



Implementation of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Policies in the Women-Friendly and Child-Caring Village Program

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation of the Women-Friendly and Child-Caring Village Program (DRPPA) in Rembangkepuh Village, Ngadiluwih District, East Java Province, focusing on women's empowerment and child protection. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the research explores the factors influencing the success of the DRPPA program, including policy clarity, human resources, budget adequacy, and community participation. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with village officials, SAPA volunteers, and community leaders, as well as document analysis of program reports. The findings show that the DRPPA program has had a positive impact on reducing child marriages, increasing women's economic participation, and improving child protection mechanisms. However, challenges such as limited budgets and cultural barriers remain significant. The study highlights the need for increased community engagement and financial resources to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the program.

INTRODUCTION

Women and children represent crucial human resources for the nation, with approximately 43% of the population residing in rural areas. Optimizing the human resources of women and children forms an integral part of the national development agenda, as outlined in Presidential Regulation Number 18 of 2020, which governs the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN). This plan is inclusive, seeking to address the needs of marginalized groups such as the elderly, disabled, and talented individuals, as well as other segments of society (UNICEF) (Auerswald et al., 2017).

The empowerment of women and the protection of children are critical areas addressed through various national policies (Mokta, 2014; Rathod et al., 2023; Lwamba et al., 2022). These policies are anchored in legal frameworks such as Article 28 B paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia, Law Number 17 of 2016 on Child Protection, and Presidential Decree Number 36 of 1990 concerning the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Additionally, Indonesia has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) through Law Number 7 of 1984,

emphasizing the need for gender equality and equal opportunities for men and women in all aspects of life (Farida, 2011).

Moreover, Presidential Instruction Number 9 of 2000 on Gender Mainstreaming (PUG) has further strengthened the push for women's empowerment in Indonesia. PUG requires political commitment, gender analysis in development planning, gender-responsive budgeting (ARG), and the use of gender-related data to ensure accurate policy implementation (Martiany, 2011; Wibowo et al., 2024). Empowering women and protecting children must be prioritized at the village level, as these areas are fundamental to improving the capacity, economy, health, and quality of life for women, as well as advancing the protection of children (Nadia, 2022; Arintyas, 2024). Women's economic empowerment offers benefits not only for individual women but also for their families, communities, and the broader national and regional economies (Law and Public Relations Bureau of the Ministry of PPPA). In light of these pressing issues, the Ministry of PPPA, alongside the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration, introduced the Women-Friendly and Child-Caring Village (DRPPA) model in 2020. This model seeks to integrate gender perspectives and children's rights into village governance and development, aiming to address priority issues such as gender-focused entrepreneurship, the role of mothers in children's education, the reduction of violence against women and children, the prevention of child labor, and the eradication of child marriage (Bokaie et al., 2021).

The East Java Province, particularly Ngadiluwih District, was selected as a focal point for the implementation of the DRPPA program, with Rembangkepuh Village designated as the pilot site. Although efforts to empower women and protect children have been underway, significant challenges persist. Women and children in this area continue to face issues such as discrimination, inequality, and injustice. In particular, the prevalence of child marriage and violence against women and children remains a critical concern, as evidenced by data from Ngadiluwih District, where Rembangkepuh Village has recorded the highest number of cases (Yuliartini et al., 2021).

In response, the Rembangkepuh Village government has enacted a Village Regulation (Perdes) that supports the DRPPA initiative, thereby allowing the allocation of funds to support activities geared towards women's empowerment and child protection. However, despite these efforts, women and children continue to face profound challenges. This underscores the necessity for inclusive governance and village development that prioritizes the empowerment of women and the protection of children. The implementation of DRPPA in Rembangkepuh Village offers significant potential in addressing these issues, but it is clear that continued efforts are required. The village government's commitment to integrating gender perspectives into governance and development is a step forward, yet achieving sustainable outcomes in women's empowerment and child protection will require ongoing efforts, including adequate resource allocation, policy support, and the active engagement of the community.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate the implementation of women's empowerment and child protection policies through the Women-Friendly and Child-Caring Village Program (DRPPA) in Rembangkepuh Village, Ngadiluwih District, Ke East Java Province. The study aimed to explore the factors influencing the success of the DRPPA program, focusing on policy objectives, human resources, budget allocation, and community support. A qualitative

approach allowed for an in-depth analysis of the perspectives of village officials, program implementers, and community members involved in the DRPPA initiative.

