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Training Enhancing the Potential of Integrated Gardens to Support Family Food and Nutritional Independence



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Abstract

The elderly are a vulnerable age group socially, economically, and health-wise, especially in rural and suburban areas. Based on data from the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in 2019, approximately 40% of the total 25.67 million elderly in Indonesia are in the lowest socioeconomic status, which is categorized as vulnerable and potentially experiencing various physical and psychological problems. This community service activity carries the theme "Enhancing the Potential of Integrative Gardens as Supporters of Family Food and Nutrition Independence." This elderly empowerment program is a solution to prevent physical and psychological health problems and provides a platform for elderly people who have the potential to be economically productive. This program included; elderly-friendly gardening training, small-scale livestock training, local food management training, marketing training, elderly health training using medicinal plants around the house, and group dynamics. This program was implemented in an integrated manner in the form of a Productive Elderly Class at the village hall. This community service program had completed the first phase, namely training in creating an integrative garden with vegetable cultivation and raising catfish using used gallon jugs. Participants' knowledge increased, from an average pretest score of 60.25 to 80 in the posttest. During the training, the elderly appeared enthusiastic and their productivity was evident, with the results of their planting media and catfish farming in used gallon jugs. Strengthen community implementation through participatory integrated gardening programs supporting sustainable family food and nutritional independence.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is currently entering a phase of population aging, with the proportion of elderly people increasing. Based on the 2023 Indonesian Population Census, nearly 12%, or approximately 29 million Indonesians, are classified as elderly ([Rokom, 2024](#)). The elderly population in Indonesia is growing faster than in other countries ([Winarti et al., 2025](#)). East Java is the second-highest province with the highest percentage of elderly people in Indonesia (14.4%). It is estimated that by 2045, the number of elderly people in Indonesia will reach 20% of the total population, or approximately 50 million people ([Sari et al., 2024](#)). The largest percentage of elderly people is in the 60-69 age group, at 63.3%. The increase in the number of elderly people is one of the impacts of the Government's success in implementing National Development ([Pusparini, 2022](#)). The elderly are a vulnerable age group socially, economically, and health-wise, especially in rural and suburban areas. According to data from the Indonesian Ministry of Social Affairs, approximately 40% of the total 25.67 million elderly in Indonesia are in the lowest socioeconomic status, categorized as vulnerable and poor ([Katriana, 2020](#)). The poor elderly group who receives elderly social assistance from the local government has a higher Out of pocket (OOP) health spending of 28.3 percent compared to the poor elderly group who do not receive assistance. The high spending on OOP was mainly due to increased spending on curative ([Luthfi & Hanri, 2023](#)). Elderly as a vulnerable group in terms of physical, economic, social-environmental and psychological challenges. Family plays a vital role in supporting an older person to overcome these challenges ([Seftiani & Vibriyanti, 2020](#)).

The phenomenon occurring in society regarding the role of the elderly indicates social and lifestyle changes that have rendered many elderly people less productive and increasingly vulnerable to various problems, both physical, psychological, and social ([Setiyorini & Wulandari, 2018](#)). The elderly are considered marginalized, with stereotypes regarding them as disadvantageous and a burden on those of productive age ([Safira Ramadhani et al., 2020](#)). This condition is exacerbated by minimal physical activity, making them vulnerable to health problems such as joint pain, degenerative diseases, and cognitive decline ([Agustana et al., 2023](#)).

Psychologically, feelings of loneliness, uselessness, and isolation are quite common among the elderly, especially if they live alone or have lost a spouse ([Sihab & Nurchayati, 2021](#)). The impact can include depression, anxiety, and sleep disturbances. These mental health problems in the elderly can be caused by several factors, such as preoccupation with their illness, economic constraints, or limited time with family, which can make them feel lonely and cause difficulty sleeping ([Amira et al., 2023](#)). Although the elderly are a vulnerable group, some still possess valuable enthusiasm, skills, and experience, and therefore have great potential to remain productive if empowered appropriately. Being productive by doing activities not only physically, but productively by interacting socially for the elderly helps maintain the physical and mental health of them which contributes to increasing longevity. Longevity essentially emphasizes that life is valuable regardless of one's age. Productive elderly are part of creating meaningful longevity for the elderly. Physical limitations don't mean elderly people can't produce and be productive and enjoy life. This is the point of view of the elderly that you need to know ([Dwi et al., 2022](#)). Efforts to improve and maintain public health including the older adult are carried out based on non-discriminatory, participatory and sustainable principles. The government has formulated various health and social service policies for the older adult aimed at improving the quality of life of the older adult, achieving a happy and efficient old age in family and community life in accordance with their existence ([Sipollo & Syukkur, 2022](#)).

