



Engagement:

Jurnal Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat

Vol. 10, No. 02, May, 2026, pp. 465 – 473

ISSN: 2579-8375 (Print), ISSN: 2579-8391 (Online)

<https://engagement.fkdp.or.id/index.php/engagement>

 OPEN ACCESS

Educational Mentoring for Indonesian Immigrant Children at Community Learning Centers in Sabah, Malaysia: Materials, Patterns, and Program Outcomes

Edhy Rustan¹, Abdul Rahim Karim², Abdul Hair Bin Beddu Asis³

¹ Universitas Negeri Islam Palopo, Indonesia

² Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia

³ Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia

Email edhy_rustan@uinpalopo.ac.id; abdrahimkarim@gmail.com; hairbedduasis@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Background: The presence of the Community Learning Centre (CLC) program in Sabah, Malaysia, has helped children of Indonesian migrant workers (TKI) access education. However, learning in the CLC program has not been optimal.

Purpose of the Study: this study aims to maximise educational services for Indonesian immigrant children in Sabah, Malaysia.

Methods: The mentoring program is implemented through a service-learning method integrated with the International Professional Training Education (PLP). The mentoring involves IAIN Palopo and the LPTK (Teaching Institution for Teachers and Teachers). The mentoring is carried out at CLC Holy Trinity Tawau, CLC AL Alaq Tawau, Pesantren As'adiyah Tawau, and CLC Cahaya Tagas.

Results: A total of 125 students participated from the four CLCs. The mentoring material was divided into three sections: general and religious topics for students, and learning management for teachers and principals. The mentoring program was tailored to meet the needs of the students. Thus, educational mentoring for immigrant children in Malaysia has a very positive impact, so it needs to be continued sustainably. The mechanism for sending students to assist teachers at CLC Sabah needs to be strengthened with an MoU between the Consulate of the Republic of Indonesia and the university.

Keywords

Learning assistance; education for immigrant; children; CLC.

Article History:

Received: March 30th 2026

Revised: May 04th 2026

Accepted: May 28th 2026

Corresponding Author: Edhy Rustan; Email: edhy_rustan@uinpalopo.ac.id; Universitas Islam Negeri Palopo

© 2026 The Author(s). Published with license by Engagement: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat. This is an Open Access article is currently licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-SA) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

Introduction

Education is a right for all children. The literature shows that immigrant children are disadvantaged in education (Cheng & Yan, 2018; Gunnþórsdóttir et al., 2019; Lastikka & Lipponen, 2016). Issues with the completeness of citizenship documents in the destination country are a barrier to immigrant children attending proper schooling (Allerton, 2017; Cheng & Yan, 2018). Furthermore, they must learn about to navigate cultural and linguistic differences and face unfavourable economic conditions (Amthor & Roxas, 2016; Gunnþórsdóttir et al., 2019; Lastikka & Lipponen, 2016). The majority of immigrants are at low economic levels, making access to education a difficult choice (Amthor & Roxas, 2016; Lastikka & Lipponen, 2016). Therefore, the education of immigrant children is an important consideration in the implementation of mentoring.

The majority of Indonesian immigrant children in Malaysia lack official documents, making it difficult for them to access their right to education (Christie, 2016; Hasanah, 2015). Incomplete immigration documents are a major problem for Indonesian migrant workers (TKI) who enter through illegal channels, are sold by migrant worker recruitment agencies, or return home with their families. Meanwhile, for registered TKIs whose documents are inactive due to economic difficulties, such as unstable employment, they are unable to renew their immigration documents. Those affected include the children of foreign workers, asylum seekers, and refugees (Lumayag, 2016). They do not receive the same educational opportunities as children in Indonesia. As illegal residents, these children are unable to attend public schools like other students (Allerton, 2018).

