

Early Childhood Education Institution Strategies in Maximizing Community Support

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ABSTRAK. Pemberdayaan masyarakat penting untuk memaksimalkan dukungan masyarakat dalam mewujudkan Pendidikan yang berkualitas. Tulisan ini ditunjukkan untuk mendeskripsikan dan menganalisis strategi Lembaga Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Dalam Memaksimalkan Dukungan Masyarakat. Data dalam penelitian ini diperoleh melalui wawancara, observasi dan dokumentasi. Selanjutnya data dianalisis dengan tahapan reduksi data, display data dan verifikasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa usaha pemberdayaan masyarakat oleh TK Darul Hasanah diimplementasikan dalam 3 program antara lain: 1) Mengirimkan guru untuk mengisi workshop. 2) Memberi pelatihan kepada kader-kader PKK. 3) Melakukan kerjasama dengan lembaga lain yaitu puskesmas. Pemberdayaan masyarakat yang dilakukan Darul Hasanah Kindergarten pada skala meso dan Mikro dengan pendekatan Partisipatif, Pendekatan Berkelanjutan dan pendekatan kolaboratif. Serta menggunakan dua strategi, yaitu melalui aksi sosial dan melalui pendidikan atau pemberdayaan. Dampak maupun implikasi kepada lembaga yang dihasilkan dari upaya pemberdayaan tersebut adalah adanya peningkatan jumlah peserta didik tiap tahun, perkembangan dan pertumbuhan anak meningkat berdasarkan profil kelulusan, dan presentase masyarakat yang mengetahui tentang lembaga meningkat.

Kata Kunci: Pemberdayaan, Anak Usia Dini, Masyarakat, Strategi

ABSTRACT. Community empowerment is important to maximize community support in realizing quality education. This article is intended to describe and analyze the strategies of Early Childhood Education Institutions in maximizing community support. The data in this research was obtained through interviews, observation and documentation. Next, the data is analyzed using the stages of data reduction, data display and verification. The research results show that Darul Hasanah Kindergarten's community empowerment efforts are implemented in 3 programs, including: 1) Sending teachers to fill workshops. 2) Providing training to PKK cadres. 3) Collaborating with other institutions, namely community health centers. Community empowerment is carried out by Darul Hasanah Kindergarten on a meso and micro scale with a participatory approach, a sustainable approach and a collaborative approach. And using two strategies, namely through social action and through education or empowerment. The impacts and implications for institutions resulting from these empowerment efforts are that there is an increase in the number of students each year, the development and growth of children increases based on graduation profiles, and the percentage of people who know about the institution increases.

Keyword : Empowerment, Early Childhood, Community, Staregy

INTRODUCTION

The social inequality in Indonesian society is considered quite high, as directly conveyed by the Head of the Population Research Center, National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN)(BRIN, 2023). Nawawi M.A stated that one part of the political issue is the social inequality occurring in society. Nawawi conveyed this during a public discussion held virtually on Monday, August 7, 2023. This public discussion was organized by the Poverty, Inequality, and Social Protection Research Group at the Population Research Center (PR), the Research Organization for Social Sciences and Humanities (OR IPSH). Nurma Midayanti, the Director of Social Resilience Statistics at the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), explained during the discussion that inequality is closely related to poverty in Indonesia. She presented data starting from the distribution of Indonesia's population, which amounted to 276 million with a GDP of 5,000 trillion rupiahs. Where 55.98% are distributed in Java with a share of GDP of 57.17%. Meanwhile, the smallest population distribution is in the Maluku and Papua islands, amounting to 2.78% with a share of GDP of 2.45%. The inequality in socioeconomic conditions is caused by uneven distribution of population and GDP. In the discussion, Nurma also presented data showing that poverty in Indonesia in 2022 was 9.36%. This high level of social inequality is one of the major factors contributing to the low level of community awareness of education. Community awareness of education is an important asset needed by children to continue their education to a higher level. This means that the main challenge in continuing education is not only from the child themselves (internal factors) but also greatly influenced by the awareness of the community, especially parents or families, regarding the importance of education. Given this phenomenon, it is crucial to establish social institutions, namely rules or methods in deciding on a problem.