The partner in this community empowerment program for beginners (PMP) is the "Kampung Sahaja" community group supporting mental health awareness in Singonegaran Village. Kampung Sahaja, a community-based mental health community, is a driving force in handling mental health cases in collaboration with the health department and community health centers ([Juwariah et al., 2020](#)). It also provides care for mental health patients and fosters social functioning, as well as assisting vulnerable groups, including the elderly. The elderly population in the area comprises 15%. A preliminary study of 10 elderly residents revealed that 80% are unemployed despite remaining physically fit. Seventy percent often feel lonely when other family members are away. All expressed a desire

for activities, preferably earning their own income. Thirty percent have shown signs of depression and loneliness due to a lack of diversional activities. Interviews with the neighborhood association (RT) head revealed that some elderly residents still participate in community social activities, but these activities are of little economic value. To date, there has been no program to empower elderly groups to be economically productive. Therefore, we are striving to empower elderly groups to prevent various health problems and optimize their function within the family. We are also working to maximize their potential through Elderly Empowerment through Local Wisdom-Based Micro-Business Innovations to Support Economic Independence and Elderly Health. This elderly empowerment program is a solution to prevent physical and psychological health problems, and provides a platform for seniors with the potential to be economically productive. The program includes; elderly-friendly gardening training, small-scale livestock training, local food management training, marketing training, elderly health training utilizing local medicinal plants, and group dynamics. This program can be implemented in an integrated manner through Productive Elderly Classes at village halls and elderly community health posts (Posyandu) involving health cadres, agricultural extension workers, local MSMEs, and families. Productive seniors have more useful activities to fill their free time so they have a better quality of life ([Puspitosari & Nurhidayah, 2025](#)). The social welfare of the elderly has improved, as evidenced by the improvement in their health, psychological, and social conditions. In practice, this elderly integrated health post has been quite successful in achieving its goals ([Fersa et al., 2024](#)).

This elderly empowerment program aligns with government regulations, namely Presidential Regulation (Perpres) Number 88 of 2021 concerning the National Strategy for Elderly Care. This Presidential Regulation also serves as the legal framework for cross-sector coordination in implementing elderly care programs. The government is promoting the concept of "Lansia Tangguh" (active, independent, and healthy), including through the revitalization of Posyandu Lansia and nutrition counseling, as part of the "Lansia Tangguh" Program ([Kemenkes RI, 2023](#); [Kemenko PMK, 2021](#)). In addition, this elderly empowerment program is in accordance with SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health and well-

being), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Ergonomic Growth), SDG 12 (Responsible consumption).

METHOD

This community service activity was carried out through seven main steps over a one-year period. The community service activities were carried out by eight community service providers, consisting of six lecturers from the Ganesha Husada Health College in Kediri and two students from the Ganesha Husada Health College in Kediri. They served as facilitators, public relations officers, documentation staff, organizers of community service activities, proposal development, questionnaires, results analysis, and discussions.

The population of this activity was cadres and seniors in the Productive Elderly Class group, totaling 20 people. The implementation also included accompanying families. This community service activity carried the theme of economic independence for seniors by optimizing the role of cadres as driving forces. Mental health cadres served as facilitators in the creation of this integrative garden, in addition to being assisted by a group of volunteers. The long-term goal of this activity is the economic independence of elderly families.

The program began with a preparation stage, including participant identification, preparation of training materials, tools, questionnaires, and used gallon jugs for planting and catfish cultivation. This was followed by a one-day training at the Singonegaran Village Meeting Hall to introduce integrative garden concepts, plant cultivation, catfish rearing, care methods, and basic marketing. Next, plant seedlings and catfish fry were prepared and then distributed to participants for home implementation. Participants applied the integrative garden system at their homes with continuous monitoring and mentoring from mental health cadres, volunteers, and the community service team. Post-harvest learning was provided to introduce simple processing of agricultural and fishery products for household consumption and income potential. Finally, evaluation was conducted using questionnaires to assess knowledge improvement, with the long-term goal of supporting food security and economic independence of elderly families.

