

Strengthening Paralegal Capacity Among The Cadres of 'Aisiyiah Branch Leadership (PCA) Rungkut Surabaya to Promote Legal Awareness

Levina Yustitiningtyas* and L.Ya Esty Pratiwi

Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia

*Corresponding author email: levinayustitiningtyas@um-surabaya.ac.id

Abstract

This community service program aimed to strengthen grassroots legal awareness by enhancing the capacity of women leaders in the 'Aisiyiah Branch Leadership (PCA) Rungkut, Surabaya, through structured paralegal training. The program utilized the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach and consisted of participatory sessions on basic legal knowledge, human rights, and advocacy skills. A total of 30 participants engaged in a three-session training, with evaluation conducted through post-tests and qualitative reflection. The results showed a substantial improvement in legal understanding. Participants also demonstrated growing confidence and critical awareness of legal rights and responsibilities. Qualitative findings revealed a shift in perception, as participants began to see themselves as legal actors capable of community advocacy. Post-training will initiatives included the formation of a cross-sector paralegal network and the establishment of a community legal aid post (*Posbakum*) in the PCA Rungkut area. This initiative contributed to the realization of the *Qoryah Thayyibah* Village model as a justice-oriented, legally aware community. The program illustrates how faith-based women's organizations can serve as effective drivers of grassroots legal empowerment and access to justice.

Keywords

Qoryah Thayyibah, Paralegals, Legal Awareness

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Abstrak

Program pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk memperkuat kesadaran hukum di tingkat akar rumput melalui pelatihan keparalegalan yang terstruktur bagi kader perempuan Pimpinan Cabang 'Aisiyiah (PCA) Rungkut, Surabaya. Kegiatan ini menggunakan pendekatan Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) dan dilaksanakan dalam bentuk sesi partisipatif yang mencakup materi dasar hukum, hak asasi manusia, serta keterampilan advokasi. Sebanyak 30 peserta mengikuti tiga sesi pelatihan, dengan evaluasi dilakukan melalui post-test serta refleksi kualitatif. Hasil menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan dalam pemahaman hukum peserta. Selain itu, peserta juga menunjukkan peningkatan rasa percaya diri dan kesadaran kritis terhadap hak dan kewajiban hukum. Selain itu, berdasarkan kegiatan PkM ini memperlihatkan perubahan persepsi, di

mana peserta mulai melihat diri mereka sebagai aktor hukum yang mampu melakukan advokasi di lingkungan komunitas. Pasca pelatihan, akan dibentuk jaringan paralegal lintas sektor dan Posko Bantuan Hukum (Posbakum) di wilayah PCA Rungkut. Program ini berkontribusi dalam mewujudkan model Desa Qoryah Thayyibah sebagai komunitas yang sadar hukum. Kegiatan ini menunjukkan bahwa organisasi perempuan berbasis keagamaan memiliki potensi besar sebagai penggerak pemberdayaan hukum dan akses terhadap keadilan di tingkat komunitas.

Kata Kunci

Qoryah Thayyibah, Paralegal, Hukum

Introduction

As stipulated in Article 1 paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Indonesia is a state based on the rule of law. Furthermore, Article 28D paragraph (1) guarantees that every individual has the right to recognition, protection, fair legal certainty, and equal treatment before the law. These provisions form the constitutional foundation for the state's responsibility to ensure access to justice for all citizens.¹ The assurance of access to justice is intended to realize legal protection and fairness in an equal and non-discriminatory manner. However, in practice, the enforcement of legal supremacy still falls short of achieving true justice, particularly for marginalized and vulnerable groups. Law and justice often remain inaccessible to ordinary citizens. Government policies, at times, appear elitist in nature, limiting the public's access to justice.

According to Umar Sholahudin, poor communities are the most vulnerable to legal injustice, while law enforcement authorities tend to favor those with economic and political power. Legal enforcement processes often perpetuate structural injustice due to their disconnection from the social context. When law is applied rigidly based solely on legal texts, without understanding the surrounding social realities, it risks becoming alienated from the sense of justice felt by society. This gap has created a growing sense of disillusionment within the broader public.²

Legal apparatuses often handle legal cases solely based on statutory interpretation, without considering their contextual meaning. Soerjono Soekanto asserts that one of the most complex and persistent themes in the sociology of law is the relationship between law and social justice, an issue found universally across societies. This complexity arises from the widely held belief that law should fulfill its fundamental role of ensuring both legal certainty and justice for all members of society.

