

The Effectiveness of the Short-Term Youth Empowerment Program: A Critique of the Duration and Impact of PMMD

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Abstract: This paper examines the effectiveness of the Independent Youth Building Village (PMMD) Program initiated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Indonesia, with a particular focus on the challenges arising from the short duration of its implementation. Although the PMMD aims to empower rural youth to actively participate in village development through leadership and entrepreneurship training, the limited duration of the program often becomes an obstacle to achieving sustainable impacts. Using a qualitative method, including in-depth interviews and online written questionnaires with PMMD participants in the DIY Province (2017–2018), this study analyzes the short-term benefits and critiques the ability of short-term interventions to foster sustainable youth leadership. The findings indicate that, while there was an increase in skills and self-confidence in the short term, the limited duration of the program hindered the sustainability of these outcomes. Recommendations include extending the program duration and providing ongoing support after the program officially concludes.

Keywords: Youth Empowerment; PMMD; Rural Development; Program Duration; Leadership; Rural Youth.

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I. INTRODUCTION

One of the main challenges that arises is the increasing unemployment rate and the migration of young people from rural areas to cities. Based on migration trend data recorded by BPS, it is projected that by 2035, 66.6% of Indonesia's population will live in urban areas, which will automatically result in a decrease in the rural population. This migration is not only driven by the desire to seek employment but also by the perception that cities offer more economic opportunities, higher education, and a modern lifestyle. Unfortunately, the individuals making this migration often lack the necessary skills, resulting in many rural youth being trapped in informal jobs and highly vulnerable to economic exploitation.

According to Grindle (1980), the success of public policy implementation is heavily influenced by the alignment between the policy content and the social and economic conditions of its target environment. In this context, an approach that focuses solely on short-term interventions without considering the social dynamics and local capacities is at risk of creating unsustainable programs. This is a major critique of various government programs, including the Independent Youth Building Village Program (PMMD),

which, despite its substantial ideas, is often constrained by the short implementation period.

The PMMD program, launched by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in 2017, aims to respond to the challenges posed by the demographic bonus by harnessing the potential of rural youth as agents of change. PMMD emphasizes the importance of strengthening leadership capacity, social entrepreneurship, and the active participation of youth in village development. In its implementation, PMMD provides space for youth aged 16–30 to identify local potential, initiate productive activities, and encourage broader participation from the community, especially youth. Unlike previous programs like PSP3, which targeted only graduates, PMMD opens opportunities for rural youth with at least a high school education to participate.

However, the short duration of PMMD raises a significant question: Is the limited time enough to transform youth into local leaders capable of driving collective participation and leading village transformation? This study notes that although many PMMD participants experienced personal capacity improvements, many were ultimately unable to continue their initiatives after the program ended due to the lack of ongoing support from village governments or long-term mentoring systems.

Theoretically, programs like PMMD require a process known as transformational leadership, where leaders focus not only on achieving short-term goals but also on creating long-term visions, fostering participation, and generating structural changes within their communities. According to Bass and Riggio (2006), transformational leadership ideally includes processes such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. In the context of PMMD, this process cannot be fully realized if youth are only involved for a short period, without continuous development and integration into the community.

Therefore, it is crucial to reassess the planning and implementation strategies of the PMMD program, considering how this intervention can become part of a long-term village development strategy. This study aims to explore how well PMMD has addressed these challenges, focusing on its implementation and impact in the DIY Province during the 2017–2018 period.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

➤ *Youth Empowerment and Development*

Youth empowerment is an integral process that is not only related to the enhancement of individual capacities but is also closely linked to strengthening the social structures that enable youth to actively participate in development. In this context, empowerment should not be understood solely as training or skill development activities, but rather as a transformational effort that encompasses psychological, social, economic, and political dimensions. Suharto (2010) states that empowerment is an effort to increase the power of vulnerable groups so that they can meet their basic needs, access productive resources, and engage in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

In this study, youth empowerment in rural areas is considered a crucial element in building self-reliant and competitive villages. Programs such as PMMD view youth not only as beneficiaries but also as active agents of change who are capable of initiating and managing development activities. Youth are expected to be catalysts for change within society through the utilization of local potential, the development of village economies, and the enhancement of social solidarity by participating in various community activities.