To reduce existing inequality, the Indonesian government, through the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia (KJRI), has implemented learning programs in the form of Community Learning Centres (CLCs) and Indonesian Schools in Kota Kinabalu (SIKK) (Andita et al., 2016; Fatahillah & Nugroho, 2013). These learning programs fulfil the state's responsibility to provide education to the children of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia. SIKK, as the main school in Kota Kinabalu, is accessible only to the children of workers in the surrounding area (Andita et al., 2016). Meanwhile, those in remote areas utilise CLC services. The education provided at SIKK and CLCs is similar to the education program implemented in Indonesia (Andita et al., 2016).

Preliminary studies indicate that learning in the CLC program is not optimal. Obvious problems include the inability of CLCs to accommodate the children of migrant workers, especially those working in the fields. Furthermore, there are limited facilities and infrastructure, as well as a limited number of teachers. Limited facilities and infrastructure require classes to be divided into morning and afternoon classes. Meanwhile, the limited number of teaching staff impacts the learning process. The deployment of teachers from Indonesia has not met demand. The religious education provided is not in-depth and does not align with the students' beliefs. Due to a shortage of teaching staff, religious instruction primarily focuses on morality and religious tolerance. In schools, students are also not taught technical skills that could provide capital for employment. These various issues certainly do not result in effective learning.

Another challenge is the nationalism of the children of migrant workers. When it comes to teaching nationalism to children, most no longer have a clear understanding of Indonesia; they only read about it in textbooks and from their parents' stories. They have never been to Indonesia. Furthermore, they are unable to celebrate Indonesian Independence Day. Similarly, limited use of Indonesian is due to children's daily environment using Malay.

Based on the background described, educational support is needed for Indonesian immigrant children at the CLC in Sabah, Malaysia. Support is provided through an organisation of LPTK (Teaching Institution for Indonesian Teachers), UMS (University of Indonesia), the Indonesian Consulate General, and parents and immigrant children. This assistance aims to

maximise educational services for Indonesian immigrant children in Sabah, Malaysia.

Method

The mentoring method used in this study was integrated service learning with International Professional Training and Education (PLP). The service-learning model was implemented with a predetermined focus on service. The target audience was 125 children of immigrants/Indonesian migrant workers (TKI) at Community Learning Centers in Sabah, Malaysia, in both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors (Holy Trinity Tawau CLC = 30 students, As'adiyah Tawau Islamic Boarding School = 13 students, AL Alaq CLC = 68 students, and Cahaya Tagas CLC = 14 students)

The mentoring program was conducted over a four-month period. The service process began with establishing a partnership and continued with the Teacher Training and Education Institute (LPTK). The goal of this partnership was to implement a hybrid mechanism, or a gradual implementation of PLP/internship. Collaboration was then established to maintain program sustainability and advocate with relevant parties. The next step was to recruit tutors through a selection process. Based on the selection results, technical training was provided on the mentoring implementation mechanism. See Figure 1.

