



Strengthening Empathy and Social Awareness among University Students and Communities Based on the Values of Progressive Islam through the KKN Program in Tambakan Village, Kalikunting Hamlet

Siti Aisa Dukabain^{1✉}, Qais Zauqi ²

(1) STIT Muhammadiyah Bangil

sitiaisadukabain@gmail.com

(2) STIT Muhammadiyah Bangil

qaiszauqi8@gmail.com

Abstract

Progressive Islamic Education offers a holistic paradigm for community engagement through the integration of educational activities, economic empowerment, and social development in rural areas. This article elaborates on four principal pillars: strengthening religious literacy through teaching activities at Tambakan Elementary School, Qur'anic learning centers (TPQ), and madrasah diniyah; fostering creative economic empowerment through household handicraft training based on local wisdom; internalizing environmental awareness through the cleaning of mosques and prayer rooms; and enhancing public health awareness through nutritional education and social health services. This approach not only facilitates the transfer of knowledge but also shapes students' character as agents of social transformation in accordance with the ethos of productive and inclusive Progressive Islam. The findings indicate significant improvements in students' literacy, the economic independence of housewives, community social cohesion, and collective health awareness, all of which are reinforced by the spiritual values of Progressive Islam. This transformation has created a sustainable ecosystem that integrates spiritual, social, and material dimensions, while also serving as a replicable model for similar community engagement programs. The implications of this study enrich the discourse of contemporary Islamic education as a unifying force for Muslim civilization in the modern era.

Keywords: *Progressive Islamic Education, community empowerment, religious literacy, creative economy, social engagement*

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions in Indonesia play a crucial role in producing human resources who are not only academically accomplished but also possess social awareness and

a strong sense of responsibility toward various societal issues. This role is reflected in the concept of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, which positions community service as one of its primary pillars, alongside education and research activities. (Amalia, 2024) Through community service activities, higher education institutions are expected to bridge scientific knowledge with the realities of social life, thereby not merely focusing on fulfilling academic demands, but also contributing to the development of students' character and social personality.

Nevertheless, most studies on Community Service Programs (KKN) continue to focus primarily on program implementation and activity outcomes, such as the number of activities conducted, forms of assistance provided, and administrative achievements. Studies that specifically examine the process of strengthening students' empathy and social awareness through a progressive participatory approach remain relatively limited, particularly within rural contexts and communities such as Tambakan Village, Kalikunting Hamlet. Furthermore, community engagement research that operationally integrates Islamic values into the design and implementation of KKN programs is still relatively scarce, causing these values to function merely as normative foundations rather than being substantively applied in practice.

On the other hand, contemporary social dynamics indicate a growing decline in social awareness among younger generations, influenced by the rise of individualistic attitudes, the pressures of academic competition, and the strong influence of digital culture.(Demirören & Atılgan, 2023) These conditions require the presence of a social learning model capable of fostering students' empathy and social awareness in a concrete manner. In this context, community service based KKN serves as a strategic approach to addressing these challenges, as it positions students as active subjects who are directly involved in the dynamics of community social life.(Mariana et al., 2025)

The values of Progressive Islam are fundamentally rooted in the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith, which emphasize the importance of balancing spiritual piety with social responsibility. The Qur'an not only guides individuals toward personal worship, but also encourages active engagement in social life through mutual assistance, compassion, and justice. Principles such as ta'awun (mutual cooperation) and ihsan (excellence in doing good) serve as foundational values in building a civilized and inclusive society .(Siregar & Zainarti, 2025)

In various verses, Allah SWT emphasizes the importance of helping one another in righteousness and prohibits indifference toward surrounding social conditions. This principle is further reinforced by the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad: *"The best of people are those*

who are most beneficial to others."(Imam Al Bukhari, 2010) Thus, Progressive Islam is not merely understood as a normative discourse, but as a practical value system that encourages Muslims to actively contribute to addressing social issues, including within the contexts of education and community engagement.

