

The Role of the Guidance Studio (SB) as an Effort to Fulfill the Educational Rights of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Kuala Lumpur

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ABSTRACT

Access to proper education is still a structural problem for Indonesian migrant children in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The absence of immigration documents, administrative barriers, and limited family economic conditions has caused most migrant children to be unable to access formal education equally. This study aims to analyze the role of Guidance Studio as a community-based non-formal education program to ensure educational rights for Indonesian migrant children. This study uses a cumulative case study approach. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation during the author's direct involvement as a volunteer teacher at the Guidance Studio. The results of the study show that the Guidance Studio plays a significant role in providing access to alternative education through flexible, context-based learning, strengthening basic literacy, and shaping the character and national identity of migrant children. Despite legal and resource limitations, the Guidance Studio remains committed to becoming a safe and inclusive space that ensures the fulfillment of children's educational rights. These findings affirm the importance of community-based alternative education as a strategy in reducing inequality in access to education for marginalized groups of migrant children.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as an important foundation for national development, not only in increasing intellectual capacity but also in shaping character and humanity. From a philosophical perspective, Ki Hajar Dewantara emphasizes education as a process of human liberation and holistic development, rather than merely the transfer of knowledge, enabling individuals to achieve well-being and dignity [1], [2]. This perspective highlights the emancipatory role of education, particularly for marginalized and vulnerable populations such as migrant children [3], [4].

The Indonesian constitution guarantees the right of children to education, a commitment that aligns with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which affirms that education is a universal right regardless of citizenship or legal status [5], [6], [7]. However, in practice, children of Indonesian migrant workers who do not have official documents (do not have official documents to live in another country for working) often experience exclusion from the formal education system in the destination country of migration [8], [7]. UNICEF confirms that stateless children are the most vulnerable group to educational exclusion due to administrative barriers, policy discrimination, and the absence of legally recognized identity documents [9], [10]. In Kuala Lumpur, the lack of population documents, such as birth certificates and valid residence permits, is a major administrative barrier that limits migrant children's access to school [11]. This condition not only has an impact on the interruption of children's learning processes, but also increases their vulnerability to social marginalization, limited social mobility, and uncertainty about the future education of Indonesian migrant workers [12], [8].

In this situation, Guidance Studio (SB), as a non-formal education program, serves as an alternative that plays an important role in bridging the gap in access to education [13]. Non-formal education is defined as structured, planned learning activities carried out outside the formal school system [14], [15]. In migration destination countries, mainly Malaysia, thousands of Indonesian children live with their families without guaranteed access to adequate education [16], [17]. Legal recognition and official documentation greatly affect the educational opportunities of children of migrant workers, especially for the children of Indonesian migrant workers [18], [19].

Empirical data show that about 53,000 Indonesian migrant children live in Sabah [20], [12], Malaysia, and about 3,000 children in Sarawak, as reported in several previous studies [21]. Meanwhile, based on the results of interviews with the manager of the Guidance Studio (SB), who is also a staff member at the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia (KBRI) Malaysia, it is estimated that there are around 3,000 Indonesian migrant children without official documents living or being born in the Kuala Lumpur area [22]. This condition shows that access to formal education for Indonesian migrant children is still limited, especially due to administrative, economic, and citizenship status constraints. In this context, the Guidance Studio (SB) is part of a community-based non-formal education unit formed through the Indonesian migrant non-governmental initiative, and serves as an alternative educational space for children who cannot access formal schooling [23], [24].

This condition confirms the existence of structural problems in the fulfillment of the educational rights of Indonesian migrant children in Kuala Lumpur that have not been fully addressed by existing formal education mechanisms [25]. Departing from these problems, this study seeks to provide an empirical understanding of efforts to include the educational rights of Indonesian migrant workers in Kuala Lumpur through non-formal education channels. In particular, this study examines the role of the Guidance Studio as an alternative learning space that addresses the limitations of access to formal education caused by administrative barriers. Using a qualitative approach, this study examines the learning practices, forms of educational assistance, and learning experiences of migrant children

involved in Guidance Studio activities, with a view to understanding the contribution of non-formal education to addressing the problem of access to education for migrant children.