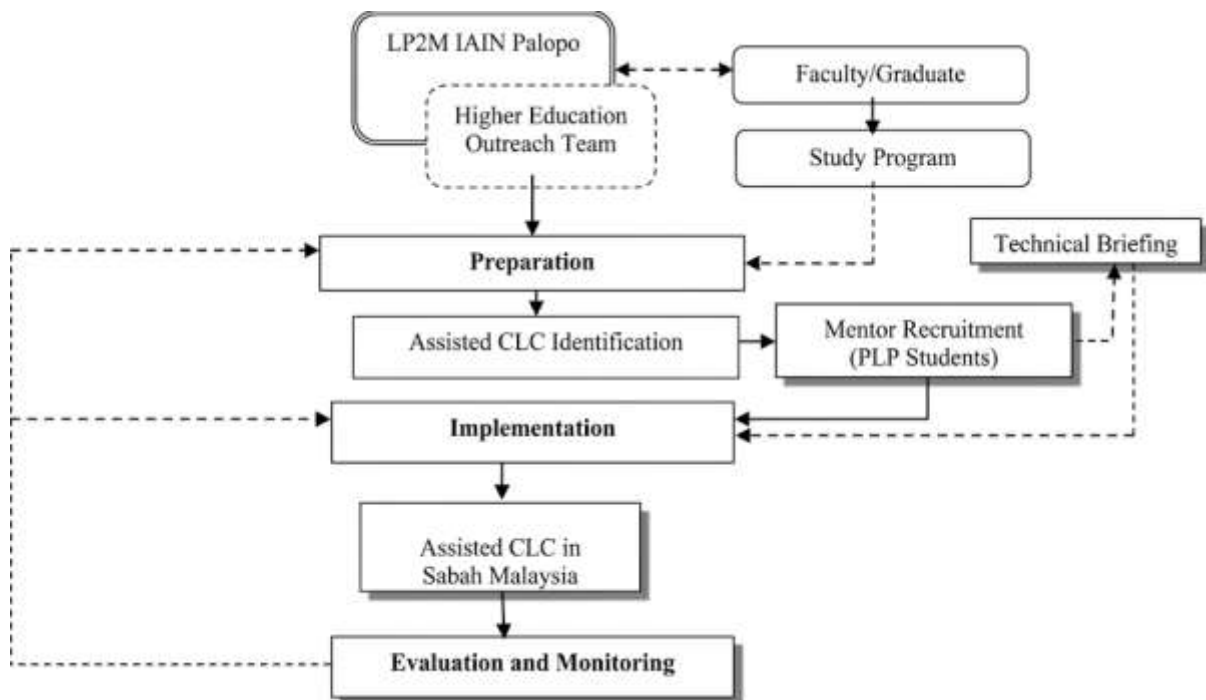


Figure 1. Mentoring Process through the Service-Learning Method at CLC Sabah Malaysia

The mentoring process aimed to improve the education and skills of immigrant children through basic learning programs and basic functional literacy. The initial step was for the service team to coordinate with the leadership of their home campus on basic learning programs and functional literacy for migrant children in the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. The Community Service Team chose IAIN Palopo because its Elementary Madrasah Teacher Education Study Program (PGMI) has achieved an A accreditation, making it the best in Eastern Indonesia and internationally recognised. It has implemented the MBKM curriculum. The basic learning program and basic functional literacy can be fully implemented as a pilot project.

The community service results are analysed descriptively, covering planning and implementation, as well as outcomes. The impact of this community service is to establish collaborative networks that ensure the education of immigrant children in Sabah. To achieve this, in areas far from the reach of the SIKK (School of Community Service), a branch or pilot CLC mechanism was implemented. Furthermore, to ensure that learning can be tailored to the needs of immigrant children with Indonesian cultural backgrounds, a prototype curriculum adapted for migrant worker (TKI) children was formulated.

Result

Needs Analysis

The mapping activity began with a meeting with the Social and Cultural Information Officer, Consul at the Indonesian Consulate General in Kota Kinabalu. He then facilitated a discussion with the Indonesian Consul General in Kota Kinabalu, the principal of the SIKK school, and the CLC manager. Following this meeting, an educational needs analysis for migrant workers' children, as part of the problem mapping process, was conducted with the principal, the vice principal, and several teachers at SIKK. This was done because SIKK manages all CLCs within the Indonesian Consulate General's jurisdiction. Furthermore, the problem mapping was conducted through direct observation of four randomly selected CLCs: Kemajuan Inanam, Permata Lohan, Cerdas, and CLC Kundasan.

To further deepen the problem-mapping results, the community service team also conducted in-depth interviews with migrant workers at the timber mill and the palm oil plantation. The problem mapping revealed a low level of educational services for Indonesian migrant children in Sabah. The mapping results are detailed in Figure 2.