According to Edelman et al. (2004), Empowerment of youth encompasses character development and leadership, which can only be attained if young individuals are provided the opportunity to engage actively in the development process; for, similar to adults, youth learn effectively through active participation and learning occurs in various types of settings and situations. Empowered youth should not merely be tasked with carrying out administrative duties or one-time projects, but should also be involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of policies at the local level. This is further reinforced by Law No. 40 of 2009 on Youth, which mandates the development of youth potential,

character, and responsibility through inclusive and participatory approaches.

➤ *Short-Term vs. Long-Term Interventions*

In development literature, short-term interventions are often seen as quick solutions to complex problems. However, in the context of youth empowerment, this approach is often insufficient to produce deep and sustainable change. This study shows that PMMD participants exhibited high enthusiasm, increased popularity, and gained positive experiences during the program, but many of them faced difficulties in continuing their initiatives after the program ended due to the lack of ongoing support, limited resources, and low support from village governments.

This aligns with the conceptual framework of policy implementation articulated by Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980), which posits that the achievement of statutory objectives hinges critically on three interdependent factors: (1) the tractability of the problem (e.g., availability of valid causal theories and manageable behavioral change); (2) the statutory structuring of implementation (e.g., unambiguous directives, hierarchical integration of institutions, and allocation of adequate resources); and (3) the dynamic interplay of non-statutory variables (e.g., sustained political support from sovereigns, constituency groups, and the commitment/leadership of implementing officials). Programs with short durations, such as PMMD, are particularly vulnerable to sustainability challenges because they do not have enough time to root themselves within local social structures. Additionally, changes in attitudes and behaviors—which are the primary goals of empowerment—require a longer period and continuous processes to foster new mindsets among youth.

According to Kets de Vries and Korotov (2010), initiatives that promise immediate outcomes frequently fail to foster enduring change, as authentic transformation necessitates prolonged effort, continual support, and avenues for practice and reflection. This perspective is echoed in the results of this study, wherein short-term programs such as PMMD, despite eliciting initial excitement and providing fundamental skills, encounter difficulties in achieving long-term impact absent ongoing follow-up mechanisms. Authentic empowerment and leadership development, especially among rural youth, demand long-term planning that incorporates regular training, mentorship, financial assistance, and cooperation with local governments. Only by amalgamating these components into a sustained framework can social transformation be truly achieved and preserved.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method to deeply understand the implementation of the Independent Youth Building Village (PMMD) Program conducted in the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY) in 2017–2018. This approach was chosen because the aim of the research is to explore the subjective experiences of participants, the context of the program's implementation, and the social meaning embedded in the

youth empowerment process in rural areas. According to Stake (2005), case studies allow researchers to gain a deep contextual understanding of the phenomenon being studied, particularly in answering the questions of "how" and "why."

As outlined, the research design integrates an interpretive approach with a constructivist paradigm, which views social reality as a result of social constructions formed through interactions between individuals and their environment. Therefore, it is essential for the researcher to explore the views and interpretations of PMMD participants regarding the meaning of their involvement in the program, as well as how they perceive the changes that occurred during and after the program's implementation.

➤ *Data Collection Techniques*

To obtain comprehensive data, the researcher employed several data collection techniques as follows:

- In-depth Interviews
- Written Interviews (Triangulation)
- Online Questionnaires for Stakeholders

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

➤ *Urban Population and Dependency Ratio Trends in DIY Province*

The data presented in Table 1 elucidates important demographic trends in the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY) over a time frame extending from 1990 to 2035. As depicted in the table, the urban population in DIY has consistently increased throughout the years, with forecasts suggesting that by 2035, approximately 81.3% of the

population will inhabit urban areas. This transformation reflects a wider trend of urbanization within Indonesia, propelled by elements such as economic opportunities, accessibility to education, and contemporary lifestyles in urban centers. The growth of the urban population is anticipated to escalate from 44.4% in 1990 to 81.3% by 2035, signifying a remarkable alteration in the demographic structure of the province.