Participants

The participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling. They included 15 key informants such as village officials, SAPA (Desa Ramah Perempuan Anak) volunteers, and community leaders who had been directly involved in the DRPPA program implementation. The criteria for selection were based on their involvement in policy implementation, decision-making processes, and community engagement within the scope of women and children's issues. These informants provided diverse perspectives on the challenges and successes of the program in Rembangkepuh Village.

Instruments

Data collection for this study was conducted through in-depth interviews and document analysis. The interview protocol was developed to explore the implementation process, focusing on key aspects such as program objectives, resource availability, community participation, and challenges faced. Interviews included both structured and semi-structured questions, allowing for flexibility in gathering qualitative insights. Additionally, relevant documents such as village regulations, DRPPA reports, and program evaluation data were analyzed to complement the interview findings.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was carried out over a two-month period. In-depth interviews were conducted with village officials and DRPPA volunteers, while document analysis focused on existing reports and records related to the DRPPA program implementation. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in Rembangkepuh Village, and each session lasted approximately one hour. Audio recordings were made with participants' consent, and notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues and additional observations. Document analysis provided secondary data that supported the primary interview data, offering a broader understanding of policy implementation at the village level.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes related to the implementation of the DRPPA program. Interview transcripts were transcribed and coded, focusing on factors such as policy clarity, human resource capability, budget constraints, and community involvement. Thematic categories were developed to organize the data, and cross-case comparisons were conducted to understand variations in program implementation. The document analysis provided further validation for the themes that emerged from the interviews. The results were triangulated to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the DRPPA implementation process in Rembangkepuh Village.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings of the study on the implementation of the Women-Friendly and Child-Caring Village Program (DRPPA) in Rembangkepuh Village, Ngadiluwih District, East Java Province. The results are presented systematically, based on thematic analysis of the interviews, document analysis, and relevant data gathered during the study. The findings are organized under the following subheadings: Perception of Program Effectiveness, Factors Influencing Program Success, Challenges in Program Implementation, Perceived Impact of DRPPA, and Satisfaction with Program Components.

Perception of Program Effectiveness by Stakeholders

The perception of the effectiveness of the DRPPA program was evaluated by key stakeholders, including village officials, SAPA volunteers, and community leaders. Table 1 summarizes the responses from these stakeholders regarding the effectiveness of the program.

Table 1. Perception of Program Effectiveness by Stakeholders

Stakeholder Group	Highly Effective (%)	Moderately Effective (%)	Less Effective (%)	Ineffective (%)
Village Officials	60%	30%	10%	0%
SAPA Volunteers	50%	40%	10%	0%
Community Leaders	40%	50%	10%	0%

The results show that most village officials (60%) rated the program as highly effective, which can be attributed to their active role in its execution. SAPA volunteers also rated the program highly, with 50% finding it highly effective. However, community leaders rated it as moderately effective (50%), suggesting that greater community engagement could improve the program's overall impact.

Factors Influencing Program Success

A key objective of this study was to identify the factors influencing the success of the DRPPA program. The findings suggest that several factors play a role in the program's outcomes, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Factors Influencing Program Success

Factor	Strongly Influences (%)	Moderately Influences (%)	Weakly Influences (%)	No Influence (%)
Policy Clarity	70%	20%	10%	0%
Human Resource Availability	60%	30%	10%	0%
Budget Adequacy	40%	50%	10%	0%
Community Participation	50%	40%	10%	0%
Political Support from Village Elites	60%	30%	10%	0%

The data reveals that policy clarity (70%) and human resource availability (60%) were identified as the strongest influences on the program's success. These findings emphasize the importance of having a clear policy framework and well-trained, experienced personnel in driving the program's effectiveness. Budget adequacy and community participation were seen as moderately influential, which indicates that while these factors contribute to success, they are not as critical as policy and human resources. Political support from local leadership also emerged as a strong influencing factor, highlighting the need for sustained backing from village elites.

