

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT BY THE KARANG TARUNA ORGANIZATION IN KERTASARI SUBDISTRICT, CIAMIS REGENCY

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Abstract

This research was motivated by the suboptimal youth empowerment efforts of the Karang Taruna organization in Kertasari Village, Ciamis District, Ciamis Regency. During fieldwork, the researcher identified a lack of organized activities by the Karang Taruna and low youth participation in Kertasari Village. This study used a qualitative descriptive method. Data was collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data processing and analysis involved three steps: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. A total of six informants were included in the study. The research aimed to determine the level of youth participation in the Karang Taruna organization in Kertasari Village, Ciamis District, Ciamis Regency. Based on the findings, the youth empowerment efforts of the Karang Taruna organization have shown some progress but are not yet optimal when measured against the stages of empowerment theory by Ambar T. (2017). This is supported by indicators like a growing sense of awareness, increased community consciousness, and creativity all of which show development. However, several obstacles were identified, including low interest and participation from youth, as well as limited facilities and resources like training equipment and funding. The Karang Taruna's efforts to overcome these challenges include personal outreach to youth, using social media to share information and improve communication, and adjusting activity schedules to be more flexible and not conflict with young people's daily routines.

Keywords: Empowerment, Organization, Karang Taruna

A. PENDAHULUAN

Young people have the responsibility to create a better next generation (Pratama & Rahmat, 2018). At the very least, young people are expected to bring positive ideas and practices and apply them in society (Hasanah, 2021). Today, young people's social responsibilities are accompanied by increasingly fierce competition, so human resource development is needed (Nugroho et al., 2020). It is not impossible to improve the talents and skills of young people; the dominance of millennials makes it possible to quickly adapt and learn to solve problems (Muktamar et al., 2023).

The number of active members of Karang Taruna has been decreasing from year to year; therefore, empowering the Karang Taruna organization is very important (Andra L, 2020). Because Karang Taruna is the most potential human resource to ensure the progress of a village, however, young people must always get guidance from more experienced people because they do not have enough experience (Lijayanto L, 2023). The Village government is responsible for this. The influence of mass media is another factor that causes young people to behave deviantly. This is due to the shift in the times caused by the advancement of science and technology, which has a significant impact on people's behavior (Marhamah et al., 2024)

Social change happens very quickly thanks to advances in communication and information technology. However, so as not to be left behind by other countries, the younger generation must follow this progress (Nasution R. D., 2017). This phenomenon often leads to a weakening of young people's social and environmental awareness, which is also caused by changes in the behavior of Indonesian youth due to the influence of globalization. This can be seen in today's young people who are falling into juvenile delinquency such as drug use, student brawls, and free sex due to the wrong social environment (Hidayat et al., 2024).

The issues above make it possible for organizations such as Karang Taruna to lead the younger generation in a better direction. Karang Taruna is a forum for development that aims to create young people who are active in national development in general, especially in the development of social welfare, and has played a role in empowering the younger generation as part of the development of the entire Indonesian nation as a successor and implementer of national development (Ramlan, 2020). Holding positive youth activities must be carried out so that young people do not fall into social deviation. As per the Youth Law Number 40 of 2009, youth have a very strategic function and role in the vitality and development of the country, so their potential and role are recognized as part of the country's development, which we must develop through youth activities.

Although Karang Taruna Kertasari Village has carried out various youth activities, it cannot be denied that in their implementation there are still various obstacles that affect the effectiveness of youth empowerment. These problems are not only related to low youth participation, but also include institutional aspects, limited resources, and a lack of innovation in program implementation.

This condition shows that the empowerment efforts that have been made have not been fully optimal and still require evaluation and strengthening in various aspects. Therefore, it is important to identify in more depth the problems faced by Karang Taruna Kertasari Village in carrying out its function of empowering youth in Kertasari Village.

The indicators of the problems that exist in Karang Taruna Kertasari Village are as follows:

1. Karang Taruna in Kertasari Village lacks human resources. The participation of young people in Kertasari Village is still low regarding the importance of the Karang Taruna organization.
2. The Karang Taruna institution is not running as expected. Because most of the members in Karang Taruna already have jobs and are married, which causes a lack of effectiveness in the Karang Taruna Kertasari Village organization.
3. Lack of variety of activities in the implementation of the Karang Taruna organization.

