

Sustainability of Non-Formal Education for Indonesian Migrant Children

Faradila Aini

Program Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam, Universitas Islam
Syarifuddin Lumajang, Indonesia

Nurhafid Ishari

Program Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam, Universitas Islam
Syarifuddin Lumajang, Indonesia

Ahmad Ihwanul Muttaqin

Program Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam, Universitas Islam
Syarifuddin Lumajang, Indonesia

General Background: Access to education for Indonesian migrant children in Malaysia remains limited due to immigration restrictions and socio-economic barriers, making non-formal education a vital alternative. **Specific Background:** The Sentul Guidance Center (Sanggar Bimbingan Sentul) serves as a Community Learning Center (PKBM) under the Indonesian Embassy, providing literacy, numeracy, and religious habituation to children without formal school access. **Knowledge Gap:** Previous studies have examined program effectiveness but rarely explored long-term sustainability, especially the interplay of institutional support, parental involvement, and spiritual practices. **Aims:** This study investigates the factors sustaining non-formal education, analyzing how institutional, pedagogical, and community elements ensure continuity despite limited resources. **Results:** Using a qualitative case study, findings reveal that sustainability depends on embassy-backed institutional support, adaptive teacher strategies, parental moral encouragement, and high student motivation. Religious activities, particularly the duha prayer, enhance discipline and learning focus. **Novelty:** Unlike prior research, this study highlights the combined influence of state educational diplomacy, collaborative community engagement, and the integration of spiritual practices as critical to program resilience. **Implications:** The results provide a model for policy development and program design, demonstrating that multi-stakeholder collaboration and the inclusion of spiritual dimensions can sustain non-formal education for migrant children in challenging contexts.

Highlights:

- Institutional and community collaboration ensures program continuity.
- Adaptive teaching and duha prayer enhance learning discipline.
- Parental moral support motivates children despite limited involvement.

Keywords: Non Formal Education, Migrant Children, Sentul Guidance Center, Calistung, Duha Prayer

Introduction

Education is a fundamental right of every child regardless of social background, economic status, or citizenship status.[1] However, the reality on the ground shows that there are still many Indonesian migrant children abroad, including in Malaysia, who face significant barriers in accessing quality education.[2] These obstacles stem from issues of immigration status, family

economic limitations, and limited access to formally recognized schools by the local government. This condition makes non-formal education an important alternative that functions to ensure that children's right to education is still fulfilled even in situations of significant limitation. Malaysia is one of the main destination countries for Indonesian migrant workers, with a significant number working in the construction, plantation, domestic services, and other informal sectors. Data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia records hundreds of thousands of migrant workers in Malaysia with varying conditions, and most of their children do not have legal documents to access formal schools. This has led to various non-formal education initiatives, one of which is through the Community Learning Activity Center (PKBM) under the auspices of the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. The Sentul Guidance Studio is a concrete example of a non-formal educational institution established to provide learning services to Indonesian migrant children living in the Kuala Lumpur area and its surroundings.

The presence of the Sentul Guidance Center is a real form of educational diplomacy as well as the government's concern for the basic rights of its citizens abroad. Here, migrant children receive reading, writing, and arithmetic (calistung) services, as well as religious practices such as duha prayers, and the strengthening of religious literacy. The learning process takes place in a simple space with limited facilities, yet it still strives to meet the academic needs and the formation of the children's religious character.[3] This condition illustrates the strategic role of non-formal education in maintaining the continuity of the right to learn amidst the social and political challenges faced by migrant communities. Theoretically, non-formal education has flexibility in its implementation and can be a solution for vulnerable groups that are not accommodated in the formal system.[4] Several previous studies have shown that non-formal education in Indonesian migrant communities has contributed to the improvement of children's basic literacy skills. [5], strengthening national identity [6], as well as the instillation of religious values. However, most studies are still limited to the aspects of program implementation, while the dimension of sustainability of non-formal education, especially abroad, has not received much attention. In fact, the sustainability of non-formal education is greatly influenced by internal factors (such as the limitation of educators and facilities) as well as external factors (government policy support, the role of educational diplomacy, and the participation of migrant communities).[7]

