



Pendekatan Participatory Action Research dalam Memakmurkan Masjid melalui Sosialisasi Remaja dan Masyarakat

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation of Participatory Action Research (PAR) to address the decline of mosque-centered religious activities in Klenisan, RT 03/RW 04, Geneng, Gatak, Sukoharjo. The central problem identified was low participation of youth and community members in mosque revitalization, compounded by limited Qur'anic literacy and the absence of youth-led religious programming. Using PAR methodology, the research involved asset mapping, stakeholder interviews, and collaborative action planning. Two primary actions were carried out: a socialization session on mosque revitalization attended by 16 youth and 17 residents, and an aspiration forum that produced a structured religious program under the Youth Organization (Karang Taruna) Religious Division. Findings reveal that participatory engagement significantly elevated community awareness and youth motivation to contribute to mosque activities. The study concludes that PAR effectively fosters grassroots religious and social transformation, particularly when youth are positioned as agents of change rather than passive beneficiaries.

Keywords: Participatory Action Research; Mosque Revitalization; Youth Empowerment.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji penerapan Penelitian Tindakan Partisipatif (PAR) untuk mengatasi penurunan aktivitas keagamaan yang berpusat di masjid di Klenisan, RT 03/RW 04, Geneng, Gatak, Sukoharjo. Masalah utama yang teridentifikasi adalah rendahnya partisipasi pemuda dan anggota masyarakat dalam revitalisasi masjid, yang diperparah oleh keterbatasan literasi Al-Qur'an dan tidak adanya program keagamaan yang dipimpin oleh pemuda. Dengan menggunakan metodologi PAR, penelitian ini melibatkan pemetaan aset, wawancara pemangku kepentingan, dan perencanaan aksi kolaboratif. Dua tindakan utama dilakukan: sesi sosialisasi tentang revitalisasi masjid yang dihadiri oleh 16 pemuda dan 17 warga, serta forum aspirasi yang menghasilkan program keagamaan terstruktur di bawah Divisi Keagamaan Organisasi Pemuda (Karang Taruna). Temuan menunjukkan bahwa keterlibatan partisipatif secara signifikan meningkatkan kesadaran masyarakat dan motivasi pemuda untuk berkontribusi dalam kegiatan masjid. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa PAR secara efektif mendorong transformasi keagamaan dan sosial dari bawah ke atas, terutama ketika pemuda diposisikan sebagai agen perubahan, bukan sekadar penerima manfaat pasif.

Kata kunci: Participatory Action Research (PAR), Memakmurkan Masjid, Karang Taruna



1. INTRODUCTION

The mosque is the most central institution in Islamic civilisation. Since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the mosque has served not only as a place of worship, but also as a centre for education, consultation, social organisation and comprehensive community empowerment (Saroso1 et al., 2024). Throughout the history of Islam, the mosque has been the birthplace of various intellectual, social and humanitarian movements that have had a profound impact on the lives of Muslim communities across the globe (Apiah et al., 2023). Emphasising that mosques in Indonesia play a wide-ranging role and serve multiple functions within the context of Islamic education, namely as centres of worship, centres of learning, centres for moral education, and centres for the development of the Muslim community (Setyawan & Roqib, 2025). These functions essentially support one another and form a healthy socio-religious ecosystem within society.

However, the empirical reality observed in many Muslim communities in Indonesia-particularly in rural and semi-urban areas reveals a significant gap between the normative ideal of the mosque's function and the reality on the ground. Many mosques stand as imposing physical structures, yet remain socially and intellectually stagnant. The mosque's function, which ought to be multidimensional, has been reduced to merely a place for performing the five daily prayers, whilst its educational, empowerment and community development functions have been neglected (Nasrullah, 2021). It has been identified that the primary functions of the mosque have not been optimally fulfilled due to three main factors: weak institutional management, a lack of programmes relevant to the younger generation, and the breakdown of the intergenerational succession process. These conditions have a direct impact on the sustainability of religious traditions and activities at the community level (Safei & Armstrong, 2023).