One way to minimize the rate of social inequality is through community empowerment. Community empowerment is an economic development concept that encompasses the values of society to build a new paradigm in development that is people-centered, participatory, empowering, and sustainable (Chambers, 1987). Conceptually, empowerment or *pemerkuasaan* (empowerment) derives from the word power (authority or capability). Because the main idea of empowerment relates to the ability to make others do what we want, regardless of their desires and interests(Suharto, 2005). Empowerment according to Suhendra and Kadmasasmita (Suhendra & Kadmasasmita, 2006) "is 'a dynamic and synergistic continuous activity that encourages the involvement of all available potentials evolutionarily with the involvement of all potentials.' Community empowerment is necessary to acquire the skills needed in daily life. These skills enable communities to have an independent mental attitude, promote rejuvenation and growth for the progress and development of the nation. The ability to meet daily needs independently, stemming from acquired skills, is the result of individual efforts that can be accessed and enjoyed." (Supsiloani, 2019). By making efforts to empower the community, the main goal is to improve the quality of life and the welfare of the beneficiary groups. This is done by providing education, training, and other activities with the aim of freeing them from incapacity, isolation, and underdevelopment. (Haris, 2014). From the various definitions, it can be concluded that community empowerment is developing the community with stimuli provided by institutions. True development always emphasizes the primary role of humans as active subjects, ensuring that development is carried out by and for the interests of the people. In this context, national development aims to increase

community participation in all development processes and activities. To achieve this goal, efforts are needed to enhance the quality of human resources in physical, mental, and spiritual (health), intellectual (education), economic (purchasing power), and moral (faith and piety) aspects.

Besides governmental institutions, educational institutions (academia) also play a significant role in empowering communities. The presence of educational institutions (academia) within communities is important to bridge the gap between governmental institutions and the public. Concrete evidence of academia in community empowerment includes their role in generating ideas through discussions, dialogues, and sharing knowledge/skills. Academia also serves as dynamizers, facilitators, and so forth in assisting communities in approaching authorities (Solichah & Merita, 2022). Moreover, equally important, academics can act as mediators (advocates) for the interests of the community. Research findings indicate that in this context, education is interpreted as the capacity to envision diverse life (Eger et al., 2018). After efforts to empower the community, there will certainly be implications of the empowerment that has been carried out. In this case, it is hoped that the community's awareness of education, especially Early Childhood Education, will increase. The empowerment process in the field of education begins with the most basic education, namely Early Childhood Education. Besides being the most basic education, Early Childhood Education is also the education closest to the community. In Early Childhood Education institutions, many community resources are involved, including educators, students, parents/guardians, the local community, government/sponsors, and graduates' users.

There are several studies relevant to this research. First, a study by Eka Prasetya Pertiwi & Hendrik Siswono, titled "Community Empowerment Through Early Childhood Education at Kindergarten Labschool IKIP PGRI Jember," showed that the results of the empowerment made parents directly involved in the events organized by the school (Pertiwi & Siswono, 2020). The second study relevant to this research is conducted by Rahmi Wardah Ningsih and Niken Farida, titled "Community Empowerment in Efforts to Improve the Quality of Early Childhood Education." The findings indicate that community empowerment in efforts to improve the quality of Early Childhood Education cannot be achieved through partial approaches but requires a holistic approach that includes empowering human resources (including educators, students, parents/guardians, the local educational community, sponsors/government, and graduates' users), learning systems, educational institutional management with all its supporting facilities and resources, natural resources, technological resources, and so forth (Ningsih & Farida, 2022). A holistic approach is applied in development implementation, which encompasses all aspects of life (Sulaiman & Press, 2021).

There are differences as well as similarities between the two studies and the author's research. The similarity is that both studies discuss community empowerment through early childhood education institutions. However, the difference lies in the orientation of the research, such as involving parents in activities at the institution. Meanwhile, the author's research is more oriented towards the community within the institution's environment, examining how the Early Childhood Education institution contributes to the community and how this empowerment can have implications for the Early Childhood Education institution itself, as empowerment aims to increase community participation in all development processes and activities. To achieve this goal, efforts are needed to enhance the quality of human resources, including in the intellectual (education) field. Thus, it is hoped that the community's awareness of the importance of education, especially Early Childhood Education, will increase. Additionally, the community empowerment

research that the author will conduct will focus more on analyzing the types of approaches and strategies used in community empowerment.