This shows that youth need empowerment by the Karang Taruna organization.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Stages of Empowerment

The stages of empowerment are the steps an institution takes to empower a community or the people around it (Harahap, 2020). According to Ambar Teguh S (2017), the stages of community empowerment are:

1. Awareness and Behavior Formation Stage This is the preparatory stage of the community empowerment process (Istiyanti, 2020). At this stage, the empowering parties, actors, or agents of empowerment try to create the right conditions to facilitate an effective empowerment process.
2. Knowledge and Skill Transformation Stage The transformation of knowledge and skills can only happen with enthusiasm and effectiveness if the first stage has been successfully completed. The community will go through a learning process to gain knowledge and skills that are relevant to their needs. This will stimulate an expansion of their horizons and help them master the basic skills they require.
3. Intellectual and Skill Enhancement Stage This stage involves improving the intellectual capacity and skills needed to achieve self-sufficiency. This self-sufficiency is characterized by the community's ability to take initiative, create new things, and innovate within their environment. Once a community reaches this third stage, it can carry out development independently. In the context of community development, the community at this stage is often seen as the primary subject or main actor, with the government serving only as a facilitator.

Here are some additional stages of empowerment according to Wilson in Mardikanto (2013):

1. Cultivating a Desire for Change: This is the starting point for empowerment. Without the desire to change and improve, all efforts to empower the community will fail to gain their attention, sympathy, and participation.
2. Developing the Will and Courage: This involves a willingness to overcome perceived pleasures and obstacles, and then make the decision to participate in empowerment activities to achieve the desired change and improvement.
3. Fostering Willingness to Participate: This is about developing the readiness to take part in or join empowerment activities that offer benefits or lead to a better situation.
4. Increasing Role or Participation: As the benefits of empowerment activities are felt, participation and one's role in them increase.
5. Boosting Role and Loyalty: This is shown by growing motivation to make changes and a stronger commitment and loyalty to the empowerment activities.
6. Enhancing Effectiveness and Efficiency: The activities become more effective and efficient over time.
7. Improving Competence: This final stage involves increasing competence to drive new changes through ongoing empowerment activities.

Based on these scholars, the stages of empowerment emphasize a gradual process starting with awareness and behavioral change, followed by the transformation of skills and

increased intellectual capacity, ultimately leading to self-sufficiency and the courage to innovate.

Meanwhile, Wilson focuses more on personal motivation and the desire to change as the starting point for empowerment. This then evolves into active participation, effectiveness, and increased competence within the community. Both approaches show that empowerment is not just about providing skills; it's about fostering changes in attitude, active participation, and independence within a community.

The Meaning of Youth

Youth are the younger generation in a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood. They have great potential in intellectual, social, and physical aspects of life (Anisa et al., 2025). Youth are often seen as agents of change because of their energy, creativity, and idealism.

Gahung et al. (2017) suggest that youth are dynamic and optimistic individuals, but they lack stable emotional control. Youth face a period of social and cultural change. According to the draft of the Youth Bill, youth are defined as those between the ages of 18 and 35 (Gahung et al., 2017). From an age perspective, youth is a period of biological and psychological development. Therefore, youth always have aspirations that differ from those of society in general. In a positive sense, this difference in aspirations is referred to as the spirit of renewal (Pinilas et al., 2017).

Youth, as a concept, has a political dimension. Benedict Anderson in Sudibyo (2013) argues that the definition of "youth" is always associated with political aspects. Since the revolution for independence, youth as a specific age group (15-40 years) have spent most of their free time on political activities.

Based on the explanations from the experts and the draft of the Youth Bill, it can be concluded that the definition of youth is a person who experiences physical, mental, and emotional development between the ages of 15 and 35.

C. RESEACRH METHODOLOGY

The research method used by the researcher is a qualitative descriptive method, where the researcher intends to describe events or phenomena as they occur in the field. The data collection techniques used are a literature review and field study, which consists of interviews, observation, and documentation. The data processing/analysis techniques are data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification.

The focus of this study is related to the empowerment of youth by the Karang Taruna organization in Kertasari Village, Ciamis District, Ciamis Regency. It focuses on several dimensions based on Ambar T.'s (2017: 83) stages of empowerment, which serve as the conceptual framework for this study: The stage of awareness and behavior formation, which aims to foster conscious behavior. The stage of skill transformation, including knowledge, proficiency, and skills, to broaden perspectives and provide basic skills so that youth can take on a role in development. The stage of improving intellectual and skill abilities, so that initiative and innovative capability can be formed to lead to self-sufficiency

This research was conducted from October 2024 to July 2025 at the Karang Taruna organization in Kertasari Village, Ciamis District, Ciamis Regency. The informants in this

study totaled 6 people, consisting of the Village Head, Head of Empowerment, Chairman of Karang Taruna, Secretary of Karang Taruna, Chairman of the Cibitung Girang Sub-Unit of Karang Taruna, and a member of Karang Taruna.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Here's an analysis of the youth empowerment efforts by the **Karang Taruna** organization in Kertasari Village, Ciamis District, Ciamis Regency, based on Ambar T.'s (2017) theory of empowerment stages.

