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Raising Students' Awareness of Refugee Children's Education Rights at SMAN 1 Malang

Peningkatan Kesadaran Siswa SMAN 1 Malang tentang Hak Pendidikan Pengungsi Anak

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Abstract

Refugee children in Indonesia hold a right to education under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, yet the issue is rarely discussed in senior high schools whose curricula prioritise science subjects. This community service program aimed to raise SMAN 1 Malang students' awareness of this right. The program combined a short lecture, youth-led Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) facilitated by university students, and an illustrated storybook, "Under the Same Sky". Outcomes were measured with an identical pre-test (n = 42) and post-test (n = 35) given to grade XI and XII students. Correct understanding of the refugee definition rose from 73.8% to 80.0%, recognition of refugee children's right to education from 92.9% to 97.1%, and agreement that schools can help refugee children from 90.5% to 100%. The program broadened students' perspectives on global humanitarian issues and offers a replicable model for integrating humanitarian themes into school projects.

Keywords: *humanitarian awareness, refugee children, right to education, socialization, youth empowerment*

Abstrak

Anak pengungsi di Indonesia memiliki hak atas pendidikan sebagaimana dijamin Konvensi Hak Anak, tetapi isu ini jarang dibahas di sekolah menengah atas yang kurikulumnya berfokus pada mata pelajaran eksakta. Kegiatan pengabdian ini bertujuan meningkatkan kesadaran siswa SMAN 1 Malang tentang hak pendidikan pengungsi anak. Metode yang diterapkan meliputi pemaparan materi, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) berbasis youth-led mentorship yang difasilitasi mahasiswa, serta buku cerita bergambar "Di Bawah Langit yang Sama" sebagai media edukasi. Capaian diukur menggunakan pre-test (n = 42) dan post-test (n = 35) yang identik pada siswa kelas XI dan XII. Pemahaman definisi pengungsi meningkat dari 73,8% menjadi 80,0%, pengakuan hak pendidikan pengungsi anak dari 92,9% menjadi 97,1%, dan keyakinan bahwa sekolah dapat membantu pengungsi anak dari 90,5% menjadi 100%. Kegiatan ini memperluas wawasan siswa tentang isu kemanusiaan global dan menawarkan model yang dapat direplikasi untuk mengintegrasikan tema kemanusiaan ke dalam proyek sekolah.

Kata kunci: *hak pendidikan, kesadaran kemanusiaan, pengungsi anak, sosialisasi, pemberdayaan pemuda*

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental human right for every child, including refugee children who reside in Indonesia while awaiting resettlement. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 places inclusive and equitable quality education at the centre of the 2030 agenda, so that no group is left behind in acquiring basic literacy and knowledge (UNESCO, 2016). Refugee children are entitled to education regardless of their citizenship status or the length of their transit period (Asti & Rahayu, 2019; Dwi Hasya, 2023). The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Indonesia ratified through Presidential Decree No. 36 of 1990, obliges states to guarantee special protection and access to basic services, including education and health care, for every child within their jurisdiction (Aliana, 2024; United Nations, 1989). Article 22 of the Convention specifically entitles children seeking refugee status to appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance without discrimination.

In practice, the fulfilment of this right in Indonesia remains limited. A 2019 circular letter from the Ministry of Education and Culture opened access to formal schooling for refugee children, but access was later complicated by barriers related to information, the learning process,

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environmental support, and the children's own motivation, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Prabaningtyas et al., 2023). Refugee children therefore continue to experience social exclusion in education (Hidayat, 2022), and the fulfilment of their right depends not only on the state but also on schools and civil society (Dwi Hasya, 2023; Rossdiana, 2022). Building awareness among Indonesian students, who are prospective peers, volunteers, and future decision-makers, is one way to strengthen this societal support.

SMAN 1 Malang, one of the leading public senior high schools in Malang City, has a strong academic record and serves as a strategic partner for student character development. Its students show high intellectual and leadership capacity, which creates an opportunity to internalise global humanitarian values and empathy toward cross-border issues such as the refugee crisis.

However, the team's initial observations indicated that students' understanding of humanitarian issues remained limited. The curriculum is dominated by science and mathematics and by formal academic achievement, leaving little room for discussion of refugee rights. The main problem faced by the partner is therefore a lack of critical literacy on global humanitarian crises; without a structured intervention, students' potential as agents of social change cannot be fully realised. Youth-centred programs have positioned young people as agents of change on social issues (Sulvinajayanti et al., 2024), and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) provides a curricular space in which such values can be developed (Hidayati et al., 2024; Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia, 2022).