RESULTS

In line with the goal of the community service program, which is to strengthen the economy of the elderly through inclusive micro-enterprises, the program established a community-based, productive business group for the elderly in Singonegaran Village, and provided training in gardening and small-scale catfish farming. The community service team initiated the implementation of small-scale gardening and catfish farming training using used gallon jugs for the elderly in Singonegaran Village.

The activity lasted one day and aimed to improve the knowledge and skills of the elderly in preparing planting media and catfish farming media. The event began with the singing of the national anthem "Indonesia Raya" (Indonesia Raya), followed by remarks from the Head of Stikes Ganesha Husada, who outlined the training's aims and objectives. The Head of Singonegaran Village fully supports positive activities for the elderly, will assist with preparing necessary supplies, and encourage the community to fully support the program. The event continued with an opening ceremony, with the symbolic garlanding of the participants by the Head of Singonegaran, accompanied by the community service leader, to the two oldest male and female participants. All participants then wore their identification badges. Next, the community service provided material on land and yard utilization for catfish farming and vegetable cultivation. Further material was provided by partners from the agricultural and livestock extension department on methods and techniques for creating media and caring for plants and livestock. Participants were very enthusiastic and asked many technical questions. Participants also asked about pest control on vegetable crops without using pesticides. Next, they practiced preparing used gallon jugs for catfish farming. The result was three ready-to-use catfish farming tools and three vegetable planting containers. The event concluded with a friendly gathering and prayer.

The activity ran smoothly with satisfactory results. Participants experienced an increase in knowledge and skills. This increase in knowledge was assessed from the results of the knowledge questionnaire, with the average pre-test score of 60.25 increasing to 80 in the post-test. Skill improvements were also assessed through the training results. During the training, participants

produced ready-to-use tools for catfish farming and vegetable cultivate.



Figure 1: Opening of Integrated Garden training



Figure 2. Integrated Garden training

DISCUSSION

This community service activity, aimed at increasing economic independence through training on enhancing the potential of integrative gardens to support family food and nutritional independence, demonstrates concern for the well-being of the elderly in the Singonegaran sub-district. The activity proceeded with enthusiasm. Participants expressed their enthusiasm for the knowledge and skills gained. As a token of appreciation, the community service team allowed them to take home the vegetable growing and catfish rearing media created by the oldest participant. The team then assisted them in constructing the tools at the elderly person's home, step by step. Research on community economic empowerment highlights the importance of inclusive micro-enterprise development as a strategy to improve welfare and support vulnerable groups, including the elderly, by creating broader access to economic opportunities and reducing social disparities. Studies have shown that empowering micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) contributes significantly to job creation, community welfare, and inclusive economic growth by providing local populations with sustainable livelihoods and increased income opportunities through productive business activities and community participation (Putria & Pratama, 2023). Community-based business groups, when supported by training, mentoring, and access to markets, have been found to improve economic balance and local welfare, which can be particularly beneficial for seniors seeking economic independence later in life (Achmad et al., 2023). Efforts to empower the elderly through a comprehensive approach can have a positive impact in improving their quality of life and slowing down the decline in their cognitive function (Dewi & Nardina, 2024).

The results showed that providing material on creating integrative gardens in yards using used gallon jugs increased participants' knowledge from an average of 60.25 to 80. Meanwhile, their skills increased from complete incompetence to the ability to transform used gallon jugs into a place for raising catfish and growing vegetables. This finding aligns with research on community gardening interventions, which consistently demonstrate that structured training and educational components enhance participants' understanding and skills related to sustainable gardening and food production. For example, a community service project introducing wall gardening through urban