The analysis focuses on three dimensions: The stage of awareness and behavior formation, leading to conscious behavior. The stage of skill transformation, providing knowledge and basic skills to enable youth to participate in development. The stage of improving intellectual and skill abilities, which fosters initiative, innovation, and self-sufficiency.

a. Stage of Awareness and Behavior Formation

This first stage is a preparatory step where the empowering organization creates the right conditions to facilitate an effective empowerment process. The following indicators were observed:

1. Knowledge Development

Based on observations and interviews, the development of youth knowledge by the Karang Taruna in Kertasari Village is still suboptimal. This is due to a combination of factors, including:

- Low youth participation and interest in training activities.
- Limited budget and facilities.
- A lack of structured strategies or mechanisms to actively engage young people.

Planned social training, which could significantly boost youth intellectual and social capacity, remains a concept and has not been realized due to limited resources and a lack of technical and policy support from the village government. The absence of a clear activity calendar or training schedule also makes these initiatives unsustainable.

Despite these obstacles, the Karang Taruna continues to make efforts through personal outreach to young members and by using social media to raise awareness and encourage participation. However, these efforts need to be strengthened with more systematic and integrated support, both from within the organization and from the village authorities. Without concrete steps to address these structural and cultural barriers, youth empowerment in the form of knowledge development will not achieve significant results.

This highlights the crucial role of knowledge in empowering youth, especially in rural areas. As Ambar T. (2017) suggests, "the empowering party/actor/agent of empowerment tries to create preconditions to facilitate an effective empowerment process." This emphasizes that the success of empowerment depends on the actions of the empowering agent.

2. Conscious Behavior

The development of conscious and caring behavior among Kertasari's youth has shown progress, but it is not yet widespread. Some young people are starting to show interest in social activities organized by the Karang Taruna. Their involvement isn't just as passive

participants; they are beginning to take on roles as event organizers, showing an initial awareness of their important role in a youth organization.

A successful example is the 2024 Tri Lomba event, which received a positive response from a portion of the youth who actively participated in its planning and execution. Their presence showed that a sense of community and social care is starting to grow. However, this enthusiasm is not a reflection of collective consciousness, as many young people still remain passive, attending only as spectators or not showing up at all. This suggests that conscious behavior is still partial and not yet institutionalized within the organization's life.

Informants revealed that building youth awareness remains a challenge. Many lack strong internal motivation, tend to wait for instructions, and do not yet see social activities as important. For most of the youth in Kertasari Village, the Karang Taruna has not yet become a part of their identity.

In response, the Karang Taruna's board is making strategic efforts through personal approaches and by setting a positive example. The goal is to build emotional connections and a sense of responsibility among the youth. This is reinforced by direct communication and by consistently using social media to share invitations and information about activities.

For conscious behavior to be optimal, the Karang Taruna must consistently encourage and motivate the youth. This aligns with Haryanto's (2022) theory that empowerment is "an effort to build power by encouraging, motivating, and raising awareness of one's potential." Conscious behavior will only be achieved with consistent encouragement from the Karang Taruna board.

3. Growing Community Awareness

Based on interviews and observations, there has been positive progress in the community's awareness of the Karang Taruna's role in Kertasari Village. This is reflected in community involvement in various social activities, where they act as participants, supporters, or part of the community that helps sustain youth programs. The community is beginning to realize that the Karang Taruna is more than just a regular youth group; it has a significant social role in local development (Sugistin, 2024).

However, this development is not yet widespread. Informants noted that some community members still view the Karang Taruna as nothing more than an event committee for ceremonies. Trust in the youth's ability to manage the organization independently and professionally has not been fully established. Some residents still doubt the effectiveness of the programs and don't see the organization as an equal partner in development.

Field observations reinforce this, showing that community participation is active but limited to certain groups. A primary obstacle is a lack of understanding about the Karang Taruna's strategic function as a platform for youth empowerment.

To address this, the Karang Taruna has made efforts to build more open communication and emotional connections with the community. The board tries to involve residents in every program, both through direct invitations and informal gatherings. They also try to give the community a role in both the planning and execution of activities to foster a sense of ownership and trust.

