

Thematic Community Service during Ramadan

(Opportunities, Challenges, and Relevance within the Kampus Merdeka Framework)

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ABSTRACT

Thematic Community Service Program (KKN Tematik) has measurable performance targets and a clear thematic focus, enabling students to make tangible contributions to community life, particularly in religious and social sectors. Activities include religious education, the development of majelis ta'lim (Islamic study groups), Islamic festivals, MSME mentoring, as well as health education and digital literacy. Through a participatory approach, students can act as catalysts for change, strengthen Islamic values, and raise community awareness of local issues. However, the limited duration of the program makes social adaptation faster and more challenging, thus requiring more systematic and intensive program planning. Community service activities using the ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development) method yield several important conclusions. Despite the short duration of the KKN, activities tend to be more compact and impactful. Overall, the community and village government where the KKN is held are receptive to the activities. Communities often need assistance and guidance in managing religious activities in rural areas. Students also demonstrate significant potential to integrate easily with the community, particularly through this point of contribution.

Keywords: Thematic Community Service Engagement; STAI As-Sunnah; ABCD Method; Participatory Action Research

Article History:

Received : 2025-04-22

Accepted: 2025-06-28

Publish : 2025-06-30



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: 10.51590/waraqat.v10i1.992

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INTRODUCTION

Thematic Community Service Program (KKN) conducted during the month of Ramadan has both short-term and long-term objectives that complement each other. Although the duration is relatively short—around two to three weeks—the activities are designed with clear and measurable performance targets and outcomes.¹ This time limitation actually encourages students to design their work programs in a more intensive and sustainable manner, thereby increasing the effectiveness of implementation. Additionally, the costs incurred by both students and the university tend to be lower compared to conventional community service programs (KKN) with longer durations.

However, the limited timeframe also presents its own challenges. Students have less time to deeply understand the social, cultural, and community dynamics. This contrasts with conventional KKN programs that last more than a month, where students have greater opportunities to interact and adapt to the local community. Such intensive interaction allows students to identify problems more accurately and design contextually relevant solutions.²

In the context of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program, Thematic Community Service (KKN Tematik) has become a relevant alternative. This program allows students to focus on specific themes that align with community needs, such as education, health, economy, or religion. For example, KKN Tematik Ramadhan often centers around religious activities such as short sermons (kultum), Qur'anic recitation (tadarus), and other Islamic educational efforts.³ These activities not only strengthen students' spiritual values but also make a positive contribution to the community by deepening their religious understanding.⁴

A study by Karimaliana et al. (2022) found that KKN Tematik can increase children's interest in learning during the digital age through student-designed educational programs. This indicates that, although the duration of KKN Tematik is shorter, it can still produce a significant positive impact if well-designed and properly implemented.⁵

Thus, KKN Tematik during Ramadan offers students a valuable opportunity to make real contributions to society while simultaneously developing their academic and spiritual competencies. Based on al-Qur'an 47:7 Helping Allah here means supporting His cause—upholding justice, spreading truth, and defending righteousness. In return, Allah promises divine assistance and stability. Despite challenges in terms of duration and community understanding, a focused and well-measured approach can help maximize the benefits of this program.

The implementation of this Thematic Community Service Program (KKN-T) utilized a service learning approach, an experience-based educational method in which students not only provided direct benefits to the community—such as through delivering dawn sermons (kultum subuh)—but

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² Suhirman, Suhirman, and Khozin Zaki. "Kolaborasi Dosen-Mahasiswa dalam Pemanfaatan KKN Tematik Untuk Pengabdian Berbasis Masjid Pada Masa Pandemi Covid-19." *Manhaj: Jurnal Penelitian dan Pengabdian Masyarakat* 12, no. 1 (2023): 1-8. Mawaddah, Rona Octavia, and Yanda Bara Kusuma. "Pendampingan Pada Masyarakat Dalam Peningkatan Pendapatan Melalui Program Bazar Ramadhan Di Desa Laweyan." *Jurnal Masyarakat Mengabdi Nusantara* 2, no. 3 (2023): 89-96.