Based on the above, this research aims to analyze and describe the approaches and strategies used by educational institutions, especially Early Childhood Education, in empowering the community in their surrounding environment, and how the empowerment implemented has implications for the Early Childhood Education institution. To achieve this goal, the researcher conducted field research activities (observations) at TK Darul Hasanah, Banjardowo, Kec. Genuk, Semarang City, Central Java Province. This institution was chosen because Darul Hasanah Kindergarten Banjardowo Genuk Semarang is one of the Early Childhood Education institutions that empowers the community in its surrounding environment. Darul Hasanah Kindergarten regularly provides empowerment every year. The results of this research are expected to be used as input for Darul Hasanah Kindergarten to make continuous improvements in community empowerment approaches and strategies. Additionally, this research can also serve as a guide for other Early Childhood Education institutions that intend to implement community empowerment programs in their institution's environment.

METHOD

This type of research is field research, which involves direct observation of the object being studied to obtain relevant data. Essentially, this section explains how the research was conducted (Sugiyono, 2011). The approach used is a qualitative approach. The reason for choosing this approach is because this research is natural, meaning there is no manipulation of the research object or subject by the author (Moleong & Surjaman, 1989). The data sources in this research are the school principal, class teachers, students, and parents of students. Data collection is conducted through interviews, observations, and documentation. The researcher employs unstructured or free-form interviews to gather data on the community empowerment approaches and strategies by the Darul Hasanah Kindergarten institution. Additionally, to gather data on the implications of community empowerment on the institution, data collection techniques such as documentation and observation are used.

Observation is conducted to directly observe community empowerment programs and to analyze what strategies and approaches are used within them. The researcher also conducts interviews with other parties directly involved in community empowerment, including the local community and parents of students. On the other hand, documentation is used to obtain documents such as photos and videos related to community empowerment, ranging from activity photos to institution profiles. The results of interviews and observations are written in field notes. Furthermore, to test the validity of the data, the author applies the technique of data source triangulation. After the data's validity is tested, it is then analyzed using data analysis techniques consisting of data reduction, data display, and data verification stages, a technique proposed by Milles and Huberman (Miles et al., 2013).