Based on these conditions, this community service activity aimed to (1) improve the understanding of SMAN 1 Malang students regarding the concept of refugees and their basic rights, particularly the right to education; and (2) foster students' collective awareness of global humanitarian issues through a participatory, youth-led educational approach that does not disrupt the school's primary focus on science and mathematics.

2. METHOD

This community service activity combined an outreach session and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to raise awareness among SMAN 1 Malang students of humanitarian issues, particularly the right to education for refugee children. The activity adopted a youth-led mentorship model in which university students served as discussion facilitators for high school students. The model was chosen because the small age gap between facilitators and participants was expected to create a more open and participatory discussion than a lecture format; undergraduate near-peer mentoring has been applied with students of the same age group for similar reasons (Hendry et al., 2022).

The activity was designed in five stages: investigation, preparation, implementation, reflection, and demonstration (Figure 1). These stages follow Kaye's service-learning framework (Kaye, 2015, as cited in Junaidah & Qadrianti, 2023). Achievement of the program targets was measured descriptively by comparing the percentage of correct or affirmative answers on an identical online pre-test and post-test, and qualitatively through participants' feedback at the end of the session.



Figure 1. Stages of the community service activity

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The activity took place at SMAN 1 Malang and involved 42 students from grades XI and XII. The activities were carried out in the following sequence:

1. Coordination with the partner: the team coordinated with SMAN 1 Malang, including the Vice Principal for Student Affairs and the Vice Principal for Public Relations, to set the schedule and participant criteria.
2. Material and narrative collection: the team compiled a narrative depicting the situation of refugee children in Indonesia.
3. Design and illustration: the team produced age-appropriate illustrations intended to evoke empathy among teenage readers.
4. Printing: thirty copies of the illustrated storybook were printed in A5 size for use in the FGDs.
5. Registration and pre-test: participants registered and completed a five-minute online pre-test accessed through a QR code.
6. Presentation of materials: a lecturer from the team presented global refugee issues, the definition and criteria of refugee status, the basic rights of refugee children under the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, and examples of the conditions faced by refugee children in Indonesia.
7. Focus Group Discussion (FGD): participants were divided into four groups of 10–11 students, each facilitated by one university student mentor.
8. Post-test and feedback: the session closed with an online post-test and the collection of participants' feedback on the activity.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The outreach session was held on Tuesday, 14 July 2026, in the multimedia room of SMAN 1 Malang. The participants were grade XI and XII students who had not previously been exposed to the topic of refugee children's right to education.

The session lasted approximately one hour. It began with registration and a five-minute self-administered pre-test that measured participants' prior knowledge and served as the baseline for later comparison (Figure 2). Administering the pre-test before any material was delivered allowed the team to identify the indicators on which students' knowledge was weakest.



Figure 2. Pre-test session

The pre-test was followed by the presentation of materials and the distribution of the illustrated storybook "Under the Same Sky", which participants used as a shared reference during the group discussions (Figure 3).

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Figure 3. The illustrated storybook "Under the Same Sky" used as a learning module

The FGD was the core component of the program. Each group of 10–11 students discussed the storybook and the presented material with a university student mentor. This format gave participants the opportunity to express opinions, exchange ideas, and relate the situation of refugee children to their own schooling experience. The mentors observed that participants asked questions and responded to one another more readily than in the plenary session, which supports the rationale for the near-peer format.

The session closed with a post-test that used the same questions as the pre-test, administered through the same online link on participants' own devices. Using identical items allowed a direct comparison of initial and final knowledge and an evaluation of the combined effect of the presentation, the storybook, and the FGD.

Participants described the topic of refugee children's right to education as new to them and stated that the session provided useful perspectives and knowledge (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Participants and facilitators after the session

The feedback collected at the end of the session was positive (Figure 5). Participants reported that the unfamiliar issue was explained in an accessible way, that the storybook made the material more concrete and engaging, and that the FGD format allowed them to participate actively and find answers to their own questions. Participants also requested similar programs on other humanitarian issues that are rarely discussed at school.

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Figure 5. Participant feedback session

Pre-test and Post-test Results

Pre-test



Figure 6. Prior participation in humanitarian outreach (pre-test, n = 42)

Most participants (79%) had never attended an outreach session on humanitarian issues, while 21% had attended a session on other humanitarian topics that were not related to refugees (Figure 6).