In a context where the supremacy of law has yet to be fully realized, citizens must actively engage in advocacy efforts to demand that the state consistently upholds its duty to protect

¹ Bisariyadi Bisariyadi, "Menyibak Hak Konstitusional Yang Tersembunyi," *Jurnal Hukum Ius Quia Iustum* 24, no. 4 (2017): 509–34, <https://doi.org/10.20885/iustum.vol24.iss4.art1>.

² Umar Sholahudin, "Hukum Dan Keadilan Masyarakat (Analisis Sosiologi Hukum Terhadap Kasus Hukum Masyarakat Miskin 'Asyani' Di Kabupaten Situbondo)," *Dimensi* 9, no. 1 (2021): 31–45.

and promote the welfare of all its people. One such form of advocacy is through the empowerment and mobilization of paralegals. Paralegals are individuals who do not possess formal legal education but have been equipped with practical and technical knowledge to handle everyday legal issues—either those they personally encounter or those faced by others in their community.³ Their main role is to provide legal assistance to society, particularly to the poor, thus helping to broaden access to justice.

In Indonesia, the existence and functions of paralegals are regulated by Law Number 16 of 2011 on Legal Aid, Constitutional Court Decision No. 88/PUU-X/2012, and the Regulation of the Minister of Law and Human Rights No. 1 of 2018 concerning Paralegals in Legal Aid Provision. In East Java, the role of paralegals is further reinforced by Regional Regulation No. 9 of 2012 on Legal Aid for the Poor.

According to Article 4 paragraph (2) of the Legal Aid Law, recipients of legal aid include impoverished individuals who face legal issues in criminal, civil, or administrative cases, whether through litigation or non-litigation processes. Article 5 further defines the poor as those unable to meet their basic needs such as food, clothing, housing, and healthcare. Articles 6 and 7 stipulate that legal aid providers may be civil society organizations, which must meet certain requirements, including accreditation and verification by the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, and support from community leaders. In addition to litigation and non-litigation assistance, legal aid may also be provided through public legal education and awareness initiatives.

Abdul Fatah categorizes the various typologies of legal aid practiced in Indonesia as presented in Table 1.⁴

Table 1. Legal Aid Typology in Indonesia

Type of Legal Aid	Description
Conventional Legal Aid	A moral and professional responsibility of advocates that is individual in nature, passive, and limited to formal/legal approaches. Legal aid is provided in the form of assistance and legal defense in court proceedings.
Constitutional Legal Aid	Legal aid for the poor provided within a broader framework beyond mere courtroom legal services. It is oriented toward the realization of a rule of law state grounded in democracy and human rights principles. The aid aims to raise legal awareness among the poor as legal subjects with equal rights as others. It is active in nature, not limited to individuals, and not restricted to formal legal procedures.
Structural Legal Aid	Legal aid is not merely institutionalized legal services for the poor, but a movement involving a series of actions to liberate society from the shackles of political, economic, social, and cultural structures rife with oppression. It includes educating the poor about their rights and interests, building shared understanding within communities about the importance of legal protection, and fostering legal awareness and autonomy among marginalized groups to enable them to fight for their rights.

³ S Hasibuan, *Keparalegalan: Konsep Dan Implementasi Di Masyarakat* (Bandung: Alumni, 2016).

⁴ Abdul Fatah, "Regional Legal Assistance," *Rechtsidee* 2, no. 1 (2015): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.21070/jihr.v2i1.7>.

One of the most active organizations in community development at the grassroots level is the 'Aisiyyah Branch Leadership (Pimpinan Cabang 'Aisiyyah, hereinafter PCA) Rungkut, which is part of the broader Muhammadiyah women's movement. 'Aisiyyah, founded by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan on May 19, 1917 (27 Rajab 1335 H), is a special autonomous organization under Muhammadiyah. It is an Islamic movement dedicated to *da'wah*, reform (*tajdid*), and enjoining good while forbidding evil (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*), grounded in the principles of the Qur'an and Sunnah. 'Aisiyyah aims to establish a truly Islamic society by promoting Islamic values across all aspects of life, through organized programs and community-based activities.