Similar issues were also encountered in Dukuh Klenisan RT 03/RW 04, Geneng Village, Gatak Sub-district, Sukoharjo Regency, Central Java Province, the location where this research was conducted. Based on the results of field observations and in-depth interviews conducted by the researcher during the period from February to April 2026, several fundamental issues related to the role of the Nurul Iman Mosque in the socio-religious life of the local community were revealed. Firstly, the lack of an active youth organisation at the mosque means that the involvement of the younger generation in the management and development of mosque activities remains very limited and unstructured. Secondly, regular religious activities beyond congregational prayers remain underdeveloped, as the activities that take place generally consist only of occasional religious study sessions. Thirdly, a situation requiring significant attention was identified: there are still adults who are unable to read the Arabic alphabet properly. This phenomenon reflects the still low level of basic ability to read the Qur'an within the community, as is also found in various other rural communities across Indonesia. One of the issues considered most significant is the lack of involvement and low level of interest among young people in participating in the various activities organised at the mosque. This decline in young people's engagement with religious activities at the mosque not only reflects a personal issue, but also points to a social phenomenon that could have far-reaching implications for the sustainability of the community's social and religious life (Alhasbi et al., 2024).

The low level of participation by young people in religious activities at mosques has an impact on the wider community's social and religious life. Consequently, religious activities within the community have lost some of their vitality, the process of nurturing the younger generation is not proceeding as effectively as it could, and the continuity of the community's religious traditions is beginning to face challenges (Kimani, 2024). This situation is also evident in Dukuh Klenisan, where the absence of a youth organisation at the mosque and the lack of religious programmes tailored to young people's interests have led to a



decline in youth participation in mosque activities. This situation has in turn created a series of interrelated and recurring problems, particularly given the strong influence of digital entertainment, which attracts teenagers' attention more than religious activities at the mosque (Udin et al., 2024).

When dealing with complex and multi-faceted issues such as this, a conventional top-down approach will not be effective, as it fails to address the root causes of the passivity among young people and the persistent illiteracy in the Arabic script among adults of Dukuh Klenisan. An approach is needed that can reverse these roles, namely one that positions adolescents and the community not as objects of the programme, but as subjects who design their own activities (Masrifatin et al., 2023). Therefore, this research employs Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Thomas et al., 2024). PAR is a research method that emphasises participatory and democratic processes, in which researchers and communities work collaboratively to understand and resolve the issues they face. This approach aims to generate practical knowledge that is beneficial to people's lives, through a combination of action and reflection, as well as theory and practice, in order to bring about more meaningful social change (Hildayanti & Machrizzandi, 2022).

In the PAR approach, the community is not treated merely as a passive research subject, but as a party that actively engages with the researcher in identifying problems, devising solutions, implementing actions, and evaluating and reflecting on the process undertaken (Kemmis et al., 2014). However, there remains a gap in the existing literature. Most studies on mosque-based PAR tend to focus on economic issues, health, and religious moderation. As for research specifically examining the application of PAR in encouraging youth participation as a driving force for the prosperity of mosques in rural communities in Indonesia, very little has been done so far (Moran et al., 2023).

Based on the above, this study was conducted with the aim of: (1) describing the process of applying PAR to increase the involvement of young people and the community of RT 03/RW 04, Dukuh Klenisan, in efforts to develop the Nurul Iman Mosque; (2) to evaluate the outcomes of the two main action programmes that have been implemented; and (3) to formulate practical recommendations for the community regarding a PAR-based empowerment model that can be replicated in similar conditions and environments.

2. METHODS

The method used in this activity is Participatory Action Research (PAR), a research approach that actively involves the community throughout the entire process, from planning and implementation to evaluation (Ingram et al., 2022). PAR aims not only to generate knowledge, but also to drive tangible social change and community empowerment (Mallory, n.d.). The participants in this activity were residents of Dukuh Klenisan RT 03/RW 04, Geneng Village, Gatak Sub-district, Sukoharjo Regency, Central Java Province. The research was conducted from February to April 2026. The PAR approach was implemented in an integrated manner through the following stages:

The first stage, Participatory Planning and Observation, was carried out through an initial survey at the research site. In this stage, the research team conducted in-depth interviews in coordination with the RT Chairman (Mr Sumardi), the RT Chairwoman (Mrs Endang), the TPA Teacher (Ms Amdani), the Karang Taruna Chairman (Mr Tulus), and the Karang Taruna Secretary (Ms Isna) to gather information and agree on the activity plan. Based on the survey results and discussions, the main issues identified were a low level of awareness regarding the upkeep of the mosque, particularly among teenagers, and the absence of a structured work programme for the Religious Affairs Division. Based on these findings, an action plan was drawn up comprising religious awareness-raising activities and participatory programme planning sessions.