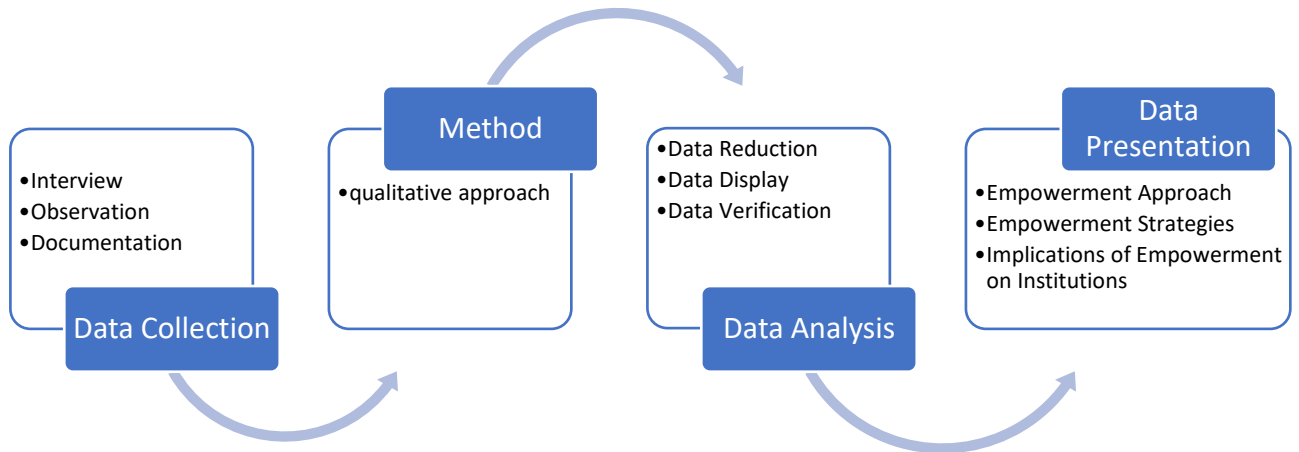


Figure 1. Research Procedure Flowchart

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Darul Hasanah Kindergarten is an Early Childhood Education institution that has been operating since 2019. Starting from the establishment process, Darul Hasanah Kindergarten has been empowering the community when seeking sponsors for building the institution as well as promoting it. After operating for approximately 4 years, Darul Hasanah Kindergarten regularly conducts activities aimed at empowering the community. Before empowering the community in the surrounding area, Darul Hasanah Kindergarten conducts research first in the Banjardowo area, as stated directly by the headmaster during the interview. Several aspects used by Darul Hasanah Kindergarten in conducting research include: 1) Identifying the Potential of the Community in Banjardowo, such as the abundance of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in mushroom cultivation. 2) Creating an Atmosphere, After identifying the potential that can be developed in the Banjardowo area, Darul Hasanah Kindergarten begins planning to create a familial atmosphere, starting from gathering parents to discuss the planned activities. 3) Taking Concrete Steps, This means that once the activity plan is formed, Darul Hasanah Kindergarten immediately executes the plan by scheduling training sessions and preparing materials. 4) Protecting the Vulnerable Community, as an educational institution, Darul Hasanah Kindergarten should embrace all segments of society, without distinguishing social strata.

Based on the interview conducted by the researcher with the headmaster, it was found that Darul Hasanah Kindergarten regularly sends one of its teachers to participate in workshops or seminars held in the neighborhood. Additionally, Darul Hasanah Kindergarten also provides training on how to transform used goods into useful creations. This training is given to the parents of students who are appointed as the school committee. The school committee mostly consists of FWE cadres (Family Welfare Empowerment), so the training results are further taught by FWE cadres to their members in the FWE organization. In its teaching approach, Darul Hasanah Kindergarten collaborates with health centers in the fields of health and nutrition. Therefore, Kindergarten Darul Hasanah's community empowerment efforts are implemented in approximately three activities, including: 1) Sending teachers to the neighborhood to participate in workshops or seminars organized there. 2) Providing training to FWE cadres on how to transform used goods

into usable creations. 3) Collaborating with other institutions, namely health centers, to educate about nutrition and health.

Firstly, sending teachers to the neighborhood to participate in workshops or seminars. There are several steps that can be taken to address the low awareness of education. One of them is through socialization activities that educate the community about the importance of education, both in formal and non-formal forms, in the context of the current modernization (Nurjamilah & Ukhrotunnasihah, 2018). By sending teachers to conduct workshops in the neighborhood, Darul Hasanah Kindergarten utilizes empowerment on a mezzo scale. In this approach, empowerment is directed towards groups (Small and Medium Enterprises owners). The goal of the mezzo-scale approach is to ensure that the benefits obtained can be utilized as a means of communication, training, and education to enhance the community's abilities, skills, and awareness in addressing the issues they face. This scale is in line with the theory proposed by DuBois & Miley, where social work in the mezzo realm involves interactions within formal groups and complex organizations. Mezzo-level interventions focus on changing the groups or organizations themselves. Factors related to groups and organizations include their functions, structures, roles, decision-making patterns, and styles of interaction influence for the process of change (DuBois & Miley, 2014). The approach used is the Participatory Approach, which is in line with Sudjana's theory stating that the participatory approach implies that community management and empowerment must involve the community, relevant institutions, and/or communities (Sudjana, 2001). This is in line with the idea that achieving community involvement and positive improvement does not occur in a linear pattern, but rather through a series of complex processes influenced by various social and cultural factors. (Haldane et al., 2019). Supported by Umayah's opinion, using a participatory approach can help strengthen self-confidence and a sense of responsibility for decisions made. Additionally, through participatory approaches, the decision-making process and analysis become easier (Umayah, 2019).