³ Maryam, Siti. "Peran Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Pendidikan, Karakter, Dan Keagamaan Bagi Siswa Pada Bulan Ramadhan Di Smp Negeri 2 Silau Laut." *LOKAKARYA* 1, no. 2 (2022): 11-18.

⁴ Putri, Aulia, Wahyuni J. Daud, Siti Maisyaroh, Nurul Alfiyanti, Nanda Amaliah, and Siti Rabiatul Adawiyah. "Pemberdayaan Pendidikan Agama Islam Melalui Majelis Ta'lim Mengaji: Peran Mahasiswa KKN Tematik Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Spritual Masyarakat Di Kelurahan Balaroo." *Menara Kearifan: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 3, no. 2 (2024): 65-76. Isnatin, Umi, Jaudat Iqbal Harris, Lalu Ananta, Amru Saputra, and Firmana Putra. "Pengembangan Kurikulum dan Metode Pembelajaran Di TPA Al-Hidayah Desa Tumpuk Kabupaten Ponorogo." *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat: BAKTI KITA* 5, no. 1 (2024): 1-12.

⁵ Karimaliana, K., R. Rindi, H. Humairoh, A. Ade, S. Sarah, and D. Dina. "Meningkatkan Minat Belajar Anak Pada Masa Era Digital Program Kerja Pendidikan KKN-Tematik." *Comunitaria* 2, no. 1 (2022): 82-6.

also gained meaningful learning experiences. From the perspective of community engagement, the program adopted the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) method, focusing on identifying and developing existing strengths within the community. The kultum activity, attended mostly by adults, was designed to integrate service with student competency development. The program was conducted during the month of Ramadan as part of the KKN-T organized by STAI As-Sunnah Deli Serdang, located in Penyasawan Village, Kampar District, Kampar Regency, Riau Province. The duration of the KKN was 14 days. The use of the ABCD method was based on the identification of local talents and potentials that could be nurtured for long-term impact, even after the students' departure. Activities began with asset mapping through observation and interviews, followed by collaborative programs with local residents and children. These included the “Clean Friday” initiative at the mosque to ensure comfort during Friday prayers, and Arabic-speaking (maharah kalam) training sessions held at Musholla Aisyiyah on March 16, 2025, organized in two focused stages.

Preparation and Planning Stage

The preparation and planning phase was conducted over one week, beginning with field observations aimed at understanding the social, cultural, and physical environment around the Musholla. Using the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, this stage focused on identifying key community assets, such as the active participation of local youth, the presence of women’s Qur’anic study groups (pengajian), and physical infrastructure like the multifunctional Musholla. After identifying these assets, a partnership agreement was established with the Musholla caretaker, a key community figure who served as a gateway to engage with other influential local actors. Together with the community, the student team then developed a collaborative work schedule that positioned community members not just as beneficiaries, but as active participants in the planning process. This participatory approach helped build a sense of ownership and was designed to promote sustainability of the program after the KKN ended.

Implementation Stage

The implementation phase included several community-centered learning activities. One of the main programs was basic Arabic language instruction, focusing on developing children’s speaking skills (maharah kalam). This was conducted through short conversation materials (*hivār ta’aruf*), with the facilitator modeling pronunciation and inviting the children to practice directly. Another key component was Qur’anic recitation (tadarus al-Qur’an), which involved children, teenagers, and adults, as well as a Master of Ceremony (MC) training program targeted at youth. These activities were held regularly during the 14-day KKN period, coinciding with the evenings of Ramadan 1446 H / 2025 AD. The programs took place at Musholla Aisyiyah, located in Penyasawan Village, Kampar District, Riau Province.