Theoretically, the problem of limited access to education experienced by migrant workers' children can be understood through the perspective of the right to education and inclusive education. The right to education is a universal human right and cannot be limited by a person's citizenship or legal status [26]. In the context of vulnerable groups, non-formal education is seen as an alternative intervention that helps bridge the penetration of the formal education system [27]. In addition, the theory of *Positive Youth Development* emphasizes that a supportive learning environment, safe social relationships, and ongoing mentoring support children's cognitive, social, and emotional development [28]. Thus, the Guidance Studio (SB) can be understood as a pedagogical and social space with the potential to holistically support the fulfillment of the educational rights of Indonesian migrant workers.

Although the Guidance Studio (SB) has played a role in providing basic academic instruction while supporting the social and personal development of migrant children through an approach that is in line with the theory of Positive Youth Development (PYD), scientific studies that specifically examine the roles, challenges, and educational impacts produced by the Guidance Studio in Kuala Lumpur are still relatively limited [18], [29], [30]. Most previous research has focused on aspects of migration policy and migrant workers' access to formal education, so that community-based non-formal education practices such as Guidance Studios (SB) have received little attention in academic studies.

A number of previous studies have discussed the fulfillment of the educational rights of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia through non-formal education pathways. Hidayat (2023) highlights the role of the Guidance Studio (SB) in ensuring access to education for migrant children from a human rights perspective. However, his study still focuses on normative and policy aspects without an in-depth review of daily learning practices and children's subjective experiences. Thus, the study has not described how the process of non-formal education is carried out concretely at the community level [18]. Another study by Sinta Wahyu Lutfiyah et al. (2024) shows the effectiveness of *Community Learning Centers* (CLC) in strengthening access to education in Johor, Malaysia. However, the relatively formal and structured institutional context makes these findings not fully representative of the dynamics of community-based non-formal education, such as Guidance Studios that grew out of migrant non-governmental initiatives [31].

Research conducted by Wulan, Muslihuddin, and Wijayanti revealed various structural, social, and psychological barriers experienced by the children of undocumented Indonesian migrant workers in Sabah, Malaysia. However, the study emphasizes identifying weaknesses and offering policy recommendations, without specifically examining the role of non-formal education at the community level as a real strategy for addressing the limitations of educational access [32]. Meanwhile, Qomariyah et al. Affirming the contribution of the Guidance Studio in improving the basic academic abilities of migrant children, although the focus of research is still limited to achieving learning outcomes and has not explored in depth the mentoring process and children's learning experience from the perspective of students [33]. Putri Hidayat et al. (2025) then broadened the perspective by positioning the Guidance Studio as an instrument of community-based educational

diplomacy. However, this study focuses more on the role of the policy state, so pedagogical practices at the grassroots level are not empirically explained [16].

Based on previous research studies, it can be concluded that although non-formal education, especially Guidance Studios, has been recognized as an important solution in providing educational rights for Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia, there is still a research gap related to empirical studies that in-depth review learning practices, educational mentoring processes, and subjective experiences of children as students, especially in the context of urban areas such as Kuala Lumpur.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the role and contribution of Guidance Studio (SB), a community-based non-formal education program, in fulfilling the educational rights of Indonesian migrant workers in Kuala Lumpur. In particular, this study aims to examine how the Guidance Studio (SB) functions as an alternative learning space for migrant children who experience limited access to formal education due to administrative constraints and immigration status, identify the challenges faced in the implementation of non-formal education, and understand the practice of educational assistance and children's learning experiences in the context of the Guidance Studio (SB). This study aims to provide an empirical picture of the role of non-formal education in addressing access to education for children of Indonesian migrant workers in destination countries.