The PCA Rungkut branch was officially established on 14 May 2005 (5 Rabiul Akhir 1426 H) by decree of the East Java Regional Board of 'Aisiyyah No. 31/SK-PWA/A/V/2005. One of its flagship programs is the Qoryah Thayyibah Village Initiative (hereinafter QT Village), which envisions a community where Islamic values are fully implemented in every aspect of life—both in relation to God (*ḥablun min Allāh*) and with fellow humans (*ḥablun min al-nās*). The QT Village emphasizes the development of faith, piety, morality, family harmony, community solidarity, economic resilience, and social justice.

The QT Village model promotes the following core characteristics:

1. A faithful and pious society;
2. Peaceful and prosperous communities;
3. Gratitude for divine blessings;
4. A strong spirit of compassion (*Al-Ma'un*);
5. Willingness to collaborate for the common good;
6. Tolerance and unity;
7. Commitment to enjoining good and forbidding evil;
8. Harmonious family life;
9. Strong work ethic;
10. High regard for education.

The ultimate goal of the QT Village program is to develop a micro-scale civil society rooted in Islamic values. The movement aims to empower branch-level and sub-branch-level organizations through initiatives that drive social transformation, enhance public welfare, promote gender justice, expand access to information, and strengthen family-based socio-economic systems. In particular, one of the focus areas of the QT Village program is law and politics, where citizens are encouraged to understand their constitutional rights and actively participate in public decision-making processes.

Based on initial discussions between the community service team (PKM) from Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya and PCA Rungkut, two key issues were identified. First, nearly 99% of PCA leadership at both the branch and sub-branch levels lack formal legal education

and have limited understanding of the Indonesian legal system. Second, there has been a concerning rise in legal issues within PCA Rungkut's working area, including cases of violence against women and children, as well as legal challenges faced by migrant workers.

When considered in light of the resources available at the Faculty of Law, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya, these two challenges present an opportunity for collaboration. By equipping PCA Rungkut cadres with legal knowledge, their grassroots activism in promoting justice and resolving community disputes can become significantly more effective. The purpose of this community service initiative is to train PCA Rungkut members—particularly women leaders at the branch and sub-branch levels—to serve as paralegals. The paralegal training aims to:

1. Provide fundamental knowledge of law and human rights, so that participants can develop legal strategies and solutions to address common legal problems;
2. Equip participants with advocacy skills related to the application of legal norms.

Upon completion of the training, the program also seeks to establish:

1. A cross-sectoral network of paralegals;
2. A community legal aid post (Posko Bantuan Hukum or Posbakum) that can serve as a rapid-response unit or first-responder mechanism for local legal issues.

By enhancing the legal literacy and advocacy capacity of women leaders in PCA Rungkut, this initiative seeks to cultivate a cadre of professional community-based paralegals capable of advancing justice and strengthening the legal foundations of the QT Village model—thereby contributing to the realization of Indonesia as a state truly governed by law.

Based on a needs analysis conducted with the partner organization (PCA Rungkut), the following problems were identified:

1. Most PCA Rungkut members are unaware of government-sponsored legal aid programs for the poor initiated by the Ministry of Law and Human Rights;
2. Most members have limited understanding of legal concepts, human rights, democracy, and the structure of society and law;
3. They lack skills in legal documentation, public communication, social analysis, and stakeholder mapping;
4. PCA Rungkut does not yet have a model for a legally literate QT Village;
5. There is no established stakeholder network for litigation and non-litigation advocacy efforts.

Method

This community service program employed the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach. Broadly defined, ABCD refers to a model of community development that focuses on identifying and mobilizing the existing assets within a community to enable

them to address their own problems independently.⁵ The ABCD method was developed by John McKnight, Jody Kretzmann, and their colleagues at Northwestern University as a response to the shortcomings of traditional community development models.⁶

Conventional community service programs often begin with a fundamental assumption that the community is inherently powerless, lacking the capacity to improve its own welfare.⁷ From this assumption, programs typically proceed by compiling lists of problems, assessing needs, and identifying deficiencies. In contrast, the ABCD model shifts the paradigm by recognizing and empowering both individual and collective assets that already exist within the community to address its challenges. Rather than focusing on filling gaps or meeting deficiencies, the ABCD approach emphasizes the activation and strengthening of community-owned resources for economic and social empowerment.