Asset Mapping and Community Engagement

The ABCD method guided the students in uncovering and utilizing the village’s existing strengths and talents to ensure long-term impact. Village potential was identified through a) interviews with the village head and religious leaders, and b) direct observation of the target community. This approach allowed students to align their program design with local needs and interests. For example, the “Clean Friday” (Jumat Bersih) activity was initiated to improve the mosque’s environment for Friday prayers—an initiative that was simple yet highly appreciated by the community. The integration of learning, service, and community empowerment exemplified how short-term service learning projects like KKN-T can still yield meaningful and sustainable outcomes when rooted in community assets and active participation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Kultum Shubuh

Kultum, a shortened form of kuliah tujuh menit (seven-minute lecture), refers to a brief religious sermon or Islamic talk typically delivered during the holy month of Ramadan. The term “seven minutes” is not a strict time requirement, but rather a symbolic expression of its brevity and concise

nature. This format provides an excellent opportunity for students participating in the Thematic Community Service Program (KKN-T) to practice effective religious communication based on what they have learned during their studies. At STAI As-Sunnah, students conducted kultum subuh (dawn sermons) following the Fajr prayer in Penyasawan Village, Kampar District, where such a practice had not previously existed. The program began with socialization and approval from the mosque management board (BKM) of Masjid Jihad, who warmly welcomed the initiative. Students were responsible for preparing their own topics and schedules, with each student delivering four sermons—at both the mosque and nearby prayer hall (musholla). Starting from March 6, each student would lead the dawn prayer and deliver their kultum afterward. The series of sermons concluded on March 17, the final day of the KKN-T program, with a closing sermon delivered by the group leader of STAI As-Sunnah's KKN team.



Figur 1. Kultum delivered by the KKNT Participants

Masjid Bersih

Gotong royong, or communal cooperation, is a deeply rooted cultural value in Indonesian society. As human beings are inherently social creatures, gotong royong represents collective action aimed at achieving shared goals—such as cleaning local environments, prayer rooms (mushalla), and mosques. Through this practice, social bonds are strengthened, fostering a sense of unity, mutual trust, and collective awareness regarding cleanliness and cooperation. In rural communities or traditional villages, gotong royong remains an essential part of addressing environmental and social challenges that require active involvement from the community itself.

In this context, we—students from the KKN-T program of STAI As-Sunnah Medan—initiated weekly gotong royong activities to clean the local mushalla and mosque areas. This was driven by our observation of the community's relatively low awareness about maintaining the cleanliness of these religious spaces. We first sought permission from local leaders to carry out the cleaning, and then encouraged local residents, especially children, to participate. These efforts not only improved the physical environment but also helped us form strong relationships with the community, thanks to the spirit of cooperation that emerged during the activity.

The weekly clean-up took place around Mushalla Aisyiyah and Masjid Jihad, every Friday morning starting at 06:00 until completion. The success of the activity demonstrated how small collaborative initiatives can cultivate stronger social cohesion and environmental awareness, particularly when conducted in a respectful and participatory manner.



Figur 2. A voluntary cleaning activities provided by KKNT Participants



Figur 3. Masjid Cleaning

Arabic Conversation Training for children

Musholla Aisyiyah in Penyasawan Village is one of the Muhammadiyah charitable institutions managed by the local Muhammadiyah branch leadership, with support from the Muhammadiyah regional board in Penyasawan. It is located in Penyasawan Village, Kampar Subdistrict, Kampar Regency, Riau Province. The Musholla serves as a center for both social and religious activities, including weekly study circles (*wirid*) and Qur'anic recitation (*tadarus*). However, prior to our program, no Arabic language instruction had been implemented—even though Arabic is essential for understanding the Qur'an and Hadith.

Arabic plays a crucial role in religious education and cultural identity in Indonesia, especially within Islamic educational institutions. As the language of the Qur'an and Hadith, it holds a foundational place in Islamic learning. Based on observations made during our community service activities, it was clear that the children at Musholla Aisyiyah had limited exposure to Arabic. In response, we—students from KKN-T STAI As-Sunnah Medan—launched a basic Arabic learning program focused on *hiwar ta'aruf* (introductory conversation).