In the realm of education policy in Malaysia, the education of migrant children often faces policy dilemmas. On one hand, the Malaysian government has strict rules regarding the presence of undocumented children in formal schools. On the other hand, the educational needs of migrant children remain urgent and cannot be ignored. This is where the role of the Indonesian Embassy and Community Learning Centers becomes a bridge to provide alternative solutions that are legal and affordable. Nevertheless, sustainability challenges arise in the form of limited operational funding, a lack of learning facilities, and dependence on volunteer teachers who sometimes change rapidly.[8].

Based on the description, there is a significant research gap (theoretical gap) that needs to be filled. Some previous studies have focused on the effectiveness of certain learning methods in PKBM or the impact of non-formal education on the academic performance of migrant students. However, there are few studies that examine how these programs can continue in the long term, particularly regarding the role of state institutions (like the Embassy), parental participation, and community support.[9] Thus, this research attempts to fill the gap by highlighting the sustainability of non-formal education for Indonesian migrant children at the Sanggar Bimbingan Sentul in Malaysia. This study focuses on how literacy activities, numeracy, the habituation of duha prayers, and religious literacy can continue despite limitations, as well as the factors that support its continuity.

The aim of this research is to describe the practices of non-formal education at the Sanggar Bimbingan Sentul, analyze the supporting and inhibiting factors for its sustainability, and identify policy implications that can strengthen similar programs in the future. Through a qualitative approach with a case study design, this research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to

the development of non-formal education studies, as well as practical contributions to the formulation of education policies for Indonesian migrant children abroad. Furthermore, this research emphasizes the importance of collaboration between the government, educators, parents, and migrant communities to ensure that the right to education for Indonesian children is upheld wherever they are.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design, as it allows the researcher to deeply understand the processes and sustainability of non-formal education for Indonesian migrant workers' children at Sanggar Bimbingan Sentul, Kuala Lumpur. The qualitative approach was chosen to explore the experiences, perceptions, and interactions of the learners and educators in a natural context, resulting in a holistic understanding of non-formal education practices, both from academic and religious habituation perspectives. The case study design is used to investigate phenomena in real contexts, particularly the dynamics of learning and educators' strategies in migrant communities. The case study enables the researcher to present the interactions between educators, learners, and parents, as well as to examine the factors that influence the success or challenges of non-formal education.[10]

The research was conducted at the Sentul Guidance Center in Kuala Lumpur, one of the Community Learning Centers (PKBM) under the auspices of the Indonesian Embassy in Malaysia. This location was purposively chosen because it actively provides non-formal educational services for Indonesian migrant children who do not have access to formal schools, and has a unique approach in integrating basic education with religious habituation. The purposive selection of this location also considered the accessibility for researchers to observe and interact directly with the learners and educators. The research analysis unit includes the location (Sentul Guidance Studio), learning activities and religious habituation, interactions between educators, students, and guardians, as well as the dynamics of the learning strategies applied. The central participants in this research are Indonesian migrant children enrolled at the studio, as they are directly involved in the non-formal learning process and constitute the primary target group of educational programs for the children of migrant workers.

To enhance the depth of data, this study also engages several key informants selected through purposive sampling, consisting of individuals closely connected to and directly experienced in non-formal education at the community center. These informants include community center administrators, teachers/educators, parents or guardians, as well as the students themselves. Complementary data is further drawn from supporting documents such as activity schedules, learning modules, photographic records of activities, and administrative files of the community center. The integration of these data sources offers a holistic perspective on the dynamics, challenges, and opportunities related to sustaining non-formal education within Indonesian migrant communities. Data collection methods employed in this research include semi-structured in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews are used to explore the experiences, perceptions, and views of informants regarding the implementation of non-formal education. Participatory observation is conducted to directly observe learning activities and religious practices in the community center, while documentation is obtained from archives, photos, activity notes, and other supporting documents. All instruments are developed to be relevant to the context of migrant children and non-formal education practices in Malaysia.