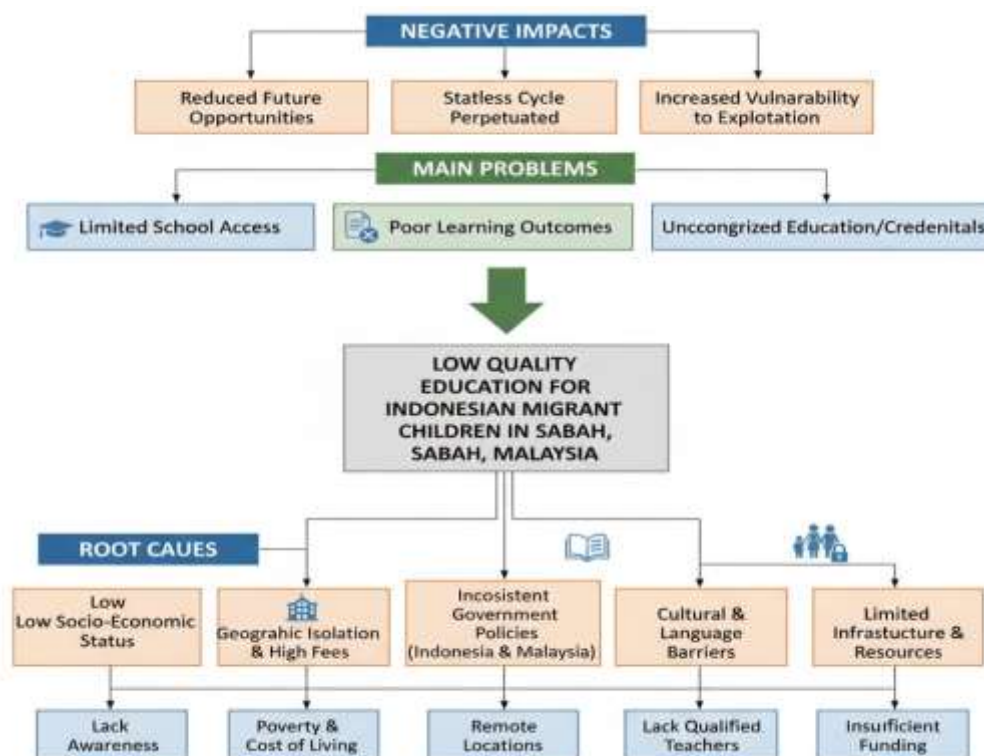


Figure 2. Problem Tree of Educational Challenges faced Immigrant Children in Sabah

Furthermore, the mapping activity was validated with social studies experts at the University of Sabah, Malaysia. This activity was conducted through initial discussions with academics and a presentation to students and lecturers from the Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities, UMS. The findings encouraged the team to proceed with a second phase of community service with the group, aiming to resolve existing problems with relevant stakeholders collaboratively.

The needs analysis then led to actions for CLC students, including mentoring on digital literacy and an introduction to the Technical Skills-Oriented School curriculum. Specifically, at the As'adiyah Islamic Boarding School in Tawau, Islamic character education counselling was provided to parents/guardians to develop pious students, addressing their needs. CLC AL Alaq Tawau provided mentoring in developing the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum, focusing on mastery of the Yellow Book and Nahwu Sharaf (Islamic grammar). CLC Cahaya Tagas focused more on school management and teaching staff.

Basic Functional Literacy Assistance for Migrant Worker Children

This collaborative student community service activity (PKM) involved presentations delivered through lectures, discussions, and question-and-answer sessions. The collaborative activity between lecturers and students at IAIN Palopo carried the theme, "Strengthening Literacy in Responding to Information, Understanding Human Rights (HAM), and Cultivating an Entrepreneurial Spirit for Digital Native Children."

Holy Trinity Tawau Community Learning Centre (CLC)

Legal assistance was provided at Holy Trinity CLC Tawau. The assistance was delivered through a classical lecture to provide knowledge and understanding and to raise students' awareness of educational rights as enshrined in various laws and regulations. The presenter explained the meaning of educational rights and the roles of the various parties and institutions involved in fulfilling, protecting, and defending them. The speaker also explained the mandate in the 1945 Constitution, which is closely related to students' educational rights at Indonesian Schools Abroad. The fulfillment and protection of students' educational rights must be non-discriminatory. Given that this school is under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture, territorial differences cannot be used as grounds for different treatment in fulfilling and protecting students' educational rights, as they are also Indonesian citizens and entitled to the same treatment as other citizens.