This research is expected to make an academic and practical contribution to the study of the education of Indonesian migrant workers abroad. Academically, this research is expected to enrich the context of providing educational rights for migrant children who experience limited access to formal education due to immigration status. In practice, the results of this research are expected to inform Guidance Studio managers, educators, and related policymakers in developing a more inclusive and sustainable educational assistance strategy for the children of Indonesian migrant workers in Kuala Lumpur.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the role of the Guidance Studio (SB) as a non-formal education initiative in fulfilling the educational rights of Indonesian migrant workers in Kuala Lumpur. The qualitative approach was chosen to gain a contextual, in-depth understanding of the learning process, student experience, and social dynamics in the studio environment [34]. Researchers act as the primary instruments of research through direct involvement as volunteer teachers, thereby enabling reflective, process-oriented data mining.

The research is carried out chronologically and systematically through several structured stages to ensure scientific accuracy and transparency [25]. The research procedure starts with the researcher's initial involvement, the identification of the learning context, data collection, data reduction, thematic categorization, and ends with interpretation and drawing conclusions [35]. The flow of the research is presented visually in Figure 1. At the same time, the data sources and data collection techniques in this study are summarized in Table 1, including participatory observation, researchers' reflective notes, and documentation of learning activities to enhance data credibility through triangulation.

Table 1. Data Sources and Data Collection Techniques

No	Data Source	Technique
1	Learning activities	Participatory observation
2	Researcher experience	Reflective notes
3	Supporting records	Documentation

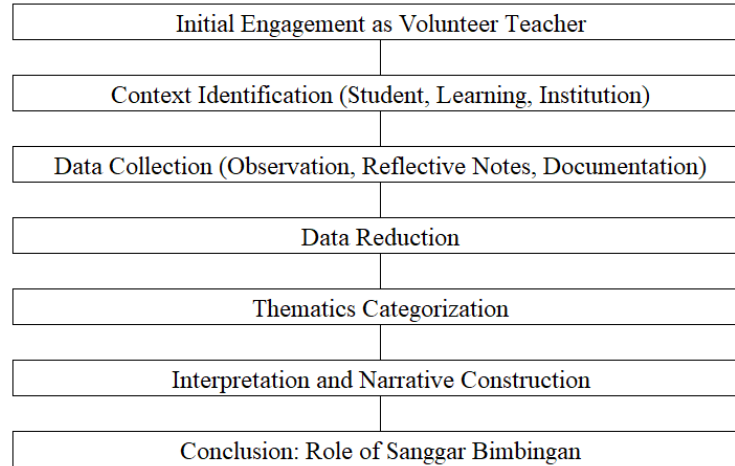


Figure 1. Research Procedure

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

3.1.1 The Condition of Indonesian Migrant Workers’ Children in Kuala Lumpur

This section presents the results of research obtained based on the author’s direct involvement as a volunteer teacher at the Guidance Studio (SB) in PPLK and KKN activities in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The research findings were obtained through participatory observation of Indonesian migrant children and informal discussions with the manager of the Guidance Studio (SB). This empirical experience is the main source of understanding the living conditions and educational challenges faced by Indonesian migrant children who are not reached by the formal education system in Kuala Lumpur.

The results of observations show that most of the children of Indonesian migrant workers in Kuala Lumpur live in limited social conditions. Although not all of them live in slums, they generally live in densely populated neighborhoods that are relatively hidden and far from main road access. Economic factors do not solely cause this condition; it is a survival strategy for migrant families without official documents to avoid inspection by local authorities. Malaysia implements a strict population administration system that requires every individual to have a clear citizenship status.

One of the main factors that causes Indonesian migrant children not have official documents is the entry of their parents into Malaysian territory through non-procedural channels. Most parents work in the informal sector without valid work visas or residence permits and then remain for a long time. In many cases, the child’s birth is not recorded in the Malaysian administrative system due to limited access to health services or fear of reporting to immigration. On the other hand, the recording of absence from birth also means these children do not have birth certificates or Indonesian citizenship documents. This

situation leaves them in a state without a clear administrative status, so they are not legally recognized by either their country of residence or their parents' country of origin.