In contrast, the Government Dependency Ratio for DIY Province, which quantifies the proportion of the population that relies on the working-age population (including children and the elderly), reveals a comparatively moderate increase during the same timeframe. In 1990, the dependency ratio was recorded at 55.1%, which diminished over the subsequent decades until it reached 44.2% in 2000. Nevertheless, beginning in 2010, the ratio has experienced a gradual ascent, with a projected rise to 48.4% by 2035. This indicates that while the working-age population in DIY continues to expand, the increasing percentage of elderly citizens and dependent youth is beginning to impose greater pressure on this demographic group.

The rise in both urbanization and the dependency ratio signifies that while urban areas are accommodating a larger share of the population, the socio-economic framework in rural areas may encounter obstacles in regard to sustaining economic growth and upholding social services. These demographic changes underscore the pressing requirement for policy interventions to guarantee that rural regions can adapt to the escalating demands of a more urbanized population, including the provision of sustainable livelihoods and leadership development initiatives, such as PMMD, that empower youth to instigate change within their communities.

Table 1 Urban Population of DIY (Urbanization Projection) and Government Dependency Ratio of DIY

Year	1971	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035
Urban Population of DIY (Urbanization Projection)	16,3%	22,1%	44.4%	57.6%	66.4%	70.5%	74.6%	78%	81,3%	84,1%
Government Dependency Ratio of DIY	82%	69%	55%	45%	45.8%	44,9%	45.6%	46,8%	47,7%	48.4%

Source: Compiled from Various BPS Data)

➤ *Short-Term Benefits Experienced*

The findings of this study suggest that the Pemuda Mandiri Membangun Desa (PMMD) Program resulted in significant positive effects in the short term, particularly for youth who were actively engaged. A notable benefit consistently expressed by participants was the substantial enhancement of self-confidence. Many reported a newfound ease in public speaking, leading peer groups, and engaging in village-level social initiatives—areas in which they had previously felt insufficiently equipped to participate. This improvement in self-efficacy, although grounded in practical skill development, signifies more than just a technical advancement; it represents an initial phase in the process of psychosocial transformation among rural youth who had frequently perceived themselves as marginal to local development discussions.

The program's design—which focused on field-based engagement—enabled participants to apply theoretical knowledge to real-life situations, thereby reinforcing a sense of competence and relevance. Managerial skills such as organizing, budgeting, coordinating with stakeholders, and mobilizing community members were honed through practical involvement. Participants reported organizing local initiatives such as women's craft workshops, environmental clean-up activities, and youth-led sports events, including the formation of futsal teams. While these initiatives may seem modest in scale, they played a vital role in allowing participants to experiment with leadership roles within a supportive, yet challenging, community context.

In addition to individual skill acquisition, the short-term outcomes included the establishment of localized networks

and a heightened emotional connection to their communities. Several participants indicated that for the first time, they felt "seen" and "respected" as change-makers within their own villages—a transformation from prior roles that were often passive or externally imposed. This sense of empowerment aligns with Suharto's (2010) definition of empowerment as a multidimensional process that enables individuals to fulfill their basic needs, access productive resources, and engage in decision-making processes that impact their lives.

However, notwithstanding these positive advancements, the research also highlights an important caveat: the benefits realized were predominantly confined within the temporal and structural limits of the program. Many participants emphasized that once the program ended, the momentum they had generated started to fade. There was inadequate time to institutionalize their initiatives, achieve complete community support, or secure long-term support mechanisms—elements that are essential for sustainable transformation. This resonates with Grindle's (1980) observations regarding the misalignment between policy design and environmental readiness, wherein programs are initiated with lofty social goals but lack sufficient frameworks for continuity.