Questions, answers, and discussions were held to explore further in-depth students' knowledge and understanding of educational rights. Students were also allowed to express their opinions on educational and basic rights as Indonesian citizens residing in the assigned area.

The level of understanding and awareness among citizens, particularly students at Holy Trinity CLC, regarding their educational rights as students attending school within Indonesian territory remains very low, reflecting the reality on the ground. This was concluded after discussions with students at Holy Trinity CLC. In general, they acknowledged that Indonesia has a constitution, the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. However, the mandate of the 1945 Constitution, particularly Article 31, concerning educational rights, remains unknown and incompletely understood. This is especially true of other regulations, such as Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning National Education and Presidential Decree Number 36 of 1990, which are also closely related to students' educational rights.

Then, during the question-and-answer session and discussion on what is contained in the 1945 Constitution, Article 31, Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning National Education, and

Presidential Decree Number 36 of 1990, not a single student answered correctly. Therefore, it can be concluded that students also do not understand that Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution establishes the basic rights of citizens, including students, as well as other regulations relevant to the right to education. In fact, these regulations are inseparable from the rights of every citizen, whose fulfillment must be guaranteed, protected, and maintained as a constitutional right.

The unique and extraordinary characteristic of the students at CLC Holy Trinity is their enthusiasm for learning and for exploring their potential. This is evident in the many achievements they have achieved in both crafts and sports. CLC Holy Trinity students have demonstrated a strong passion for learning, exploration, and the development of their potential.

As'adiyah Tawan Islamic Boarding School

Postgraduate students and lecturers from IAIN Palopo conducted digital literacy mentoring at this location. The students were provided with additional knowledge and insight into digital literacy, a necessary skill in today's sophisticated era for accurately filtering information. Efforts to support digital literacy include using appropriate applications and thoroughly understanding the information obtained. Given the alarming spread of hoaxes in society, students also received religious instruction. Furthermore, they received guidance on integrating the Technical Skills-Oriented School Curriculum for Indonesian Immigrant Children.

Throughout the mentoring session, both teachers and students enthusiastically participated in the activity until the end. The Q&A session revealed that several students were beginning to understand the concepts presented on digital literacy. The teachers also listened attentively and actively asked questions during the curriculum integration mentoring session.

AL Alaq Community Learning Centre (CLC)

This school is located near a market, with two-story buildings arranged in rows, similar to shophouses (in Indonesian). The activities at CLC Al-Alaq include teaching and delivering material to students. The material covered includes English and Arabic. In English, students are given material on describing people, interspersed with games and singing about body parts. Students are also taught the Hijaiyah alphabet, interspersed with games and songs about body parts in Arabic.

There are several non-Muslims at this school, but during the Hijaiyah instruction, some of them know the alphabet and even join in with the pronunciation. This raises critical questions about the religious learning process implemented at this school. Furthermore, elementary school students are seen performing ablutions for Asr prayer; they do not use running tap water but instead use plastic bottles filled with clean water, and three large plastic bottles for the ablution. This is because the water sometimes does not flow. It might be difficult for us to hear, but they remain enthusiastic about pursuing their education. The lesson to be learned from this incident is that tolerance grows from the students' enthusiasm for learning. Furthermore, the development of faith is instilled in them from elementary school onward, where, despite limited water, they adhere to religious teachings.

CLC Cahaya Tagas

Based on interviews conducted by the IAIN Palopo Postgraduate team with operators and teachers at CLC Cahaya Tagas, it was found that students' educational rights are well-protected. However, during the school's establishment, concerns have been raised several times about discrimination against students because almost all of them lack passports. As we know, every foreign citizen visiting another country must have a valid identification, such as a passport. This

demonstrates that citizens respect the laws of the country they are visiting.