The absence of these official documents has a direct impact on the disconnection of migrant workers' children's access to basic rights, especially formal education. In addition, observations show that this condition also causes psychological pressure in children's daily lives. One of the managers of the Guidance Studio (SB) who lives in the neighborhood revealed that children often show a frightened response when they hear police sirens and try to find a hiding place. Children of primary school age have understood that their existence is risky and can have legal consequences for their families. This situation shows that the administrative status of the non-qak only has an impact on the educational aspect, but also affects the sense of security and the social and emotional development of migrant children.

The conditions experienced by Indonesian migrant children in Kuala Lumpur reflect the inequality of access to education experienced by vulnerable groups. Hidden lives, limited space for movement, and fear of aparat show that children's basic rights, especially the right to security and education, have not been optimally met. These findings are in line with various studies showing that undocumented migrant children are at high risk of experiencing social marginalization and limited access to basic services, including education and health.

In addition, the educational challenges faced by migrant children do not only occur in the destination country, but also continue when they return to Indonesia. Many children of migrant workers born and raised abroad lack the administrative documents required by the national education system, making it difficult for them to continue their formal education. This condition shows that the educational problems of migrant children are structural and cross-country, and require an alternative approach that is adaptive to their situation.

The Role of Guidance Studios in the Fulfillment of Education Rights

Based on participatory observation, the Guidance Studio (SB) serves as a non-formal education space accessible to children of Indonesian migrant workers who are not accepted into formal schools. The Guidance Studio is managed independently by the migrant community and volunteers, and is the only learning alternative for most children without official documents.

Learning activities take place in simple and flexible conditions. The study room is integrated with the volunteers' living area, and the children learn by sitting on the floor using a plastic table and a simple whiteboard. Although facilities are limited, the learning process runs regularly and is structured. The children showed high enthusiasm for learning activities at the Guidance Studio (SB). Based on observation, they are consistently present and often arrive early before learning begins. The material is delivered through a learning



Figure 2. Learning Activities for Children of Indonesian Migrant Workers at the Guidance Studio, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

approach that involves playing, singing, telling stories, and drawing, creating a fun and unburdensome learning atmosphere.

In addition to serving as a learning room, the Guidance Studio (SB) also provides a psychologically safe place for children of migrant workers. The interaction between the volunteers and the children was warm and attentive, so the children felt accepted and protected. According to the studio manager, one of the studio's important roles is to support children in gaining access to formal education, as is the case with children in general. Some children who previously participated in studio learning were able to continue their education at Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL) with administrative assistance from the studio manager. These findings show that the Guidance Studio (SB) serves not only as a temporary learning space but also as a bridge to formal education for the children of Indonesian migrant workers.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study show that the educational problems of Indonesian migrant workers in Kuala Lumpur cannot be understood solely as individual or family problems, but as structural problems related to immigration status, the cross-border administrative system, and limited access to public services. The absence of official documents directly hinders the fulfillment of formal education rights, both in the destination country and upon children's return to Indonesia [9], [16], [18]. These findings reinforce the view that undocumented migrant children are in a position of dual vulnerability as children and as migrants, which significantly increases the risk of social exclusion in the education system [36], [37], [38].

In this context, the existence of the Guidance Studio (SB) can be understood as a form of community adaptation to the formal education system that is not yet inclusive for children of undocumented migrant workers. Non-formal education held at the Guidance Studio (SB) is not aligned with formal curriculum standards but focuses on fulfilling children's basic educational needs, such as reading, writing, arithmetic, drawing, religious learning, and the habituation to structured daily activities. This flexible, contextual, and needs-based learning pattern suggests that alternative education can be an effective strategy for ensuring the sustainability of the learning process for marginalized migrant children excluded from the formal education system [39].