The data was analyzed using the Miles interactive analysis model, which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and verification/conclusion drawing, in line with contemporary qualitative methodology approaches that emphasize contextual interpretation of data and source triangulation.[11] The analysis was conducted simultaneously from data collection to the final interpretation stage, using content analysis methods to interpret the patterns, themes, and meanings that emerge from the qualitative data.

As a methodological reinforcement, this research also refers to previous findings that show how similar analytical models have been widely applied by education researchers both in Indonesia and abroad. Several studies indicate that the model is relevant for understanding the dynamics of educational practices in various contexts. It emphasizes that this model is capable of uncovering adaptive learning strategies in classes with student heterogeneity. It reports that the implementation of this model contributes to the establishment of more participatory teacher-student interaction patterns. It finds that this model can explain the influence of local culture in shaping student character, while demonstrating its consistency in enhancing the effectiveness of learning across different educational levels. From various studies, it can be understood that this model is not only popularly used, but it also contributes important insights in expanding the understanding of educational practices from pedagogical, sociological, and psychological aspects.

To ensure the validity of the data, this study employs a triangulation strategy of sources and techniques. This is done by comparing interview results with observational data and documentation, so that the findings obtained are more reliable. In addition, a member check process is also carried out by reconfirming preliminary results with the informants, ensuring that the researcher's interpretations align with their real experiences. From an ethical research perspective, important steps are applied according to academic standards. The researcher explains the purpose of the study to the informants, obtains consent through informed consent, and disguises the respondents' identities to maintain their confidentiality and comfort. Thus, both in terms of validity and ethics, this research strives to uphold its credibility and scientific integrity.

Results and Discussion

The results of this research show that the sustainability of non-formal education for Indonesian migrant children at Sanggar Bimbingan Sentul Malaysia is greatly determined by institutional support, the role of teachers, and parental participation.[12] The existence of this PKBM is viewed as a concrete form of the KBRI's concern to ensure that the right to education is upheld even though the children cannot attend formal school. One of the managers stated: "We strive to ensure they can still learn even if they are not in formal school. The challenges are great, but these children are very enthusiastic" (Personal interview, June 3, 2025). Field observations reveal a simple learning space equipped with a whiteboard, folding tables, and bookshelves, yet it remains vibrant with various learning activities.



Figure 1. *A simple study room at the Sentul Tutoring Center*

From the teacher's side, the learning process is adaptive, adjusting to the very diverse abilities of the students. Some students quickly master letters and numbers, while others require repeated repetition. The teacher emphasizes the importance of patience and creativity in learning: 'The children here come from different backgrounds; some are already used to holding books, while others are just learning. So we have to be patient and repeat, even using pictures and games' (Personal Interview, June 12, 2025). Observational results note that the interaction between the teacher and students is often marked by a personal approach, such as the teacher giving small praises to boost self-confidence. Even some children dare to read aloud after receiving direct motivation from the teacher.[13]



Figure 2. *The teacher accompanies the students reading using the game method.*

In addition to the role of teachers, parental support also influences the continuity of learning. Although most parents have limited time due to work, they still feel proud that their children can receive a basic education. One parent said: 'I am happy that my child can participate in learning here; at home, I can't teach much because I have to work. At least he can read prayers and do simple calculations' (Personal interview, June 20, 2025). This moral support from parents serves as a support even though their direct involvement is still limited. The perspective of the students themselves shows a sense of joy and pride in being able to learn together with their peers and being guided by teachers. One student said, 'I like learning here, there are friends, there are teachers. I can read prayers and learn to count' (Personal interview, June 15, 2025). The children also reported feeling more enthusiastic after performing the duha prayer together before the learning session started. Thus, this worship routine not only serves as a spiritual activity but also functions to instill discipline and readiness to learn.[14]