The second phase, Action, involves the implementation of two main sets of activities. Firstly, an awareness-raising event themed “Pentingnya Memakmurkan Masjid”, held on 28 April 2026, attended by 33 participants comprising 16 Karang Taruna youths and 17 adult community members, featuring speakers from the community’s external network. This activity included a presentation, discussion, and a question-and-answer session. Second, a session for expressing aspirations and planning the work programme of the Karang Taruna Religious Division, carried out in a participatory manner with all participants. All stages of the action were documented through photographs, field notes, and audio recordings.

The final stage, Reflection, involves a comprehensive analysis and monitoring of the implementation process across the entire range of activities, with a view to identifying achievements and challenges encountered. Reflection is carried out through joint discussions with the community and participatory evaluation. Data triangulation is conducted to ensure the validity and credibility of the findings, whilst reflective field notes are used to document the researcher’s positionality and the dynamics of the relationship with the community. The results of this reflection stage serve as a basis for ensuring the relevance and sustainability of the activities’ impact on community engagement and the strengthening of local religious institutions.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

a. Result

1) Initial Conditions and Mapping of Community Assets in Dukuh Klenisan RT 03/RW 04

Through participatory observation, in-depth interviews and communal asset mapping carried out together with residents of Dukuh Klenisan RT 03/RW 04, Geneng Village, Gatak Sub-district, Sukoharjo Regency, a comprehensive sociological picture of the community’s ecosystem was obtained. Geographically, the RT 03 area covers approximately twenty thousand square metres, situated at the eastern end of Geneng Village, bordered by a river to the north, rice fields to the south, the boundary of Baki Sub-district to the east, and the RT 02 settlement to the west. Land use is dominated by residential areas, agricultural irrigation networks, private gardens, the Yatim Mandiri Foundation, a public cemetery, the Nurul Iman Mosque, and a church.



Figur 1. Interview stage

The socio-economic situation reveals a massive shift in livelihoods. The majority of the adult population work as casual labourers and farm labourers with fluctuating incomes, whilst almost all young people of working age choose to work as factory workers in the industrial areas around Sukoharjo. On the other hand, the community’s social capital is relatively strong, as reflected in the running of regular gatherings such as the Family Welfare Education (PKK), periodic arisan, and weekly jimpitan contribution schemes. Nevertheless, aspects of local culture show signs of decline, marked by the fading of the Kidungan,



Kenduri, and Ruwahan traditions, as well as the dormant state of the Karawitan group due to the deterioration of musical instruments.

Religious activities centred on the Nurul Iman Mosque have seen a significant decline in participation. Of the eighty-six households, the majority of whom are Muslim, only a few people attend congregational prayers; intensive regular religious study sessions are held only during Ramadan; and over the past four years, the mosque has not organised any scheduled celebrations of major Islamic holidays. The number of teachers at the Al-Qur'an Education Centre (TPA) has also fallen from five in 2024 to three in 2026 due to work commitments. Conversely, the Karang Taruna Andhiaksa RT 03 youth organisation has grown steadily to reach fifty active members by 2026; however, its Social and Religious Affairs Division has yet to produce a single concrete programme of work that contributes to the prosperity of the Nurul Iman Mosque.

2) Root Cause Analysis and Action Priorities

The formulation of intervention strategies was carried out through root cause analysis using a problem tree and gap analysis (Harsono P., 2008). The core issue in Dukuh Klenisan is the low level of participation and collective awareness among residents and young people regarding the development of the Nurul Iman Mosque. This situation is caused by two factors: the absence of inclusive and regularly scheduled religious programmes, and the lack of an institutional support framework that integrates the potential of the Karang Taruna youth organisation into the mosque management structure. Through the transformation of the problem tree into a tree of hope, the ultimate goal agreed upon is the realisation of a community and youth who actively organise innovative religious activities at the Nurul Iman Mosque.