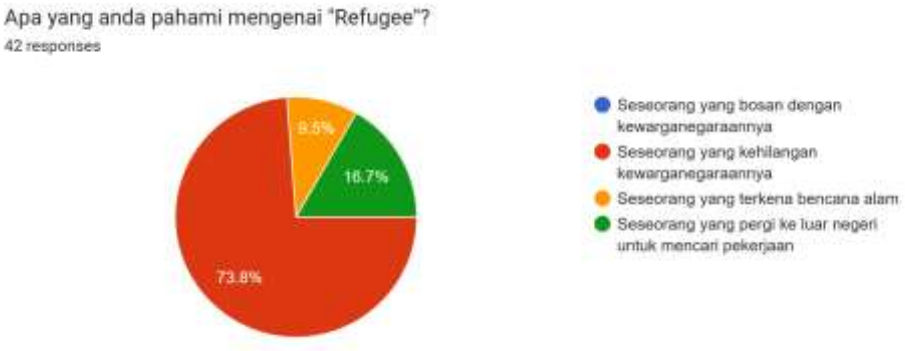

Figure 7. Understanding of the term "refugee" (pre-test, n = 42)

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In the pre-test, 73.8% of participants correctly identified the definition of a refugee (Figure 7).

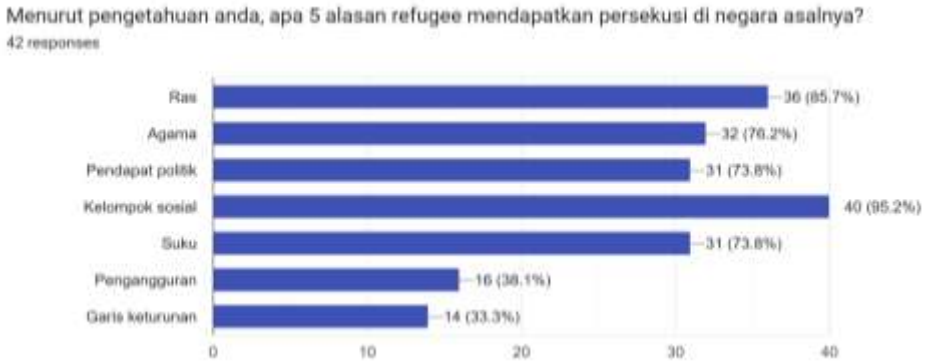

Figure 8. Knowledge of the grounds of persecution faced by refugees (pre-test, n = 42)

Knowledge of the five grounds of persecution listed in the questionnaire was uneven: social group was identified by 95.2% of participants, race by 85.7%, religion by 76.2%, and political opinion and ethnicity by 73.8% each (Figure 8).

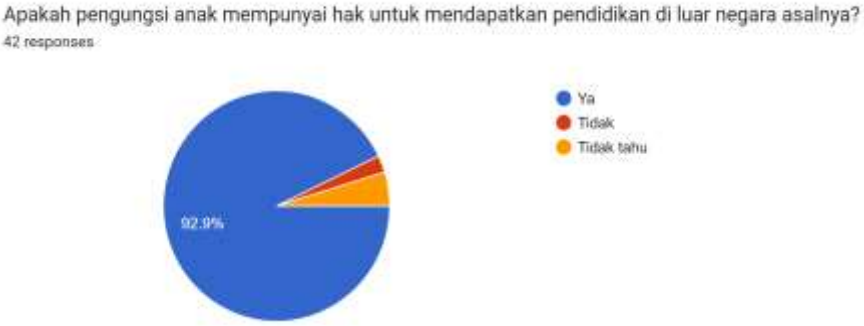

Figure 9. Recognition of refugee children's right to education outside their country of origin (pre-test, n = 42)

A large majority of participants (92.9%) already recognised that refugee children have the right to education outside their country of origin (Figure 9).



Figure 10. Perceived role of schools in addressing refugee children's educational problems (pre-test, n = 42)

Likewise, 90.5% agreed that schools can help address the educational problems faced by refugee children (Figure 10). These results indicate that participants began the program with a fairly strong normative position on refugee children's rights but with weaker conceptual knowledge, particularly regarding the definition of a refugee and the grounds of persecution.