The KKN program implemented in Desa Tambakan, Kalikunting Hamlet, holds strategic significance as the area represents a coastal rural community characterized by diverse socio-economic conditions and continuing limitations in access to education and social welfare. Through a participatory approach grounded in the values of Progressive Islam, students function not merely as program implementers, but also as community partners in identifying local needs and formulating relevant social solutions. This approach aligns with the concept of community-based service learning, which emphasizes collaboration, reflection, and experiential learning in fostering empathy and genuine social awareness. (Rochaendi et al., 2024)

Departing from the existing gap in previous studies, this article aims to examine empirically how the implementation of the KKN program in Desa Tambakan, Kalikunting Hamlet, contributes to strengthening empathy and social awareness among both university students and the local community through a Progressive Islamic approach. The primary focus of this study is not merely on the types of activities carried out, but rather on the process of internalizing values such as empathy, solidarity, and social responsibility that emerge through direct engagement within the community.

Therefore, this article is expected to provide an academic contribution to the development of community service models that are not solely oriented toward program implementation, but also toward strengthening character formation and humanitarian values grounded in Islamic teaching

METHOD

This community service activity was designed using a descriptive qualitative approach with a participatory model. The approach was employed to examine comprehensively the implementation of the Kuliah Kerja Nyata (KKN) program in Desa Tambakan, Kalikunting Hamlet, and to explore its impact on strengthening empathy and social awareness among university students and local residents through direct engagement grounded in the values of Progressive Islam within the community environment.

The KKN program was conducted in Desa Tambakan, Kalikunting Hamlet, Pasuruan, from July 5 to July 12, 2026, with the main activities culminating on July 10, 2026, in conjunction with local community social programs. The target participants included

approximately twenty-five underprivileged elderly residents, several children from low-income families, and members of the surrounding community who actively participated in various social activities based on the values of Progressive Islam.

The data sources in this activity consisted of both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from informants selected purposively, namely individuals who were directly involved in and closely connected to the implementation of the KKN program in Desa Tambakan, Kalikunting Hamlet. These informants included KKN student participants, village officials, community leaders, religious leaders, as well as beneficiary residents such as elderly citizens and economically disadvantaged families. In addition, a limited snowball sampling technique was applied to obtain further information from key informants in order to enrich and deepen the collected data.

Data collection techniques in this activity were carried out through several methods. First, participatory observation was employed to directly observe student involvement, community responses, and the social dynamics that emerged throughout the implementation of the KKN program. Second, brief and informal interviews were conducted to explore the perspectives of village officials, community leaders, religious figures, and beneficiary residents regarding both the implementation process and the impacts of the activities. Third, documentation techniques were utilized, including activity photographs, field notes, program schedules, and students' daily reflective records during the KKN program in Desa Tambakan, Kalikunting Hamlet.

DISCUSSION

The implementation of the KKN program in Desa Tambakan, Kalikunting Hamlet, demonstrates that the values of Progressive Islam are not merely normative concepts, but can be applied concretely through various forms of community engagement activities. Values such as ta'awun (mutual assistance), ihsan (striving for excellence in doing good), and the balance between spiritual and social dimensions became the foundational principles underlying every activity carried out by the students.

Strengthening Literacy and Religious Values through Educational Activities

Teaching activities conducted at SD Tambakan, TPQ, and Madrasah Diniyah became strategic spaces for instilling values of empathy, social awareness, and learning enthusiasm among students. From the perspective of Progressive Islam, education is not merely oriented toward the transfer of knowledge, but also toward the formation of character and social consciousness. The direct interaction between university students and school learners encouraged the creation of a more humanistic and participatory learning environment.

Furthermore, these activities demonstrated that university students functioned not only as instructors, but also as facilitators capable of creating meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences. As a result, students became more active, developed greater self-confidence, and showed stronger attitudes of mutual respect toward one another. This condition aligns with Islamic principles that position knowledge as a means of building a civilized and inclusive society.