One key outcome of legal empowerment through ABCD is advocacy, which aims to strengthen community awareness of their legal rights and the methods by which those rights can be asserted. Generally, legal empowerment manifests in several forms, including:⁸

1. **Street Law:** An interactive legal education method that engages legal students or community learners in analyzing real-life legal problems. It not only exposes participants to actual legal issues but also encourages them to design legal empowerment strategies for marginalized groups whose rights are often unfulfilled.
2. **Clinical Legal Education:** A method that emphasizes collaborative engagement between academic institutions and communities. Legal problems brought forward by the community are addressed through legal studies that formulate actionable solutions and legal prescriptions aimed at protecting citizens' rights.
3. **Ghost Lawyer:** A community-driven model of legal empowerment in which citizens receive legal training and education to advocate for their own rights independently. This model aims to cultivate a legally aware and self-reliant society capable of articulating and defending its legal interests.

Referring to these forms of legal empowerment, the community service team at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya chose to orient its initiative toward the ghost lawyer model. Given

⁵ H Scott, B Smith, and B Schaedler, "Disaster Recovery towards Resilience: Contributions of an Assets-Based Community Development Approach," *Australian Journal of Emergency Management* 33, no. 1 (2018): 55–60.

⁶ I García, A Biamont, and J Klopfenstein, "A Case Study of Story Mapping, Neighborhood Change, and Community Assets of Ballpark, Salt Lake City," *Land* 13, no. 10 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.3390/land13101573>.

⁷ J Harris and D Kelly, "COMMUNITY CARE AND ELDERLY PEOPLE: ONE WAY TRAFFIC?," in *Dependency and Interdependency in Old Age: Theoretical Perspectives and Policy Alternatives* (Department of Applied Social Studies, Lanchester Polytechnic, United Kingdom: Taylor and Francis, 2024), 140–49, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781032715940-14>.

⁸ Sri Bintang Ayu Ningrat Anang Dony irawan, Azizah Nur Hidayat, Yanuar Ramadhana Fadhlila, Rubiati, M. Shohibul Ahzam, "Paralegals in Building Public Legal Awareness: An Efforts to Empower Community Law in the Work Area of the 'Aisiyah Branch Manager," *Indonesian Journal of Law and Economics Review* 14 (2022): 6–14.

that the leadership and members of PCA Rungkut initially lacked legal understanding, the program aimed to educate and empower them to serve as community-based paralegals. Through this model, PCA Rungkut members are expected to become conscious, active, and critical legal actors who can advocate for justice within their community.⁹

The implementation of this community service program was carried out in two main phases: the preparation stage and the implementation stage. The preparation phase was conducted by a team comprising lecturers and students, who coordinated with the community partner (PCA Rungkut) to identify the legal issues they faced and to formulate proposed solutions. This was followed by a mutual agreement outlining the schedule and terms of the program's execution. The community service implementation team consisted of lecturers and students from the Faculty of Law, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya.

Preliminary Survey and Coordination Meeting

Before the execution of the program, a preliminary survey was conducted to assess the legal needs of the community partner and to collect data on prospective training participants. This initial assessment was followed by a coordination meeting with PCA Rungkut Surabaya, who served as both the partner institution and the participant group for the paralegal training. Given time constraints on both sides, coordination meetings were conducted online using platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams to ensure efficiency.

Paralegal Training Sessions

The core activity of the program was a series of paralegal training sessions for members of PCA Rungkut Surabaya. These sessions were conducted in three separate classes, each lasting approximately four hours. The training combined lectures, case discussions, and interactive dialogue to ensure comprehensive learning.

Evaluation

An evaluation of the training was conducted using post-tests to measure participants' knowledge after the sessions. The questionnaire was based on the training materials and consisted of 25 multiple-choice questions (**Figure 1**), with five questions for each core topic of the paralegal curriculum. Both the pre- and post-tests were administered online using Google Form.

⁹ S. Irianto, *Praktik Penelitian Hukum: Perspektif Sosiolegal* (Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2011).

Kuisloner Pre-test/Post-test Pelatihan Paralegal**Tema 1: Dasar-dasar Paralegal (5 Soal)**