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Post-test

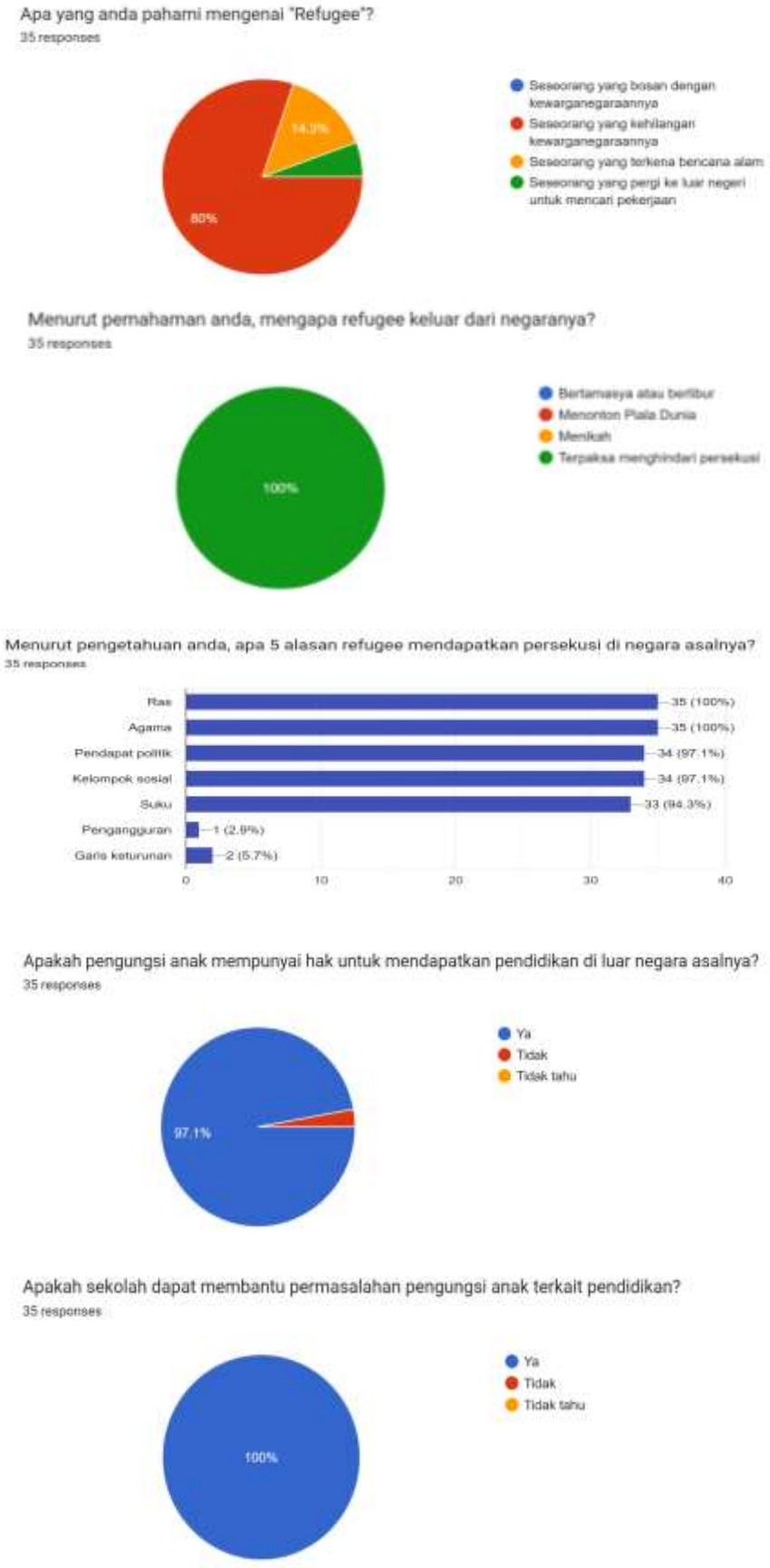

Figure 11. Post-test results (n = 35): definition of a refugee, reasons for leaving the country of origin, grounds of persecution, right to education, and the role of schools

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Figure 11 presents the post-test responses, and Table 1 compares them with the pre-test. The gender composition of respondents was identical in both measurements (71.4% female and 28.6% male), indicating that the two groups were comparable even though seven participants did not complete the post-test.