3) Implementation of the Action Cycle

The first action cycle, an awareness-raising session on the theme of 'The Importance of Supporting the Mosque', was held on Tuesday, 28 April 2026, at 19:35 WIB in the main porch of the Nurul Iman Mosque. The event was attended by thirty-three active participants, comprising sixteen young members of Karang Taruna and seventeen adult residents, including the mosque management committee and the Head of RT 03, Mr Sumardi. The material was presented by Ustaz Fadhil Hidayatullah Rohman, who discussed the theological virtues of revitalising the mosque, the collective responsibility of Muslim residents, and the urgency of positioning the younger generation as active agents of religious change. The awareness-raising session successfully created a space for interactive dialogue that eased the stiffness of intergenerational communication.



Figur 2. Sosialisasi stage

Immediately after the information session concluded, the event continued with a forum for gathering feedback and planning a collective work programme as the second phase of the initiative. The Chairman of Karang Taruna Andhiaksa, Mas Tulus Arendra Bagaskara, reaffirmed the organisation's full commitment to making the prosperity of the

mosque an integral part of Karang Taruna's work programme. The speakers also recommended that residents make use of the network of religious study groups around Gatak and informed them of the existence of an Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah-based study centre currently being built near Dukuh Klenisan. The session concluded with a commitment to financial support from the mosque's funds, and further discussions successfully formulated three main work programmes: the organisation of periodic large-scale religious study sessions, a mosque clean-up initiative every two weeks, and regular Islamic studies for young people and residents.



Figur 3. Aspiration delivery stage

b. Discussion

1) A Sociological Paradox: The Vitality of Youth Organisations versus the Decline of Religious Life

The most crucial finding of this study is the stark sociological contradiction between the quantitative vitality of youth organisations and the decline in the quality of religious life in Dukuh Klenisan. The Andhiaksa Youth Organisation has grown steadily to fifty active members with a fully-fledged management structure, whilst the Nurul Iman Mosque has seen a decline in its spiritual function and a lack of youth involvement. The phenomenon of low youth involvement in mosques following socio-economic pressures is a pattern also documented in various other Muslim contexts (Mahat et al., 2022). This phenomenon is not merely a matter of declining individual morality, but rather the result of the absence of institutional mechanisms linking the two entities (Cheema et al., 2014).

The theory of community-based youth engagement asserts that strategies for the revitalisation of places of worship that treat young people merely as passive participants tend not to be sustainable (Mabetha et al., 2023). Engagement that yields long-term impact is programmatic and leadership-based, whereby young people are given full authority to design, manage and evaluate their own religious activities. Youth-centred participatory action research (YPAR) has proven effective in fostering a sense of ownership and sustainable community leadership capacity (Wagaman et al., 2023). The PAR initiative successfully acted as an institutional catalyst bridging this gap. When the Chair of Karang Taruna proposed a restructuring of the Religious Affairs Division's work programme, the proposal carried strong internal legitimacy, aligning with the fundamental PAR principle that the most enduring change is that designed by the community's own internal actors (Stringer, E. T., & Ortiz Aragón, 2020).

2) The Institutional Crisis at TPA and the Failure of the Organic Cadre System

The decline in the number of TPA teachers from five to three over a two-year period is a clear indicator of the failure of the organic religious succession system. This problem stems from structural economic pressures, whereby the transition in young people's lives after completing their formal education forces them to enter the workforce as factory workers with long working hours. This pattern of institutional regression in rural religious youth



organisations due to the pressures of industrialisation and the social mobility of young people is also commonly found in other suburban areas (Clendenning, 2022). The structural integration between the staff of the Karang Taruna Religious Division and the management of the mosque, resulting from the PAR action forum, breaks this chain of problems. By institutionalising the religious agenda as part of Karang Taruna's official organisational duties, activities such as teaching at the TPA and attending religious study sessions are no longer viewed as an individual moral burden, but rather as part of the collective identity of the youth.