Due to time constraints, the holy month of Ramadan, and the children's school exams, the Arabic class was held for one day. Despite this, the session was highly effective. During the course of the lesson, the students showed great enthusiasm for learning. They actively engaged in speaking practice, demonstrated courage by performing conversations in front of their peers, asked

questions about the material, and responded well to instructor prompts. Initially, most students struggled with pronunciation and vocabulary. However, with continued practice and the aid of a whiteboard for visual support, they gradually improved their articulation and recall of Arabic words and phrases.

Speaking skills (*maharah kalam*) are a vital component in learning Arabic, as they allow learners to express ideas, feelings, and thoughts verbally. In line with this, the results of the evaluation indicated that even students who had never learned Arabic before were able to recognize and comprehend the basic materials taught. With consistent practice and repetition, they were eventually able to pronounce several vocabulary words (*mufradat*) and dialogues (*hivar*) correctly. This experience demonstrates that even a short-term learning initiative, when well-executed and contextually appropriate, can leave a meaningful impact on early Arabic language acquisition in community-based settings.



Figur 4. KKNT participants teaching the students.



Figur 5. Practicing Arabic Conversation and evaluation

Tadarus

The month of Ramadan is a sacred time during which Muslims observe the obligatory fast from dawn until sunset. Beyond fasting, Ramadan also presents a limited but valuable opportunity to intensify other forms of worship, such as reading the Qur'an, giving charity, maintaining additional voluntary prayers (*salat sunnah*), and engaging in various religious activities. Therefore, it is

important to use this month wisely by organizing our daily routines in a structured manner so that our time is spent meaningfully and our spiritual goals can be achieved. One beneficial activity that can enrich our Ramadan experience is participating in a Ramadhan pesantren program, such as Qur'anic recitation (*tadarus al-Qur'an*).

The implementation of the *tadarus al-Qur'an* activity is influenced by several factors. Initially, the number of participants was relatively low. Among those who joined were children and teenagers with varying levels of Qur'anic reading ability—some fluent, while others were still learning and struggling with pronunciation. Motivated by this, the KKN team decided to join the program as a way to strengthen relationships with the local youth and contribute meaningfully to the community's religious engagement.

The activity took place at Musholla Aisyiyah, located in Penyasawan Village, Kampar Subdistrict, Kampar Regency, Riau Province. Participants included children and adolescents aged between 6 and 15 years old. The event was held on Sunday, March 9–10, 2025, from 8:45 PM to 9:00 PM (WIB), serving as both a spiritual gathering and a bridge for social connection between the KKN students and the younger generation.

A. Master of Ceremony training

The Master of Ceremony (MC) training activity began with an observation by one of the KKN-T team members from STAI As-Sunnah. During a *kultum* (short sermon) session held after the *tarawih* prayer, it was noted that some community members were already acting as MCs. This observation led to the idea of organizing a dedicated MC training program for children and teenagers at the local *musholla*. The aim of the program was to introduce them to the basics of public speaking, stage presence, effective communication skills, and developing confidence when speaking in front of an audience. The training took place at Musholla Aisyiyah, located in Penyasawan Village, Kampar Subdistrict, Kampar Regency, Riau Province. Participants included children, teenagers, and adults ranging in age from 6 to 60 years. The activity was held from Saturday, March 8 to March 17, 2025, each evening from 9:00 PM to 10:30 PM (WIB).