The Indonesian School of Kota Kinabalu (SIKK), which oversees the CLC school in Malaysia, has taken on the role of the Indonesian government in assisting Indonesian students studying in Malaysia by issuing student cards. Some students live far from their school, sometimes requiring them to undergo multiple checks at the Malaysian border. Therefore, the student card serves as a substitute for their passport. This also indicates a threat to students' sense of security in pursuing their education. We know that every citizen has the right to feel safe wherever they are and at any time.

Through this service, the IAIN Palopo Postgraduate team is seeking legal protection by collaborating with the embassy to issue student ID cards for students as a replacement for passports. Meanwhile, the issue of threats to the right to a sense of security experienced by some students requires firm follow-up from the Indonesian government to ensure justice for all Indonesians, even in their assigned areas.

Discussion

The mentoring results revealed several problems faced by immigrant students at the CLC. These included limited understanding of student rights, English, and religious beliefs, unequal access to student cards, and threats to their sense of security. This lack of understanding of student rights and religious beliefs stems from insufficient exposure to relevant regulations. The material provided to students is limited due to the limited number of educators. This is supported by [Christie \(2016\)](#), who stated that Indonesia still has a limited number of teachers and that the curriculum is adapted to Malaysia.

Furthermore, research by [Binti Amir & Kusumawati \(2025\)](#) showed a decline in reading literacy among advanced CLC students in Sabah compared to the early grades. After the mentoring program, students began to understand their rights and obligations as Indonesian citizens and as religious people. Students were very enthusiastic about participating in the mentoring program. This aligns with research by [Hidayati et al. \(2025\)](#), who found that literacy mentoring for immigrant children at the CLC enhanced their knowledge and skills. Their enthusiasm for learning facilitated the mentoring process. Learning through games makes it easier for immigrant students to understand language materials ([Wijayatiningsih et al., 2025](#)). This is reinforced by those who suggest that increasing the frequency and continuity of mentoring can optimally improve the skills of Indonesian immigrant children in Malaysia. Therefore, ongoing education with adequate facilitators is needed for students at CLCs in Malaysia. Another issue is the unequal distribution of student ID cards and the threat to their sense of security. Not all CLC students have complete documentation, hindering their education and creating insecurity among students. Some parents still lack official immigrant documentation, which impacts their children. This aligns with research conducted by [Lumayag, \(2016\)](#) dan [Novia \(2023\)](#), which found that incomplete documentation hinders access to education for immigrant children at CLCs. Furthermore, [Anita et al. \(2021\)](#) revealed that children's personal documents, parental immigration status, residence, and availability of places are challenges faced by Indonesian citizens in obtaining a proper education. By collaborating with the Indonesian Consulate General, it is hoped that the number of undocumented students can be minimized so that everyone can access education and feel safe.

There are several limitations to this study. The relatively small number of participating schools makes the mentoring data potentially biased. Another limitation is that the study did not examine pre- and post-test data, so the effectiveness of the mentoring program cannot be statistically proven. Furthermore, the relatively short duration of the mentoring program resulted in a lack of visible impact on students.