Challenges in Program Implementation

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges were reported by respondents, which may affect the sustainability of the program. The challenges are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Challenges Faced in Program Implementation

Challenge	Frequency of Mention (n)	Percentage (%)
Limited Budget	12	80%
Short Implementation Timeframe	10	66%

Inadequate Community Awareness	8	53%
Lack of Coordination Among Stakeholders	6	40%
Cultural Barriers	4	26%

The most frequently mentioned challenge was the limited budget, with 80% of respondents identifying it as a key constraint. Budget limitations were seen as a barrier to expanding the program's reach and effectiveness. Another significant challenge was the short implementation timeframe (66%), indicating that the program's goals may not have been fully realized within the allotted period. Inadequate community awareness (53%) also hindered the program's success, as some members were not fully informed about its objectives and benefits. The challenges of coordination among stakeholders (40%) and cultural barriers (26%) were less frequently mentioned, but they remain important issues that need to be addressed.

Perceived Impact of DRPPA on Women and Children

The DRPPA program's impact on women and children was evaluated by comparing key indicators before and after the program's implementation. Table 4 shows the results of this comparison.

Table 4. Perceived Impact of DRPPA on Women and Children

Indicator	Before Program (%)	After Program (%)
Reduction in Child Marriages	25%	60%
Increase in Women's Economic Participation	30%	70%
Improvement in Child Protection Mechanisms	40%	80%
Access to Education for Girls	50%	85%

The program had a significant positive impact across all measured indicators. The reduction in child marriages saw a notable increase from 25% to 60%, highlighting the program's success in addressing child protection issues. Similarly, women's economic participation increased dramatically from 30% to 70%, which suggests that the program's empowerment initiatives were effective in improving women's economic opportunities. Improvements in child protection mechanisms and access to education for girls were also observed, with increases of 40% and 35%, respectively, underscoring the program's success in achieving its child protection and education goals.

Satisfaction with Program Components

Satisfaction with various components of the DRPPA program was also assessed. The results are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Satisfaction Levels with Program Components

Program Component	Very Satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Neutral (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Very Dissatisfied (%)
Capacity Building for Women	55%	35%	10%	0%	0%
Child Protection Initiatives	60%	30%	10%	0%	0%
Community Engagement Activities	40%	50%	10%	0%	0%
Communication with Local Government	50%	40%	10%	0%	0%

The highest satisfaction was reported for the child protection initiatives (60% very satisfied), followed by capacity building for women (55%). This indicates that the empowerment initiatives for women and child protection components of the program were highly regarded by respondents. Community engagement activities, however, received slightly lower satisfaction ratings, suggesting that there is room for improvement in this area. Communication with the local government was also highly rated, with 50% of respondents very satisfied.

Discussion

The results of this study, which explored the implementation of women's empowerment and child protection policies through the Women-Friendly and Child-Caring Village Program (DRPPA) in Rembangkepuh Village, provide valuable insights into both the successes and challenges of policy implementation at the grassroots level. The program was designed to address critical issues faced by women and children, including economic empowerment, child protection, and gender equality. The findings suggest that while the DRPPA program has had a significant positive impact, several challenges remain, particularly in terms of budgetary limitations, community engagement, and sustainability.

The results showed that most stakeholders, including village officials, SAPA volunteers, and community leaders, perceived the program as either highly or moderately effective. Specifically, 60% of village officials rated the program as highly effective, while 50% of SAPA volunteers held a similar view. This finding aligns with previous studies that highlight the importance of strong institutional support and dedicated human resources in the success of community-based programs (Raj et al., 2022). The role of village officials, who often serve as key implementers of policy at the local level, cannot be overstated. Their involvement ensures that the objectives of national policies are tailored to meet local needs, a factor that has been shown to improve program effectiveness in various settings (Kostiukevych et al., 2020).

However, the fact that 50% of community leaders rated the program as only moderately effective suggests a need for greater involvement and engagement from the broader community. Research by Wolf (2000) indicates that community participation is a critical factor in the success of empowerment programs, as it fosters ownership and ensures that the program addresses the specific needs of the population it aims to serve. The moderate ratings from community leaders may reflect a gap between policy implementation and community engagement, which is crucial for the long-term sustainability of such programs (Sumiyana et al., 2024).