Figure 3. *The dhuha prayer activity before the lesson starts*

Nevertheless, there are real challenges that hinder the sustainability of the program. Limited learning facilities, insufficient reading materials, and relatively small rooms often lead to crowded learning activities. The legal status of some migrant families also poses obstacles in accessing other educational programs. However, close cooperation between the managers, teachers, parents, and support from the Indonesian Embassy can sustain this Community Learning Center.[15] Based on the above description, the supporting and hindering factors for the sustainability of non-formal education at the Sentul Guidance Center can be systematically summarized, as presented in Table 1 below:

Aspect	Supporting Factors	Barrier Factors
Institutional	Support from PKBM and the Embassy (facilities, legal legitimacy, program coordination)	Operational funding limitations Dependence on volunteer teachers
Teacher/Educator	Adaptive strategies according to the child's abilities Creative media use (images, games) Personal approach, motivation, and praise	The number of teachers is limited. Volunteer teacher replacements occur quite frequently.
Parents	Moral support and a sense of pride despite limited time Motivation for the child to keep learning	Minimal direct involvement due to being busy with work.
Students	High motivation to learn Enthusiasm in following calistung and Duha prayer A sense of togetherness with peers	The background abilities vary (some have just started learning to read and write)
Facilities & Services	The presence of a simple learning space,	Narrow and crowded space

a whiteboard, and bookshelves.

Table 1. *Supporting and Hindering Factors of the Sustainability of Non-Formal Education at the Sentul Guidance Center in Malaysia*

Overall, the results of this study show that the sustainability of non-formal education at the Sanggar Bimbingan Sentul is not only determined by the availability of programs but is also supported by the collective commitment of various parties. Migrant children show a high spirit of learning despite being in limitations. Meanwhile, the habituation of duha prayer contributes to the formation of discipline and spirituality in children, making the learning activities more focused.

The results of this research emphasize that the sustainability of non-formal education at the Sanggar Bimbingan in Sentul, Malaysia is influenced by a combination of institutional support, the role of teachers, parental participation, and students' enthusiasm for learning. The limited access to formal schools for migrant children is an important background that highlights the urgency of non-formal education as a strategic alternative. Support from government institutions through the Indonesian Embassy not only provides administrative legitimacy but also ensures the availability of facilities, learning materials, and systematic coordination for the sustainable implementation of the program.

First, from the institutional side, PKBM (Community Learning Center) that is directly supervised by the Indonesian Embassy (KBRI) is a key factor in the sustainability of the program. This institutional support includes the provision of learning spaces, educational materials, and legal legitimacy to organize non-formal education for migrant children. These findings align with research that emphasizes that the effectiveness of non-formal education heavily relies on stable institutional support, both in terms of resources and regulations. However, this study adds that the KBRI does not only act as a provider of administrative legitimacy but also serves as a direct facilitator that provides learning facilities and conducts educational diplomacy for the migrant community. This indicates a more active role of the state compared to previous studies.

Secondly, the role of teachers has proven to be crucial in determining the success of learning. Teachers at the Sentul Guidance Center implement adaptive strategies that tailor teaching methods to the heterogeneous abilities of the students. Some children quickly master letters and numbers, while others require repeated practice. The use of visual media, educational games, and a personal approach to foster motivation are effective strategies that encourage active student participation. This finding reinforces the results of studies showing that adaptive learning methods in non-formal education can enhance the confidence and basic skills of migrant students. Unlike the research by Sari & Pramudita, this study adds a spiritual dimension through the habituation of duha prayer, which has been shown to contribute to the formation of discipline and readiness to learn in children—an aspect that has rarely been examined before.

