Dhuafa Rumah Harapan. *Jurnal Ilmiah Kebijakan dan Pelayanan Pekerjaan Sosial (Biyana)*, 5(1), 78–91.
- Silitonga, T. F. C., Simatupang, W. P. S., Ginting, L. C., Zaidan, M. A., & Vieri, H. C. (2023). Peran panti asuhan Yayasan Rumah Bakti Kasih Anak Indonesia dalam membentuk karakter anak panti. *Sosmaniora: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora*, 2(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.55123/sosmaniora.v2i1.1461>
- Sudirman, Nuranisah, & Kelana Putra, S. (2026). Penguatan karakter dan motivasi belajar anak panti asuhan melalui program bimbingan edukatif. *Jurnal Pemberdayaan Masyarakat*, 3(1), 41–49. <https://doi.org/10.62735/battuta.v3i1.162>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.