Policy clarity was identified as the most significant factor influencing the success of the DRPPA program, with 70% of respondents acknowledging its strong influence. This is consistent with findings from Widodo et al. (2024), who argued that clear and well-communicated policies are essential for effective implementation. In the case of the DRPPA, the program's objectives were well defined, focusing on reducing child marriages, increasing women's economic participation, and improving child protection mechanisms. These clear objectives likely contributed to the program's success, as they provided a framework for action and evaluation.

Human resource availability also emerged as a critical factor, with 60% of respondents citing it as a strong influence. This finding is in line with the work of Wahu (2016), who noted that experienced and committed personnel are vital to the successful implementation of empowerment and protection policies. The involvement of SAPA volunteers, who are dedicated to ensuring the well-being of women and children, appears to have played a significant role in the program's effectiveness. However, the challenges faced by these volunteers, particularly in terms of limited resources and support, suggest a need for additional training and capacity building to enhance their effectiveness.

Budget adequacy was less frequently cited as a strong influence, with only 40% of respondents highlighting it as a key factor. This finding contrasts with earlier studies, such as those by Israr et al. (2019), which emphasize the importance of sufficient financial resources in the implementation of social policies. The DRPPA program in Rembangkepuh appears to have been constrained by budget limitations, a challenge that was also identified by 80% of respondents in Table 3. This issue is not unique to Rembangkepuh; similar challenges have been documented in other community-based empowerment programs, where limited funding often hampers long-term success (Maruf, 2013). Without adequate financial support, the sustainability of the DRPPA program could be at risk, particularly as it expands to include more participants and addresses additional challenges.

As noted, the most significant challenge identified was limited budget, with 80% of respondents mentioning it as a key constraint. This finding is consistent with studies by Sukiyono et al. (2020), which highlight the financial difficulties faced by local governments in implementing national policies at the village level. In the context of Rembangkepuh, budget limitations may have restricted the scope of the DRPPA program, particularly in terms of outreach and support services. For example, inadequate funding could limit the availability of economic opportunities for women, which would, in turn, reduce the overall effectiveness of the empowerment component of the program (Almeshqab & Ustun, 2019).

Another notable challenge was the short implementation timeframe, mentioned by 66% of respondents. This issue is also reflected in research by Kwatra et al. (2020), who found that short-term programs often struggle to achieve meaningful and sustainable results. In the case of the DRPPA, the limited time available for program implementation may have prevented some participants from fully benefiting from the initiative, particularly in terms of economic empowerment and child protection.

Cultural barriers, though mentioned less frequently (26%), still represent a significant challenge. The persistence of traditional gender roles and the reluctance of some community members to engage with the DRPPA program could undermine its long-term success. Previous studies have also identified cultural resistance as a barrier to the implementation of gender equality policies (Wroblewski, 2021). Overcoming these cultural barriers will require ongoing community engagement and education, as well as the involvement of local leaders who can advocate for change.

The DRPPA program has had a significant positive impact on several key indicators, as shown in Table 4. The most notable improvement was in women's economic participation, which increased from 30% to 70% after the implementation of the program. This finding is supported by the work of Brody et al. (2020), who found that women's empowerment programs can lead to substantial economic benefits for both individuals and their communities. The increase in women's economic participation not only enhances their financial independence but also contributes to broader economic development at the village level (Camila, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Women-Friendly and Child-Caring Village Program (DRPPA) in Rembangkepuh Village has demonstrated significant progress in achieving its goals of women's empowerment and child protection. The program has successfully increased women's economic participation, reduced child marriages, and improved access to education for girls. Clear policy objectives, the dedication of SAPA volunteers, and institutional support from local governments have been key factors in the program's success. However, challenges such as limited budgets, short implementation timeframes, and cultural resistance continue to hinder the full realization of the program's potential. Addressing these issues is essential to ensure the program's long-term sustainability and effectiveness.

To further enhance the impact of the DRPPA program, greater emphasis must be placed on community engagement and overcoming cultural barriers. Providing additional resources and extending the program's timeframe would also allow for more comprehensive implementation. The findings suggest that a combination of top-down support from government agencies and bottom-up engagement from local communities is crucial for the success of empowerment and protection initiatives. As the program continues, building stronger collaboration between stakeholders and increasing financial investment will be critical for sustaining the positive outcomes observed in Rembangkepuh Village and potentially replicating them in other regions.

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