1.2 Learning Activities Conducted by STITM Bangil Students

Progressive Islamic education encourages synergy between formal educational spaces, such as SD Tambakan, and non-formal institutions like TPQ and Madrasah Diniyah in order to create a holistic learning ecosystem. This synergy not only addresses the limitations of religious instruction hours within formal schools, but also serves as a strategic instrument for transforming the character and intellectual capacity of the younger generation.

a. Integration of Formal and Non-Formal Education

Education at SD Tambakan functions as the foundation for academic literacy, while TPQ and Madrasah Diniyah serve as centers for cultivating practical spiritual values. The integration of these two educational spheres creates a bridge that enables students to apply religious teachings in their daily lives beyond the boundaries of the classroom. This approach ensures that Islamic education is not merely understood as memorization, but rather as a way of life capable of strengthening students' moral character amid the challenges of modernity.



1.2 Integration of Formal and Non-Formal Learning Systems

b. Transformation of the Teacher's Role

Within this educational ecosystem, teachers function as facilitators who combine innovative teaching methods with exemplary conduct (*uswatun hasanah*). In TPQ and Madrasah Diniyah, educators possess greater flexibility to engage with students on emotional and spiritual levels in a more personal manner, something that is often difficult to achieve within the dense curriculum structure of formal schools. The presence of teachers across both formal and non-formal settings creates continuity in the learning process, where discipline and religious practices introduced at school are consistently reinforced through activities in religious educational institutions.

c. Strengthening Progressive Character Values

Progressive Islamic education demands that these institutions transform into dialogical spaces that are adaptive to the needs and challenges of the contemporary era.



1.3 Learning Assistance Provided by University Students

- 1) Character formation was cultivated through the habituation of congregational prayers and the practical implementation of Qur'anic values, enabling religion to become an internalized personal need rather than merely a formal obligation.

- 2) The management of non-formal educational institutions should be conducted in a professional and inclusive manner in order to remain competitive with formal education in shaping learners who are spiritually and intellectually competent.
- 3) This synergy creates an educational ecosystem in which diverse learning environments enrich students' perspectives in understanding Islam as a religion that is compassionate, moderate, and progressive.

Creative Economic Empowerment through Household Craft Training

Training in the production of household handicrafts became a concrete form of community empowerment based on self-reliance and local potential development. Within the framework of Progressive Islam, this activity reflects efforts to improve community welfare through the strengthening of local capacities and creativity. Islam does not merely emphasize ritual worship, but also encourages its followers to become productive, innovative, and economically independent.

This activity generated positive impacts in improving community skills, particularly among housewives, while also creating new economic opportunities. Beyond its economic benefits, the collaborative nature of the training process fostered a stronger sense of togetherness, solidarity, and mutual support among community members. Therefore, this empowerment initiative contributed not only to the economic dimension, but also to strengthening social cohesion within the community.



2.1 Creative Economic Empowerment through Household Craft Training

Creative economic empowerment through household craft training embodies the essence of Progressive Islamic Education as a bridge between spiritual values and material self-reliance. Amid the dynamics of rural communities that are often confined to subsistence-oriented routines, this initiative seeks to awaken the hidden potential of women, particularly housewives, enabling them to transform into independent economic actors. Beyond merely

teaching technical skills such as bamboo weaving or crafting accessories from recycled materials, the training instills an Islamic perspective that sustenance is not only expected passively, but must also be pursued through sincere effort aligned with the ethic of productivity (*itqan fi al-'amal*) as exemplified in the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad.

This progressive approach is reflected in the adaptive design of the training activities, beginning with the identification of local wisdom and community resources, such as regional craft motifs or abundant agricultural waste, which were then transformed into products with higher economic value through modern innovations including environmentally friendly packaging and simple digital marketing through community-based communication platforms. The impacts were multidimensional. Economically, participants were able to generate additional household income while strengthening family resilience. Socially, the activities fostered networks of solidarity among participants through the exchange of ideas, raw materials, and mutual support, reflecting a dynamic form of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* within the community. More profoundly, the process cultivated a sustainable mindset in which creativity was no longer viewed as a burden, but as a meaningful form of worship that brings individuals closer to God through productive works beneficial to others.