Furthermore, several participants revealed that project implementation often felt expedited, with a greater emphasis placed on achieving output targets (e. g. , number of activities conducted) rather than on fostering process-oriented outcomes (e. g. , community ownership, capacity transfer). This operational pressure impeded their ability to iterate, adapt, and refine their methods—crucial aspects of authentic community-based development. Consequently, while the short-term benefits of PMMD are both evident and significant, they remain, to a considerable extent, fragmentary and precarious without an enduring framework of support.

These findings indicate a larger concern regarding youth empowerment interventions: in the absence of sufficient time, mentorship, and integration into the village governance framework, potential instances of leadership and innovation may transform into transient moments rather than triggers for sustainable change. In the words of one participant:

"Yes, it worked. However, the youth complained that there was no follow-up from the government, and so, until now, it feels as though the enthusiasm that once ignited their potential has faded, and the abilities they could only channel through the PMMD program are now dormant."

This statement embodies the program's dual effect: it fostered confidence and initiative, yet left participants managing a post-program environment that was predominantly ill-equipped to facilitate their ongoing development.

➤ *Challenges Due to Limited Duration*

The short duration of the Pemuda Mandiri Membangun Desa (PMMD) program emerged as one of the primary challenges in achieving sustainable and long-term change in

the communities where it was implemented. The majority of participants reported that, although they gained new skills, new positions, and valuable insights, there was insufficient time to apply the lessons learned on a larger, more impactful scale. This limitation in time resulted in what can be described as "shallow changes," where the outcomes were noticeable at the individual level but failed to translate into deep-rooted, structural shifts within the social and economic frameworks of the villages involved.

In the context of the PMMD program, the notion of "shallow change" can be interpreted as the gap between the immediate benefits experienced by participants and the broader, long-term impact that the program had hoped to generate. According to Grindle (1980), the alignment between policy content and the target community's social and economic environment is critical for the success and sustainability of public policies. This observation is directly applicable to PMMD, where the short timeframe hindered participants' ability to integrate their newly acquired leadership and entrepreneurship skills into their communities in a way that would have long-lasting effects. While the program provided participants with essential tools for personal development and social engagement, these benefits were often limited by the lack of time to nurture the initiatives that were started during the program.

Further emphasizing this point, this research notes that participants expressed a deep desire to extend the impact of the program beyond its limited duration. For example, some participants aimed to establish small community-based businesses or expand upon the training initiatives they had started. However, the constraints of time made it challenging for them to plan and implement these projects sustainably. This perspective aligns with the insights provided by Kets de Vries and Korotov (2010), who contend that leadership development—and, by extension, initiatives striving for lasting change—cannot depend on quick-fix solutions. They assert that programs that promise immediate results seldom yield lasting outcomes, as genuine transformation necessitates sustained effort, continuous support, and opportunities for practice and reflection, without which endeavors risk remaining superficial and disconnected from the community's fabric.

The phenomenon of "wilt before it blossoms," as described in Indonesian, aptly captures the transient nature of the impact felt by the participants. Although they experienced bursts of enthusiasm and achievement during the program, without continued support from external actors—such as the village government or other stakeholders—their projects and leadership initiatives gradually faded. Zeldin, Christens, and Powers (2013) assert that sustainable youth empowerment necessitates continuous partnerships between youths and adults that promote joint decision-making and community integration, thereby pointing out the shortcomings of transient interventions such as PMMD. This scenario highlights the necessity for extended strategies that merge short-term interventions with sustainable, ongoing support systems to guarantee the enduring success of youth empowerment initiatives.

Moreover, the challenge of sustaining greater community participation after the program ended became another critical issue. Many participants reported that, while they had successfully mobilized some level of engagement during the program, they struggled to maintain this commitment once the program concluded. The absence of certainty and a clear continuation plan post-program meant that participants faced difficulties in ensuring that the changes they had initiated were maintained. Despite having acquired valuable leadership skills, participants felt that without the ongoing support of the village government and community members, their ability to drive lasting change was severely restricted.