3) Optimising Local Social Capital as a Supporting Framework for the Sustainability of the Mosque Ecosystem

Sociological analysis shows that the main issue in Dukuh Klenisan is not a lack of social capital, but rather the uneven distribution of existing social capital. Residents of RT 03 have a very strong solidarity network, as reflected in the operation of the jimpitan fund, the monthly social fund, and the tradition of taking turns to provide refreshments for the TPA. Referring to social capital theory, communities with high levels of mutual trust and norms of reciprocity possess an extraordinary inherent capacity to resolve collective action dilemmas independently (Maulana, I. N. H., & Wardah, 2023). The stagnation of mosque activities occurs because this abundant social capital is channelled solely towards secular social agendas, whilst the religious dimension of the mosque lacks a proper channel for expression (Cheema, A. R., Scheyvens, R., Glavovic, B., & Imran, 2014). Experience from the Indonesian context shows that strengthening the mosque as a centre for community empowerment requires a strategic reorientation that structurally involves young people (Efiyanti et al., 2021). The PAR intervention in this study redirects the energy of local social capital towards the mosque's spiritual ecosystem, through synergy between the PKK group, which manages logistics, and the Karang Taruna youth group as field implementers.

4) The Effectiveness of the PAR Methodology in Stimulating Local Emancipatory Epistemology

The participatory action research approach assumes that the success of social transformation at the grassroots level is not determined by top-down interventions, but rather by the degree to which local residents take ownership of the process of change (Burns, 2019). Unlike conventional intervention programmes, which are instructive in nature, PAR works by stimulating critical awareness from within the community itself (Keahey, 2021). when applied in the context of Islamic community development, has consistently been shown to yield superior programme sustainability because it places programme autonomy in the hands of local residents (Minkler, 2018). This finding aligns with empirical evidence that authentic participatory engagement in CBPR yields tangible collective empowerment with long-term impact (Röger-Offergeld et al., 2023). The key determinant of PAR's success in this case lies in the two-stage activity design, namely transformative socialisation directly combined with a participatory aspirations forum (Coghlan, D., & Brydon-Miller, 2014). The socialisation process challenges the status quo of residents' passive awareness, whilst the aspirations forum provides an emancipatory space for participants to formulate their own solutions, thereby fostering a strong sense of ownership.

5) Critical Reflection and Methodological Implications

Although the series of PAR activities went well, a critical reflective analysis of the technical challenges encountered in the field is still required. The challenges identified included participants arriving late, which affected the efficiency of the outreach sessions; technical miscommunication at the outset of coordination between the RT Chair, TPA teachers and mosque committee members; and a shortage of research staff, which led to an



uneven distribution of the workload. Beyond these technical challenges, there is a more fundamental methodological challenge: ensuring the sustainability of the three work programmes designed by the Karang Taruna Religious Affairs Division after the researchers withdrew from the field. These limitations have important implications for the design of future PAR research, namely the need for a longer longitudinal timeframe covering several cycles of repeated action that does not stop at the socialisation and planning stages, but continues to monitor programme implementation, periodic evaluation, and joint reflection after the programme has been running for a certain period of time (Kemmis, S., McTaggart, R., & Nixon, 2014).

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach is an effective method for promoting community-based mosque revitalisation, particularly in Dukuh Klenisan RT 03/RW 04, Geneng Village, Gatak Sub-district, Sukoharjo Regency. The main problem identified in the field was the low level of participation by young people and residents in religious activities at the Nurul Iman Mosque, exacerbated by a lack of structured religious programmes and a weak intergenerational succession system.

Through two main action cycles—namely, a socialisation session themed ‘The Importance of Revitalising the Mosque’, attended by 33 participants, and a consultation forum for drafting the work programme of the Religious Affairs Division of the Andhiaksa Youth Organisation—this research succeeded in creating tangible change at the grassroots level. The findings indicate that participatory engagement significantly increased the collective awareness of residents and the motivation of young people to contribute actively to mosque activities. Three concrete work programmes were also successfully formulated collaboratively: the organisation of regular large-scale religious study sessions, a mosque cleaning initiative every two weeks, and regular Islamic study sessions for young people and residents.

The main contribution of this research lies in demonstrating that the problem of religious stagnation in rural communities is not merely a matter of individual morality, but rather the result of a lack of institutional mechanisms linking the potential of youth organisations with the management of mosques. PAR has proven capable of acting as an institutional catalyst that bridges this gap, by positioning young people not as passive beneficiaries, but as agents of change who actively design and manage their own religious agenda. This PAR-based empowerment model has the potential to be replicated in other communities with similar socio-religious conditions.

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