Conclusion

Overall, the activity ran smoothly, despite some obstacles. Among them, a member of the PKM team was unwell due to the weather conditions on the ground, the tight schedule, and the distance between the locations. Nevertheless, the planned presentation activities went well. Given the positive results of implementing activities that have improved the education of immigrant children in Malaysia, the PKM program, which involves lecturers and international student collaborations, should be continued. The mechanism for sending students to assist teachers at CLC Sabah needs to be strengthened with an MoU between the Consulate of the Republic of Indonesia and the university.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to express his gratitude to the Directorate of Islamic Higher Education, the Directorate General of Islamic Religious Education, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia through Litabdimas, along with the DIPA IAIN Palopo, the University of Malaysia Sabah, the Indonesian Consulate General in Tawau, and the Indonesian Consulate General in Kota Kinabalu for their cooperation and support in implementing this mentoring program.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Allerton, C. (2017). Contested Statelessness in Sabah, Malaysia: Irregularity and the Politics of Recognition. *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 15(3), 250–268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2017.1283457>
- Amthor, R. F., & Roxas, K. (2016). Multicultural Education and Newcomer Youth: Re-Imagining a More Inclusive Vision for Immigrant and Refugee Students. *Educational Studies*, 52(2), 155–176. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2016.1142992>
- Andita, L. R., Damayanti, C., & Suryo, H. (2016). Peran KJRI kota Kinabalu dalam meningkatkan akses pendidikan bagi anak-anak buruh migran Indonesia (TKI) di Sabah. *Transformasi*, 1(30), 150–161. <http://ejurnal.unisri.ac.id/index.php/Transformasi/article/view/1775/1577>
- Anita, Darwita, & Bahaudin, A. (2021). Kerjasama Indonesia Malaysia Dalam Pendidikan Anak Tki Di Sabah. *Hasanudin Journal of International Affairs*, 1(2), 193–216. <http://etd.repository.ugm.ac.id/penelitian/detail/60808>
- Binti Amir, A., & Kusumawati, Y. (2025). Keterampilan Literasi Membaca Siswa Sekolah Dasar: Studi Kasus Community Learning Center (CLC) Pontian Fico, Sabah Malaysia. *Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan Dasar Dan Menengah*, 2(1), 46–59. <https://doi.org/10.71301/jipdasmen.v2i1.68>
- Cheng, L., & Yan, W. (2018). Immigrant Student Achievement and Educational Policy in Canada. *Immigrant Student Achievement and Education Policy*, 137–153. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-74063-8_9
- Christie, D. A. (2016). Anak Tenaga Kerja Indonesia Di Sabah Malaysia. *EJournal Ilmu Hubungan Internasional*, 4(4), 1161–1176. ejournal.hi.fisip-unmul.ac.id
- Fatahillah, R. I., & Nugroho, M. F. A. (2013). The learning motivation to Indonesian Immigrant

- Child in Sabah, Malaysia. *Technology, Education, and Science International Conference (TESIC)*, 2–4. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324897933>
- Gunnþórsdóttir, H., Barillé, S., & Meckl, M. (2019). The Education of Students with Immigrant Background in Iceland: Parents' and Teachers' Voices. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 63(4), 605–616. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2017.1415966>
- Hasanah, T. (2015). Potential Social Capital of Indonesian Immigrant in Malaysia: A Preliminary Research. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 211(September), 383–389. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.11.050>
- Hidayati, N., Luayyi, S., Umam, A. K., Nurrahma, A. I., & Yani, A. (2025). Penguatan Literasi Ekonomi dan Kewirausahaan Anak Pekerja Migran Indonesia Berbasis Participatory Learning di Kampung Melayu Sungai. *Welfare : Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 3(4), 701–706.
- Lastikka, A. L., & Lipponen, L. (2016). Immigrant parents' perspectives on early childhood education and care practices in the finnish multicultural context. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 18(3), 75–94. <https://doi.org/10.18251/ijme.v18i3.1221>
- Lumayag, L. A. (2016). A Question of Access: Education Needs of Undocumented Children in Malaysia. *Asian Studies Review*, 40(2), 192–210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2016.1158238>
- Novia, H. (2023). Dinamika Diplomasi Indonesia Terkait Pemenuhan Akses Pendidikan Anak Pekerja Migran Indonesia di Sarawak Malaysia. *Jurnal Studi Diplomasi Dan Keamanan*, 15(2), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.31315/jsdk.v15i2.8393>
- Wijayatiningsih, T. D., Mulyadi, D., Budiastuti, R. E., Setiawan, A., Sucipto, A. W., & Izatunnajah, H. (2025). Belajar tanpa batas: Transformasi pembelajaran bahasa Inggris anak imigran melalui Mobile-Assisted Language Learning. *Community Empowerment Journal*, 3(4), 186–196. <https://doi.org/10.61251/cej.v3i4.294>