This issue corresponds with the framework articulated by Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980), which asserts that the success of policy implementation depends upon three interrelated factors: (1) statutory structure (clear mandates, adequate resource allocation, and integrated institutional hierarchies); (2) tractability of the problem (valid causal theories, measurable behavioral change); and (3) sustained political support (actor commitment, constituent alliances, and resource stability). Importantly, effective policy is not solely a product of legal design but arises from a dynamic interaction between formal institutional structures, the complexity of the targeted issue, and political resilience in navigating socio-economic changes. This framework emphasizes that lasting policy outcomes necessitate the harmonization of statutory objectives with adaptive governance and stakeholder alignment. In the case of PMMD, the lack of such support structures after the program ended highlights a key weakness in its design: although it created initial momentum for change, it did not equip participants with the necessary resources or institutional backing to continue their efforts in the long term.

In conclusion, while the PMMD program achieved notable short-term success in empowering youth and enhancing their leadership and entrepreneurial skills, its short duration prevented these benefits from fully taking root in the local social and economic fabric. To address this gap, future programs should consider extending their duration and incorporating post-program mentorship and community involvement to ensure that participants' efforts continue to grow and yield sustainable impacts.

➤ *Stakeholder Perspectives*

Information gathered from village officials, committee members, the community, and program partners provided invaluable insights into the perceptions and experiences surrounding the Pemuda Mandiri Membangun Desa (PMMD) program. While the program received favorable evaluations from stakeholders, a significant concern was expressed regarding the limited duration of the intervention. Numerous stakeholders observed that the short timeframe of the program hindered the youth's capacity to genuinely promote sustainable and impactful change within their communities.

Village officials, in particular, acknowledged that PMMD injected new energy into the youth, motivating them

to partake in social activities and assume leadership roles within the community. Participants' engagement in local initiatives, such as organizing small-scale projects or mobilizing youth groups, served as a clear indication of the enthusiasm and potential that the program helped to unleash. However, a critical observation made by these stakeholders was the necessity for enhanced collaboration between the village government and the youth to guarantee the long-term success of these initiatives. Many village officials emphasized the significance of ongoing support to "nurture" the momentum generated during the program. The absence of such support, along with inadequate funding and resource allocation, was identified as a major obstacle to the sustainability of the initiatives.

This reflection resonates with findings from Grindle (1980), who posited that the success of public policy interventions relies not only on their design but also on the congruence of the policy's duration with the social and economic realities of the target community. In the case of PMMD, the brief program duration did not effectively integrate the intervention into the local institutional and economic frameworks in a meaningful manner. Stakeholders, while acknowledging the immediate advantages, voiced concerns that the youth's newfound enthusiasm and leadership skills would not thrive without institutional mechanisms in place to sustain and guide their efforts.

The phenomenon of initiative termination following program completion exemplifies a classic challenge in policy implementation, as articulated within the framework established by Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980). The inability to sustain participant-driven initiatives highlights the fragility of behavioral compliance when interventions lack statutory structures that institutionalize sustained resource allocation, inter-institutional hierarchical integration, or embedded participatory frameworks. In essence, the disintegration of post-program initiatives represents not solely a technical failure but rather a manifestation of misalignment among policy design, political dynamics, and adaptive capacity—a core tenet emphasized by Sabatier and Mazmanian in their assertion that effective policy must evolve from static mandates into dynamic, living processes. In the absence of such frameworks, the changes initiated during PMMD were at risk of dissipating, raising a critical inquiry: Can sustainable change be expected if the intervention is only short-term?