Third, parental support is a determining factor for the sustainability of non-formal education. Although most parents have limited time due to work, their gratitude and pride because their children continue to receive basic education become positive energy for the continuity of the program. This is in line with findings that emphasize the importance of parental involvement, although moral and motivational in nature, in maintaining the sustainability of non-formal education. However, this study found different characteristics: although parental involvement is limited to moral support (rather than direct accompaniment), its contribution remains significant in maintaining children's learning spirit. This complements Hidayat's research, which stresses the active involvement of parents.

Fourth, students' perspectives show that non-formal education not only provides basic knowledge but also builds character, togetherness, and discipline. Migrant children feel happy to learn together with their peers and are accompanied by patient teachers. Some children even only dared to read aloud after receiving motivation and praise from their teachers. This positive learning

experience emphasizes that the success of non-formal education relies on warm social interactions and an adaptive personal approach. These findings add a new dimension compared to previous studies that tended to focus on academic achievements, as this research highlights the role of non-formal education in strengthening the affective and spiritual aspects of migrant children.

Moreover, this discussion underscores the difficulties encountered by non-formal education programs within migrant communities. Inadequate learning facilities, overcrowded classrooms, and a shortage of reading materials pose tangible barriers. On top of that, the uncertain legal status of some migrant families limits children's access to alternative educational opportunities and often disrupts their attendance. Even so, the strong collaboration between the Indonesian embassy, non-formal education organizers, teachers, parents, and the students' own enthusiasm demonstrates that these barriers can be reduced through cooperative strategies. This situation illustrates that the continuity of non-formal education depends not solely on the availability of resources but on balancing these limitations with the shared commitment of all stakeholders. A review of the literature shows that these findings align with existing studies, which consistently highlight the difficulties migrant children in Southeast Asia face in accessing education, such as inadequate infrastructure and legal restrictions. What this study contributes, however, is a fresh perspective—showing that collaboration among government institutions, educators, parents, and students can significantly ease these challenges. This collective strategy has seldom been addressed in earlier research, making it an original contribution of the present study.

In practical terms, these findings may serve as a reference for other non-formal education institutions working with migrant children in different regions. The policy implications highlight the need for an integrated approach that encompasses facility provision, institutional support, teacher training, and active parental engagement. Furthermore, the development of learning modules that integrate both cognitive and spiritual dimensions can foster learning motivation while nurturing children's character. This study also creates avenues for future research on collaborative efforts between government agencies, local communities, and migrant families to ensure the continuity of non-formal education. Accordingly, the discussion underscores that the sustainability of non-formal education for Indonesian migrant children at *Sanggar Bimbingan* Sentul, Malaysia, emerges from the dynamic interplay of institutional backing, instructional strategies, parental involvement, and student enthusiasm. Collectively, these elements form an educational ecosystem that enables migrant children to access consistent basic education, even in the face of socio-economic vulnerability.

Conclusion

This research shows that the sustainability of non-formal education for Indonesian migrant children at the Sentul Guidance Center in Malaysia is influenced by the synergy between institutional support, the adaptive role of teachers, parental participation, and student motivation. Activities focusing on basic skills and the habituation of duha prayers not only enhance children's fundamental abilities but also foster their discipline and spirituality, making non-formal education an effective alternative for migrant children who do not have access to formal schools. Theoretically, this study emphasizes the importance of a combination of institutional factors, adaptive pedagogy, and family involvement in creating a sustainable non-formal education ecosystem. Practically, this finding can serve as a reference for non-formal educational institutions, the government, and community organizations in designing programs for migrant children. The limitations of this research lie in the number of informants and the limited locations, thus future studies need to be expanded to produce a more comprehensive understanding. This study also provides an important contribution by emphasizing the synergistic role between the Indonesian Embassy, teachers, parents, and students in maintaining the sustainability of non-formal education, adding a spiritual dimension through the practice of duha prayer as part of a learning strategy that shapes discipline and a religious character in children, as well as providing practical references for the development of educational programs for migrant children through collaborative and sustainable approaches.

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