Second, providing training to PKK cadres who are members of the school committee in turning recycled materials into useful works. In this activity, Darul Hasanah Kindergarten employs a micro-scale approach as it only empowers or trains a few individuals, namely several parents who are PKK cadres. This is in line with the theory proposed by Dubois & Miley (DuBois & Miley, 2014) Micro-level interventions in social work involve individuals, families, or small groups to facilitate behavior change in individuals or in their relationships with others. This empowerment activity is individual in nature but targeted at small group entities. Rural entrepreneurs tend to rely more on the financial and physical assets available within their community networks; these networks play a crucial role in accessing and utilizing resources (Barraket et al., 2019). The purpose of this empowerment activity is to train and provide guidance for the beneficiaries. This scale is also commonly referred to as a task-centered scale. The sustainable approach is the approach used in this training activity, still in line with the same theory, namely Sudjana's theory (Sudjana, 2001) The sustainable approach is an empowerment activity that must be conducted regularly and continuously; therefore, the development of cadres from the community becomes a key consideration. Social efforts in rural areas tend to rely more on the financial and physical assets available within their community networks. Conversely, urban social entrepreneurs depend more on access to assets derived from relationships with companies and structured philanthropic support. As found in other research, we found that networks play a crucial role in accessing and utilizing resources.

Lastly or **thirdly**, collaboration with other institutions, namely community health centers (puskesmas), is conducted to educate about nutrition and health. This collaboration includes

distributing Pocket Books on Healthy and Clean Living Behavior to parents of students. The distribution of these pocket books aims to foster community literacy interest, particularly among the parents of students. Literacy has long been recognized as an empowerment tool. According to the UNESCO Global Report on Education for All, literacy plays a crucial role in health promotion as it can enhance individual self-esteem, thus influencing personal abilities in choosing lifestyles (Estacio, 2013). This also provides individuals with the ability to participate in the decision-making process. Consequently, this can benefit the overall health system by empowering individuals to take more responsibility for their health, as described by Nutbeam (Nutbeam, 2000). The scale of this activity remains the same as sending teachers to conduct workshops in the neighborhoods, which is a mezzo-scale activity. This is because of the collaboration between educational institutions and healthcare institutions with the same goal of educating the community about the importance of nutrition and health. However, in this activity, the approach used is a collaborative approach, where community empowerment is carried out in collaboration with other parties. This collaboration must be integrated, coordinated, and synergistic. The community empowerment model helps us understand how to influence conditions significantly for individuals who share similar environments, workplaces, experiences, or specific concerns. Approaches like this can strengthen collaborative partnerships to improve health and community development (Fawcett et al., 1995).

Besides the approach in community empowerment within institutional environments, to create effective development with the community as the main focus, a variety of empowerment strategies need to be explored. When selecting strategies to be used, attention must be paid to the principles and methods of community empowerment approaches. Community empowerment efforts involve engaging the community as actors while also providing economic support and enhancing the skills and knowledge they possess. Expanding knowledge and skills will stimulate creativity, facilitate decision-making, enable the recognition and utilization of opportunities, and overcome emerging obstacles. With this approach, the expected outcomes are hoped to be better (Zuliyah, 2010). Darul Hasanah Kindergarten Banjardowo also has strategies in empowering the community. Based on the observations conducted by the researcher, Darul Hasanah Kindergarten employs two strategies in community empowerment, namely through social action and through education or empowerment. The strategy through social action itself is designed to provide stimulus to the community. The principle in using the social action strategy is solidarity. The manifestation of using the social action strategy by Darul Hasanah Kindergarten is by involving students, parents, and the community in communal work and voluntary activities in the village environment. Meanwhile, the second strategy is through education or empowerment, by inviting students to visit mushroom cultivation to observe and directly engage in mushroom cultivation.

The strategies used by Darul Hasanah Kindergarten are in line with the theory developed by Jim Ife, which states that efforts to empower marginalized groups are defined by three strategies, namely: a) Empowerment through planning and policies implemented by building or changing structures and institutions that can provide equal access to resources, services, and opportunities to participate in community life. b) Empowerment through social and political actions carried out through political struggles and movements aimed at building effective power. c) Empowerment through education and awareness-raising conducted through the educational process. (Ife, 1995). However, only 2 strategies can be utilized by Kindergarten Darul Hasanah, namely through social action and education. This is because the empowerment strategy through planning and policies can only be carried out by authorized institutions, as it requires evaluation of planning and policies due to its close connection with budgeting.