This concern directly challenges the concept of "impact" achieved through short-term programs. Although PMMD provided youth with essential leadership and entrepreneurial skills, many participants articulated frustration regarding the lack of post-program support. The absence of a post-program support system hinders participants from realizing the full potential of their efforts. The short-term nature of PMMD indicated that while participants were able to initiate change, there was no structured system to ensure that this change would persist once the program concluded. This prompts the question of whether we are merely creating an illusion of change, temporarily empowering youth without establishing the means for long-term growth and leadership.

Reflecting on this, this research emphasizes that the true assessment of an effective youth empowerment program resides not only in the initial cultivation of skills but also in the ability to integrate these skills within the larger social and economic frameworks of the community. In the absence of mechanisms to perpetuate the enthusiasm, ideas, and initiatives generated during the program, the leadership fostered through PMMD risks being ephemeral, resulting in youth feeling alienated from the community they once aspired to transform.

In conclusion, while PMMD effectively ignited enthusiasm and leadership potential among youth, its brief duration did not guarantee the sustainability of the outcomes. The lack of ongoing support from the village government and the absence of structured follow-up highlights the necessity for future programs to extend their influence by incorporating post-program mentorship, securing funding, and nurturing stronger collaborations with local governance structures. These components are vital for fostering youth leadership and empowering sustainable community development.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the research and theoretical contemplations, the following strategic recommendations are proposed to enhance the sustainability and efficacy of the PMMD program moving forward:

➤ *Extension of Program Duration*

One of the primary criticisms voiced by participants and stakeholders pertains to the duration of the program, which is perceived as overly short. Drawing on the experiences of PMMD participants in the DIY Province, the implementation period of merely a few months is regarded as inadequate for cultivating robust social relations, effectively managing projects, and fostering strong leadership. Consequently, it is advised that the duration of the PMMD program be extended to a minimum of 12 months. With this timeframe, participants will possess sufficient opportunity to comprehend the village context, establish networks, socially acclimatize, and implement projects gradually with ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

➤ *Post-Program Mentorship*

Numerous PMMD participants exhibited considerable enthusiasm and initiative during the program; however, they experienced confusion following its conclusion. The research indicates that the absence of a post-program support mechanism hinders PMMD alumni from maintaining the momentum of change they had initiated. Therefore, there is a necessity for a continuous mentorship system for a duration of at least 6–12 months after the conclusion of the program, ensuring that the initiatives participants have commenced are relatively established and capable of sustaining independently. This mentorship could encompass guidance from local leaders, follow-up training, PMMD alumni forums, or business mentoring from professionals within their respective fields.

➤ *Additional Funding Support and Village Government Assistance*

Inadequate funding has been identified as one of the primary obstacles for participants in fully actualizing their ideas. The study revealed that, although participants received seed funding, the amount was comparatively limited and insufficient to develop sustainable projects. Hence, it is recommended to augment funding support—either through village funds, co-funding initiatives with local partners, or assistance from BUMDes or local CSR programs.

Furthermore, active participation from the village government is of paramount importance. The village government should be engaged from the inception of program planning and encouraged to extend administrative, logistical, and moral support to PMMD participants. In accordance with the Village Law, youth involvement is a requirement that can be integrated through the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJM Desa) and the Village Budget (APBDesa). This support is crucial to ensure that projects initiated by youth do not devolve into transient activities, but are genuinely embedded within the long-term village development framework.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Pemuda Mandiri Membangun Desa (PMMD) program illustrated its capacity to empower rural youth by enhancing their leadership abilities, self-confidence, and entrepreneurial skills in the short term. However, the limited duration of the program emerged as a significant constraint, obstructing the sustainability of these positive results. While the program successfully sparked enthusiasm and initiative, numerous participants found it challenging to sustain momentum after the program due to the absence of ongoing support and resources. This underscores the necessity for a more long-term, integrated strategy that incorporates continuous mentorship, sufficient funding, and stronger collaboration with local governments. Only through such sustained endeavors can authentic and enduring social transformation be realized, ensuring that the leadership potential developed in youth does not diminish but rather thrives and contributes to the continual advancement of their communities.

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