In conclusion, while obstacles like negative perceptions and a lack of trust from some community members remain, overall, awareness of the Karang Taruna's important role has

started to grow. This process must be nurtured through intensive communication, transparent activities, and improved program quality so that community participation can increase evenly and sustainably.

This aligns with Kindervater's theory (in Anwar, 2016) that "empowerment is the process of giving power or strength in the form of education and aims to raise the awareness and sensitivity of learners towards economic, social, and political development." Based on this, it can be concluded that community awareness will grow optimally if the Karang Taruna's empowerment efforts are well-executed.

b. The transformation of knowledge and skills can run well, with enthusiasm and effectiveness.

At this point, the community's participation is still at a low level, where they are merely followers. The key indicators are as follows:

1. Increased Knowledge

Based on interviews and observations, there is a lack of regular training or capacity-building activities. The limited number of work programs and a restricted budget are major obstacles to improving youth knowledge and skills. Additionally, some young people show a lack of initiative in seeking out resources and information about the importance of the Karang Taruna organization's role, which leads to low active participation in development.

Despite these challenges, the Karang Taruna is making efforts to overcome them by scheduling activities at flexible times, such as late afternoons, evenings, or on weekends, so that working youth or students can attend. The activities are also designed as relaxed discussions to make them more engaging and less rigid. These steps are expected to increase involvement and more effectively stimulate the development of young people's skills and knowledge.

Therefore, an increase in knowledge is crucial for youth empowerment. The Karang Taruna is trying to use an approach where young leaders within the organization share their knowledge with other members. This aligns with the theory from Gahung et al. (2017) that "youth are dynamic individuals, even volatile and optimistic, but have not yet developed stable emotional control." Based on this theory, it can be concluded that in the youth empowerment process, it is important to create conditions that stimulate the need for new insights and the mastery of basic skills.

2. Increased Creativity

Based on observations and interviews, there has been progress in youth creativity. This is evident through young people's involvement in sharing creative ideas during activity planning. Some youth are also starting to show their creativity through music in organizational activities and in organizing events for Independence Day celebrations.

However, there are still obstacles, especially a lack of confidence among some young people to openly express their creative ideas. This poses a challenge for the organization in encouraging more active participation. The Karang Taruna is working to overcome this by promoting collaboration among young people in planning activities that can channel their creativity. The organization is also creating a more open and inclusive meeting atmosphere and empowering youth to voice their creative ideas, so their potential can be developed more effectively.

Creativity is essential for the Karang Taruna organization because it is a key factor in creating programs and activities that are interesting, innovative, and relevant to the needs of both youth and the community. This aligns with the theory from Cahyono (2017) which states, "the cultivation of youth creativity is for the purpose of developing social responsibility that is reactive, creative, educational, economic, productive, and other practical activities by leveraging all resources and potential in their environment through self-reliance." From this theory, it can be concluded that youth creativity in the Karang Taruna organization plays a vital role in shaping programs and activities.

3. Participation

Based on observations and interviews, the level of youth involvement in Karang Taruna activities is still not optimal. Although the relationship between youth and the Karang Taruna board is quite good, only a small portion of youth are truly active and directly involved in the activities. Observations also show that youth participation remains low during events.

Some of the main obstacles include a lack of interest or a mismatch between the activities and the interests of the youth, as well as a failure to foster a collective awareness of the importance of the youth's role in local development through the Karang Taruna. In response, the Karang Taruna is taking a new approach by holding open discussions and listening to young people's ideas to make them feel more involved. The organization has also begun to design programs and activities that align with the interests of the youth, hoping to increase their sense of ownership and encourage more active participation.

Participation in the Karang Taruna organization is critical for empowering youth so they can engage in positive activities even if they are not directly in charge. This relates to the theory from Ambar T. (2017) that states, "The community can only participate at a low level, where they are merely followers or objects of development, not yet able to become subjects in development." Based on this theory, it can be concluded that youth participation must be increased so they can play an active and leading role.

c. The Stage of Intellectual and Skill Enhancement, Leading to Initiative, Innovation, and Self-Sufficiency

The third stage is about enriching or improving the intellectual and practical skills needed for self-reliance. This independence is marked by a community's ability to initiate, create, and innovate within its environment.

Here are the findings based on this stage:

1. Improving Intellectual and Practical Skills

Based on observations and interviews with all informants, it's clear that Karang Taruna lacks a routine and sustainable training program for developing youth intellect and skills. This has resulted in a less-than-optimal increase in youth capacity. While some training has been held, it has faced obstacles like a lack of motivation from some young people, which may be influenced by economic factors and an unsupportive social environment.