Furthermore, the headmaster elaborated that Darul Hasanah Kindergarten also carries out program activities as an effort to introduce early childhood education institutions to the community by participating in exhibitions organized by both Early Childhood Education institutions and the community. They organize and participate in August competitions oriented towards children, and equally important is participating in the organization of cultural or traditional customs in the environment where the institution stands. During the interview, the headmaster also emphasized that before the institution empowers the surrounding community and raises awareness of the importance of education, the institution itself must already be in good shape internally. By "being in good shape internally," it means expanding partnership networks by collaborating with other institutions, being accredited, and having certified early childhood education programs in place. According to Sufa and Setiawan (Sufa & Setiawan, 2020) One simple way to assess the quality of an educational institution is by checking its accreditation. This applies to all levels of education, from early childhood education, primary and secondary education, to higher education institutions (HEIs). In fact, the quality of non-formal educational institutions (NFEIs), such as courses and training centers, can also be evaluated based on their accreditation status. The higher the accreditation status of an educational institution, the more assured the quality assurance process is.

After various approaches and empowerment strategies have been implemented towards the community surrounding the institution, there will certainly be **impacts** and **implications** for the institution resulting from these empowerment efforts. With the availability of educational facilities for the surrounding community, it is expected that their awareness of the importance of basic education, especially for early childhood, will increase significantly (Madyawati et al., 2020). After regularly conducting training, collaboration, and sending teachers to workshops, as well as organizing activities to introduce early childhood education institutions to the community, gradually the community's perception of early childhood educators and early childhood education institutions becomes more open. The community begins to understand that education is very important for their children's lives, and this awareness can improve human resources in the area, as stated by Heni, that the quality of human resources (HR) in a region is not only influenced by the efforts made by schools but also by the level of community involvement in education. The greater the community's participation in education in an area, the more developed the human resources in that area. Conversely, the lower the level of community participation in education in an area, the more hindered the development of human resources in that area (Sukmawati, 2018). The community realizes that early childhood education is also needed to support further education for children. This can be seen from the increasing number of students enrolling in Darul Hasanah Kindergarten every year, the development and growth of children also increase based on graduation profiles, and the percentage of the community aware of the Darul Hasanah Kindergarten institution is increasing.

Academic Year	Male Students	Female Students	Amount	Percentage Of Increase
2021/2022	100	101	201	-
2022/2023	102	114	216	7,46%
2023/2024	113	130	243	12,5%

Student Data Documen Of Darul Hasanah's Kindergarten

Based on the description above, in empowering the community, attention must be paid to the strategies and approaches to be used. In addition to the government, academics also play a role in empowering the community, and community empowerment can be carried out by the most basic educational institutions, namely early childhood education institutions. The aim of choosing the right strategy is to enhance the abilities and independence of the community. The focus of this research is more on presenting various community empowerment strategies by Early Childhood Education institutions that can be considered (Cholisin, 2011). The empowerment carried out by educational institutions must certainly be oriented towards the community and the institution itself, so that besides impacting the community, empowerment also affects the institution.

The author hopes that the results of the research can be used as material to motivate early childhood education institutions to implement community empowerment programs within their environments. Additionally, the findings of the research can also serve as a guideline for improving the strategies and approaches used in community empowerment. The implications and impacts of community empowerment activities, as presented in the results section, can also be used as material in determining the indicators of the success of community empowerment program implementation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that social inequality in Indonesian society is quite high. Data shows that poverty in Indonesia in 2022 was 9.36%. The high level of social inequality is one of the major factors contributing to the low level of awareness among the community regarding education. One way to minimize social inequality is through community empowerment. Besides governmental institutions, educational institutions (academia) also play a significant role in community empowerment. The process of empowerment in the field of education starts from the most basic education, which is Early Childhood Education. Besides being the most basic education, Early Childhood Education is also the closest education to the community. Based on the research findings, it is concluded that the efforts of community empowerment by Darul Hasanah Kindergarten are implemented through three activities, including: 1) Sending teachers to neighborhoods to conduct workshops or seminars held in the neighborhoods 2) Providing training to PKK cadres in processing used goods into usable items 3) Collaborating with other institutions such as health centers to educate about nutrition and health. Based on the observations conducted by the researcher, Darul Hasanah Kindergarten also employs two strategies in community empowerment, namely through social action and through education or empowerment. The impacts and implications for the institution resulting from these empowerment efforts include an increase in the number of students enrolling in Darul Hasanah Kindergarten each year, the development and growth of children also increase based on graduation profiles, and the percentage of the community aware of the Darul Hasanah Kindergarten institution is increasing.

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