At a broader strategic level, this empowerment initiative represents a replicable model of inclusive Progressive Islamic Education, where religious institutions such as mosques and TPQ are not solely positioned as centers of ritual activities, but also as spaces for community economic empowerment and social transformation. Challenges such as limited capital access and market instability were addressed through collaborative partnerships with local community institutions and village-based empowerment programs, thereby supporting the sustainability of the initiative. Ultimately, programs of this nature demonstrate that Progressive Islam is not merely a normative discourse, but a practical reality manifested through skilled, faithful, and socially responsible communities that are capable of adapting to modern challenges without losing their cultural and religious identity.

Strengthening Health Awareness through Educational and Social Service Activities

The activities of cleaning mosques and prayer rooms represented a tangible form of internalizing values of environmental awareness and care for places of worship. Within the framework of Progressive Islam, cleanliness is understood not merely as a physical matter, but also as an essential component of spiritual and social consciousness. As centers of communal activity, mosques play a significant role in fostering harmonious social life and strengthening collective responsibility within the community..

3.1 Community Service / Mutual Cooperation Activity



Through these activities, university students and community members demonstrated the values of mutual cooperation and shared responsibility toward maintaining public facilities. The program also strengthened social relationships between students and local residents while fostering collective awareness regarding the importance of cleanliness as an integral part of faith. Such values became an essential foundation for building a healthy, comfortable, and religiously conscious community.

The involvement of university students in supporting health services and nutritional education further illustrates that Progressive Islam emphasizes the balance between physical and spiritual well-being. Educational activities provided to the community, particularly regarding healthy lifestyles and nutritional awareness, served as preventive efforts aimed at improving the overall quality of life within the community.

These activities not only delivered practical knowledge, but also increased public awareness of the importance of maintaining health as a responsibility entrusted to human beings. The interactions established throughout the program likewise revealed a growing sense of empathy and social concern among the students, especially toward vulnerable

groups within the community. This reflects the value of compassion that lies at the core of Islamic teachings.

CONCLUSION

Community service activities conducted through teaching programs at SD Tambakan, TPQ, and Madrasah Diniyah, together with creative economic training, the cleaning of places of worship, and health education initiatives, successfully integrated the values of Progressive Islam into everyday community life. This holistic approach not only strengthened religious literacy and practical skills, but also fostered empathy, solidarity, and self-reliance among students and community members, thereby creating a sustainable ecosystem of education and community empowerment.

Ultimately, this transformation demonstrates that Progressive Islam can serve as a unifying force connecting spiritual, social, and economic dimensions, with university students acting as inspiring agents of change. Its impact is reflected in the improvement of character development, social cohesion, and community well-being, while simultaneously providing a model for similar initiatives aimed at building an inclusive and progressive civilization.

REFERENCES

- Amalia, N. (2024). Tridharma perguruan tinggi untuk membangun akademik dan masyarakat berpradaban. *Karimah Tauhid*, 3(4), 4654–4663.
- Demirören, M., & Atılğan, B. (2023). Impacts of service learning-based social responsibility training on medical students. *Advances in Physiology Education*.
- Imam Al Bukhari. (2010). Shahih Bukhari. *Da'wah Rights*, 1(1–1138), 500. <http://telkom-hadits9imam.com>
- Mariana, M., Kamaliah, N., Jannah, M., Hutajulu, A. S., & Amalia, A. (2025). Peran dosen dalam mendampingi mahasiswa melaksanakan kegiatan sosial di masyarakat. *Jurdimas Alkhidmah: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 1(1), 35–43.
- Rochaendi, E., Ariyani, Y. D., Sari, I. P., Mahfud, M., Kholik, N., Rouzi, K. S., Afifah, N., & Nazibi, Z. (2024). Pelaksanaan KKN-Tematik: Mengoptimalkan Diseminasi Pembangunan Perdesaan dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat. *BERDAYA: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 6(1), 75–92.
- Siregar, J., & Zainarti, Z. (2025). Penerapan prinsip ta'awun dalam praktik asuransi syariah di indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Dan Manajemen*, 3(1), 300–305.