Table 1. Comparison of pre-test and post-test results

No	Indicator	Pre-test (n = 42)	Post-test (n = 35)
1	Female respondents	71.4%	71.4%
2	Male respondents	28.6%	28.6%
3	Understands the definition of a refugee	73.8%	80.0%
4	Understands that refugees leave their country to escape persecution	97.6%	100%
5	Recognises refugee children's right to education	92.9%	97.1%
6	Agrees that schools can help refugee children	90.5%	100%

All four knowledge and attitude indicators increased after the program. Correct understanding of the refugee definition, the weakest indicator at baseline, rose by 6.2 percentage points (from 73.8% to 80.0%). Understanding that refugees leave their country to escape persecution rose from 97.6% to 100%, recognition of refugee children's right to education rose from 92.9% to 97.1%, and agreement that schools can help refugee children rose from 90.5% to 100%. Because seven participants did not submit the post-test before the session ended, the two measurements are not paired at the individual level, and the comparison should be read descriptively.

The storybook "Under the Same Sky" helped participants understand the issue in a concrete and engaging way. Participants reported that the illustrations and short narrative were easier to follow than text-based material. This is consistent with classroom research showing that picturebooks about refugees help students gain insight into a complex and controversial issue and can prompt empathy and social action (Hope, 2018). The near-peer FGD format was also valued because it allowed active participation without the formality of classroom instruction.

Added Value of the Program

The program generated added value at three levels. At the level of knowledge, conceptual understanding improved most on the indicator that was weakest at baseline. At the level of attitude, the unanimous post-test agreement that schools can help refugee children indicates a shift from awareness toward a sense of institutional responsibility, which is an early precondition for behavioural change. At the level of school resources, the program produced an illustrated storybook that can be reused as a learning medium in later classes or school projects. Comparable knowledge gains measured through pre-test and post-test comparisons have been reported in other community service programs published in Dinamisia (Basuki et al., 2024), which supports the use of this design for short educational interventions.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Outputs

The main strengths of the program were its participatory near-peer format, the use of a low-cost and contextual storybook, and a simple measurement design that the school can repeat. Its weaknesses are also clear. First, the one-hour duration allowed only an immediate post-test, so the retention of knowledge was not measured. Second, the pre-test and post-test were not paired and the post-test sample was smaller, so the improvement cannot be attributed to the program with statistical certainty. Third, baseline scores above 90% on three indicators left little room for improvement (a ceiling effect), which indicates that future instruments need more

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demanding items and an attitude scale. Fourth, the program measured knowledge and stated attitudes, not actual behaviour.

Implementation Difficulties

Several difficulties arose during implementation. The session had to fit within the school's academic schedule, which limited the time available for each FGD. Only 30 copies of the storybook were printed for 42 participants, so some participants had to share copies. Completion of the online post-test depended on the remaining time and on participants' own devices, and seven participants did not submit it before the session ended. In addition, a ratio of one mentor to 10–11 students limited the opportunity for every participant to speak at length.

Opportunities for Further Development

The program can be developed in several directions. Humanitarian themes can be integrated into the school's P5 activities so that they are delivered regularly rather than as a one-off event (Hidayati et al., 2024). Selected SMAN 1 Malang students can be trained as peer facilitators to extend the youth-led model within the school (Hendry et al., 2022; Sulvinajayanti et al., 2024). The storybook can be digitised to remove the printing constraint, and future programs can use several sessions with a paired, delayed post-test. Collaboration with organisations that work directly with refugee children in Indonesia would also allow students to move from awareness to concrete action.

These results confirm that a youth-led humanitarian education intervention is relevant for addressing students' literacy gap on global issues such as refugees. Previous studies emphasise that fulfilling the right to education for refugee children and asylum seekers requires support from schools and civil society beyond the state's formal responsibilities (Dwi Hasya, 2023). Such awareness is important because refugee children frequently face the consequences of serious human rights violations, including physical and psychological violence, disrupted education, and increased health risks (Rassel & Fitri, 2024).

Education for refugee children is not only a human rights issue but also a long-term investment in development and peace. Rossdiana (2022) shows that a humanitarian approach underlies Indonesia's policy on refugee children's education. Strengthening awareness of this issue among young people therefore contributes to the broader effort to fulfil the right to education for refugee children.

4. CONCLUSION

The outreach program on refugee children's right to education at SMAN 1 Malang broadened students' perspectives on humanitarian issues, as shown by increases in all four indicators measured through the pre-test and post-test, with the largest gain on the definition of a refugee. The youth-led FGD and the illustrated storybook suited high school students whose curriculum focuses on the exact sciences. The program was nevertheless limited by its single one-hour session, unpaired measurement, ceiling effects on several indicators, and the absence of behavioural measures. The team recommends that SMAN 1 Malang integrate humanitarian themes into P5 on a regular basis, train student peer facilitators, and that future programs use multiple sessions, paired and delayed measurement, and partnerships with organisations working with refugee children.

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