These findings are in line with the principle of Human Rights (HAM), which affirms that education is a universal right for every child, without discrimination based on citizenship or administrative status [40], [41]. Affirming that the state has an obligation to ensure access to education for all children, including migrant children and stateless children [42]. However, in practice, there is still a gap between international legal norms and policy implementation on the ground. In this situation, the Guidance Studio (SB) serves as a grassroots initiative that seeks to close the gap in the fulfillment of the right to education through community-based educational practices.

Furthermore, the Guidance Studio (SB) is not only limited to providing non-formal learning spaces but also serves as a transition mechanism to formal education. Administrative assistance provided by the studio managers, including efforts to help children access Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL), shows that non-formal education can serve

as a structural bridge for migrant children to obtain equal educational rights. These findings reinforce the view that community actors have a strategic position in expanding access to education, especially when the state is not yet fully able to reach vulnerable groups.

From the perspective of Positive Youth Development (PYD), the educational practices implemented in the Guidance Studio (SB) reflect an environment that supports children's development holistically, a warm relationship between the teacher and the children in the studio, a fun learning approach, and the creation of a psychologically safe space contribute to strengthening children's basic competencies, confidence, and social connections [43], [44]. Such a learning environment is important for migrant children living under social pressure and legal uncertainty, as education serves not only as a means of knowledge transfer, but also as a medium of psychological recovery [45].

Overall, this study's results confirm that the Guidance Studio (SB) is an alternative education model responsive to the needs of Indonesian migrant workers in Kuala Lumpur. Although it has not been formally integrated into the national education system, the Guidance Studio (SB) can play a strategic role in ensuring children's educational rights by initiating a community-based approach at the institutional level, under the manager's ownership. Therefore, non-formal education models such as Guidance Studios (SB) need to be considered as part of an inclusive education policy strategy, especially in the context of protecting and fulfilling the educational rights of transnational migrant children.

4. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the limited access to education experienced by Indonesian migrant workers in Kuala Lumpur is a structural problem stemming from immigration status, the absence of administrative documents, and the lack of inclusion of the formal education system for undocumented migrant groups. In this context, the Guidance Studio (SB) has proven to be a basic education space for migrant children through a flexible, contextual, and focused learning approach tailored to children's needs.

The study's findings show that the Guidance Studio (SB) not only functions as a temporary alternative to formal schooling but also as a pedagogical and social space that supports the learning process, a sense of security, and children's social and emotional development. The role of companions carried out by managers and volunteers, including assisting access to Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL), places the Guidance Studio as a strategic bridge in providing educational rights for Indonesian migrant workers in migration destination countries.

Implicitly, this study contributes to the development of non-formal education studies and inclusive education by showing that community-based education initiatives have the real capacity to reduce inequality in educational access for marginalized children. These findings also emphasize the importance of collaboration among countries, migrant communities, and educational institutions for migrant children.

However, this study has limitations in the scope of the study that focuses on the regional context, namely the Guidance Studio in Kuala Lumpur, and uses a qualitative approach with the involvement of researchers as volunteer teachers. Therefore, the findings

of this study are not intended to be generalized widely, but rather to provide a contextual and empirical understanding of non-formal education practices in migrant environments.

Further research is suggested to examine the long-term impact of education in Guidance Studios on migrant children's educational desire. This includes when they return to Indonesia and the comparison of the effectiveness of various non-formal education models across different migration areas. In addition, quantitative or mixed-methods studies can be developed to strengthen empirical evidence on the contribution of non-formal education to migrant children's educational rights.

For the general public and policymakers, this research helps raise awareness that the provision of migrant children's educational rights does not depend solely on formal education systems but requires an adaptive, inclusive, and community-based alternative approach. Therefore, the Guidance Studio can be considered a model of best practice to ensure the educational rights of Indonesian migrant workers in the destination country.

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