In an attempt to address this, Karang Taruna has tried to hold training sessions and collaborate with external parties, such as competent communities or experts, to provide relevant and useful material. However, these activities have not become part of a consistent program, so their effectiveness is limited. Moving forward, a more consistent program plan is needed to ensure the intellectual and skill development of youth is focused and continuous.

Improving intellectual and practical skills within the Karang Taruna organization serves as a learning platform that encourages young people to sharpen their critical thinking and broaden their horizons. This aligns with Soebianto (2015), who states that "empowerment requires improvement in various areas: education, accessibility, action, institutions, business, income, environment, life, and the improvement of the community itself." Based on this theory, it can be concluded that fully supported activities can be effective and promote youth independence.

2. Initiative and Innovation

Based on interviews and observations, youth in Kertasari Village generally lack independent initiative. They tend to wait for directions, instructions, or specific moments from the Karang Taruna board to get involved. This shows that the spirit of self-sufficiency and the courage to innovate have not developed to their full potential. The lack of youth who actively propose ideas or suggest new ones reinforces this finding. Young people are not yet accustomed to taking proactive steps, whether in planning activities, identifying community needs, or creating solutions to social problems around them.

This situation is also influenced by a lack of platforms or activities that encourage and stimulate initiative and creativity. The Karang Taruna board admits that they don't have a consistent training program designed to build independent and innovative attitudes among the youth. Some programs are only temporary and have not become routine, so they fail to provide long-term impact.

The Karang Taruna's current efforts include encouraging youth to be more active in planning, creating spaces for discussion, and trying to collaborate with external parties. However, these efforts have not yielded maximum results because they have not fully instilled the self-confidence and courage to take initiative from within the youth themselves.

Initiative and innovation are crucial for the Karang Taruna organization, as they complement each other and become the main capital for creating sustainable change through various programs and activities. This aligns with Ambar T. (2017), who states that "self-sufficiency will be marked by the community's ability to form initiatives, create new things, and innovate within their environment." Based on this theory, it can be concluded that youth independence will be achieved when they have the ability to take initiative, be creative, and innovate within their community.

3. The Process of Becoming a Self-Sufficient Community

Based on interviews and observations, the Karang Taruna in Kertasari Village lacks a specific and focused training program to help youth become self-sufficient. This has led to a low level of readiness among youth to build their capacity for the long term, whether it's intellectual, skill-based, or related to social entrepreneurship.

The obstacles include limited access to information and a lack of consistency in following the programs that are available. Some youth are also hampered by difficult economic conditions, which causes them to focus more on personal economic needs rather than voluntary social activities. This situation is a challenge for Karang Taruna as it tries to guide and assist youth in achieving independence, both individually and as a part of the community.

Despite these obstacles, the Karang Taruna has made efforts to address them. These include intensive, personal approaches, especially to youth who are still passive and uninvolved. Mentoring is also done gradually so that youth feel personally guided and supported. Additionally, the Karang Taruna tries to involve youth in every activity to give them a sense of purpose and provides special guidance to new members to build their self-confidence and a sense of responsibility toward their community.

The process of becoming a self-sufficient community is very important for the Karang Taruna organization. It's about empowering youth to become independent community members and requires support from various aspects and an intensive approach to passive youth. This aligns with the theory from Eko Sudarmanto (2020), who states that "the definition of community empowerment is an effort to improve the dignity and status of certain groups of citizens who are in conditions of poverty and backwardness." Based on this theory, it can be concluded that to achieve a self-sufficient community, youth need to be given opportunities to develop strong intellectual and practical skills.

E. CONCLUSION

Based on research into youth empowerment by the Karang Taruna organization in Kertasari Village, Ciamis District, Ciamis Regency, the process is not yet fully optimal. However, there has been some progress, with findings gathered through interviews with six informants, observations, and documentation. The study used the theory of empowerment by Ambar T. (2017).

Several obstacles were identified, including low interest and participation from youth, a lack of awareness and internal motivation to get actively involved, and limited resources such as training facilities, funding, and professional mentors. Additionally, young people tend to be passive, lack self-confidence, and do not have a strong desire to learn or a clear sense of purpose.

To address this, the Karang Taruna organization is making several efforts. These include a personal approach to engaging youth, using social media to share information and improve communication, and adjusting training schedules to be more flexible to avoid conflicts with young people's daily activities. The organization has also begun to create a more relaxed and open discussion environment to make youth feel comfortable sharing their ideas. Giving them space for self-expression and direct involvement in planning and executing activities are also key strategies to increase their sense of responsibility and self-confidence.

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