farming training reported a marked increase in participant knowledge from pre-test to post-test stages following soft skill and educational activities, underscoring the effectiveness of hands-on garden education in expanding community capabilities to utilize limited land for productive purposes (Soelaksini et al., 2025). Additionally, urban farming training interventions have been shown to improve participants' comprehension of food production techniques and their role in supporting food security and livelihood resilience, reinforcing the value of experiential learning in gardening programs (Carolina et al., 2023). This was due to the theory being presented not only through lectures but also through discussions and hands-on practice through active training. The resource person, facilitator, resources, participant conditions, implementation process, and media used all contributed to this success. This is in accordance with the statement that new skills can be acquired if they are implemented through a learning or training process (Gomes, A. R. 2023). Gomes further explain that the attainment of a skill is influenced by many factors. These factors are divided into three; the teaching and learning process, personal factors, and situational (environmental) factors. In learning, the process must be created based on the stages outlined by a learning theory that is believed to be valid and selected based on its benefits. This is consistent with the training process, where the use of yards and used gallons for planting vegetables and raising catfish must follow clear and precise stages in accordance with the theory taught by the resource person. These findings suggest that garden-based training not only fosters knowledge acquisition but also empowers communities to adopt practical agricultural practices that can contribute to household food independence and economic well-being.

The training media consists of teaching aids and waste materials that have high economic value. Used gallons are readily available in the community. Through this training, it is hoped that seniors will become more productive, able to utilize their free time for useful activities, and have high economic value. Community training on transforming household waste into marketable products has been shown to improve economic awareness and create additional revenue sources for participants, while also encouraging positive use of free time for constructive activities (Andriyani & Juliansyah, 2023). Additionally, similar empowerment

initiatives involving training on waste management and eco-entrepreneurship indicate that equipping community members with practical skills enhances their ability to generate income through small-scale production of handicrafts and eco-friendly products, contributing to local economic resilience and sustainable livelihoods ([Gusmida et al., 2025](#)).

This training activity in Singonegaran sub-district represents a new hope for improving the welfare of the elderly and serves as occupational therapy for those at risk of mental health problems. Research indicates that participation in structured activities, including productive and social work, enhances multiple dimensions of elderly welfare, physical, economic, social, and psychological—by providing elders with opportunities to be active, feel valued, and maintain social relationships, which in turn helps protect against isolation and emotional decline. For example, studies on socio-economic empowerment of elderly women in market settings demonstrated that continued economic activity supports not only income generation but also social and psychological well-being in older adults, showing that productive engagement contributes to holistic welfare outcomes ([Iryani & Murtiwidayanti, 2020](#)). Similarly, occupational therapy and community-based interventions have been shown to improve autonomy and psychological health among the elderly, reducing stress and promoting independence when older adults are actively involved in purposeful tasks ([Renidayati & Rachmadanur, 2022](#)). Cadres play a key role in community development and empowerment programs. Collaboration can be fostered with fellow cadres, families, health workers, agricultural extension workers, and community leaders to support the economic independence of the elderly. The next step after the training is to create media and directly plant and raise catfish at the elderly's homes, with the assistance of cadres, the community service team, and the extension team from the Kediri City Food Security and Agriculture Office.

This activity involves students, whose involvement is essential to meeting the competency targets for recognized courses. In accordance with student assignments, the head of the community service team is responsible for fostering and supervising the achievement of recognized course competencies. Member 1 creates a checklist of student achievements for recognized courses. Member 2 provides coaching and field monitoring, evaluates student achievements, and submits reports

to the head. Students are tasked with assisting with activity implementation, conducting activities according to the achievement and checklist of recognized course targets, and submitting activity reports. This aligns with the Independent Learning and Independent Campus (MBKM) concept implemented at Ganesha Husada Health College in Kediri ([Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020](#)).

CONCLUSION

The community service program, which included training on creating an integrative garden, utilized the yard for growing vegetables and raising catfish on a small scale, directly impacted the knowledge and skills of the elderly. They learned and became skilled at preparing planting media, caring for plants, raising catfish, and maximizing yields based on economic principles. The community service team provided incentives by providing free tools, plant seeds, fertilizer, catfish fry, and feed. The elderly, with the assistance of their families, cadres, and volunteers, continued and developed this integrative garden into a source of nutrition and food security for their families, as well as a source of additional income.

Following this training, the elderly, assisted by the community service team and cadres, prepared the garden area and prepared the media. The team distributed seeds and assisted with planting, supervised the participants, and discussed challenges encountered in the field, along with solutions.

SUGGESTION

Activities can be continued by creating integrative gardens for other elderly families as well as for productive families as an alternative source of family nutrition that is economically valuable, easy to do and does not require a large space.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The public service member states that there is no conflict in this service and publication.

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