B. Memorizing al-Qur'an Competition

The program was titled “Musabaqah Ramadhaniyah 1446 H / 2025 AD”, consisting of various competitions held during the holy month of Ramadan. These included a funeral prayer (*sholat jenazah*) competition for middle school students (MTs level or equivalent), Juz 30 memorization competitions for elementary students in grades 4–6, and Surah Adh-Dhuhaa to An-Nas memorization competitions for students in grades 1–3. This activity formed part of the Thematic Community Service Program (KKN-T)—an intra-curricular learning initiative designed to give students opportunities to engage in experiential learning, collaborative problem-solving, and community-based development. KKN-T encourages student participation through a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, promoting community involvement at all stages of the activity. The main participants were children from elementary and junior high school levels, while adults—such as parents and community leaders—acted as judges or provided moral support for the young contestants.

The event was organized by students from STAI As-Sunnah Deli Serdang and took place during Ramadan 1446 H (March 13–15, 2025), held at Musholla Aisyiyah in Penyasawan Village, Kampar Subdistrict, Kampar Regency, Riau Province. This activity was part of the 14-day KKN-T program. The event was well-attended and supported by key community figures, including the village head, women's Aisyiyah branch members, the head of Masjid Jihad, the local Muhammadiyah branch leader, youth organization leaders, neighborhood and hamlet heads (RT 007 and Dusun), and many local residents. The event was officially opened by the Youth Leader of Penyasawan Village. The children's competitions were held over three days and included Surah Adh-Dhuhaa to An-Nas memorization, full Juz 30 memorization, and funeral prayer simulation. This initiative not only

fostered a spirit of religious enthusiasm among the youth but also strengthened community bonds and participation during the holy month.

Competition	Aim
Jenazah Prayer	"Training for students to properly and correctly perform the funeral prayer (<i>sholat jenazah</i>) in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)
Tahfiz Adh-Dhuhaa - An-Nas	Qur'anic learning is directed toward introducing, understanding, and developing awareness of the teachings of the Qur'an, with the goal of applying its content in daily life
Tahfiz Juz 30	To strengthen memorization, enhance precision, and build greater awareness of practicing the teachings of the Qur'an in daily life.

Table 1. The Musabaqah Ramadhaniyah 2025 M



Figur 6. Musabaqah Ramadhaniyah

CONCLUSION

The community service program based on Service Learning conducted in Sioban Village, Mentawai Islands, demonstrated that a community-based learning approach utilizing the talaqqi-tahsin method and contextual repetition was effective in improving Qur'anic reading skills among illiterate populations, including both children and adults. Significant improvement was observed, with 80% of participants able to recognize and independently read basic Qur'anic text, either autonomously or with guidance. Positive changes were also noted in religious participation and the reinforcement

of religious values in daily life. These findings underscore the importance of Qur'anic illiteracy eradication strategies that emphasize direct experiential learning, emotional support, and active engagement of the local community, particularly in areas with limited formal educational infrastructure.

The program also revealed that the success of strengthening religious literacy heavily depends on the integration of adaptive teaching methods and the establishment of a supportive social environment. Family involvement, engagement of religious leaders, and post-program sustainability emerged as critical factors in maintaining and expanding the impact of the initiative. Based on these findings, it is recommended that future programs systematically adopt community-based learning models, strengthen synergy with local institutions such as mosques, schools, and community organizations, and provide advanced training for local facilitators to ensure the continuity of the learning process without reliance on external actors. Furthermore, the development of contextual and literacy-friendly Qur'anic learning modules tailored to participants with illiterate backgrounds is essential to enhance the effectiveness and scalability of similar programs in other remote areas.

To preserve the impact of the program after the completion of the KKN (Community Service Program), a structured follow-up plan has been designed. This includes establishing a local learning circle (halaqah) led by previously trained facilitators, who will receive periodic remote guidance from the university team. A mentoring schedule and simple reporting mechanism will be introduced to monitor progress and address challenges in real-time. In collaboration with local religious institutions, a quarterly review forum will also be held to evaluate learning outcomes and renew community engagement. These measures aim to ensure that the positive outcomes achieved during the KKN can be sustained and expanded, ultimately embedding Qur'anic literacy as a continuous grassroots movement within the community.

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