1. Apa definisi utama dari paralegal?
A. Pengacara resmi yang bekerja di firma hukum
B. Pegawai pengadilan yang menangani perkara pidana
C. Seseorang yang membantu masyarakat dalam masalah hukum tanpa status pengacara
D. Penyidik perkara hukum di kepolisian
Jawaban: C
2. Peran utama paralegal dalam masyarakat adalah:
A. Mengadili perkara hukum ringan
B. Memberikan nasihat hukum tanpa batas
C. Mewakili terdakwa di pengadilan
D. Memberikan edukasi dan bantuan hukum dasar kepada masyarakat
Jawaban: D
3. Paralegal TIDAK diperbolehkan untuk:
A. Memberikan pendampingan hukum di luar pengadilan
B. Memberikan penyuluhan hukum kepada masyarakat
C. Mewakili klien di pengadilan dalam kasus pidana
D. Menyusun dokumen hukum non-litigasi
Jawaban: C
4. Siapa yang biasanya menjadi sasaran utama dari kerja-kerja paralegal?
A. Perusahaan besar
B. Masyarakat yang tidak mampu mengakses bantuan hukum
C. Lembaga pemerintahan
D. Polisi dan jaksa
Jawaban: B
5. Mengapa peran paralegal penting di daerah pedesaan atau terpencil?
A. Karena tidak ada pengacara yang bekerja di sana
B. Karena paralegal bisa menggantikan hakim
C. Karena mereka bertindak sebagai penyidik
D. Karena masyarakat sering kesulitan mengakses sistem hukum formal
Jawaban: D

Tema 2: Hukum Acara Dasar (5 Soal)

6. Dalam hukum acara pidana, siapa yang berwenang melakukan penahanan?
A. Paralegal

- B. Hakim
C. Polisi dan Jaksa
D. Pengacara
Jawaban: C
7. Gugatan pidana biasanya diajukan ke:
A. Kejaksaan
B. Kepolisian
C. Pengadilan Negeri
D. Kementerian Hukum dan HAM
Jawaban: C

8. Dalam proses hukum, asas praduga tak bersalah berarti:
A. Terdakwa harus dihukum secepatnya
B. Hakim tidak perlu bukti lengkap
C. Setiap orang dianggap tidak bersalah sampai terbukti sebaliknya
D. Sman orang bersalah sampai terbukti tidak
Jawaban: C

9. Siapa yang berhak menunjuk pengacara untuk terdakwa jika ia tidak mampu secara ekonomi?
A. Paralegal
B. LSM Hukum
C. Hakim
D. Negara melalui bantuan hukum
Jawaban: D

10. Dalam perkara perdata, pihak pengugat adalah:
A. Yang menerima tuntutan
B. Yang mengajukan vonis
C. Yang mengajukan tuntutan
D. Yang menyidik perkara
Jawaban: C

Tema 3: Hak Asasi Manusia (5 Soal)

11. Hak atas perlindungan hukum termasuk dalam kategori:
A. Hak politik
B. Hak ekonomi
C. Hak sosial budaya
D. Hak sipil
Jawaban: D

12. Pelanggaran HAM berat dapat berupa:
A. Tindak pidana ringan
B. Penipuan biasa
C. Genosida atau kejahatan terhadap kemanusiaan
D. Hutang piutang
Jawaban: C

13. Siapa yang paling bertanggung jawab untuk menegakkan HAM di Indonesia?
A. LSM
B. Paralegal
C. Komnas HAM dan Pemerintah
Jawaban: C

D. Mahasiswa Hukum**Jawaban: C**

14. Hak atas bantuan hukum bagi yang tidak mampu diatur dalam:
A. KUHP
B. UUD 1945
C. UU Bantuan Hukum No. 16 Tahun 2011
D. Peraturan Presiden
Jawaban: C

15. Salah satu bentuk advokasi HAM oleh paralegal adalah:
A. Menangkap pelaku pelanggaran HAM
B. Memberikan vonis kepada pelaku
C. Memberikan penyuluhan hukum kepada korban
D. Menyidik kasus hukum
Jawaban: C

Tema 4: Mediasi dan Penyelesaian Sengketa Alternatif (5 Soal)

16. Tujuan utama mediasi adalah:
A. Menjatuhkan hukuman
B. Menyidangkan pelaku
C. Menyelesaikan sengketa secara damai
D. Melaporkan perkara ke polisi
Jawaban: C

17. Mediator harus bersikap:
A. Memihak
B. Netral dan objektif
C. Agresif dan memaksa
D. Pasif dan tidak terlibat
Jawaban: B

18. Salah satu manfaat penyelesaian sengketa alternatif adalah:
A. Biaya tinggi dan proses panjang
B. Proses hukum formal
C. Menghindari konflik berlarut
D. Harus melalui pengadilan
Jawaban: C

19. Dalam mediasi, kesepakatan damai harus:
A. Dibuat secara lisan
B. Ditandatangani dalam akta otentik
C. Tidak perlu disepakati kedua belah pihak
D. Tidak boleh dicabut
Jawaban: B

20. Paralegal dapat berperan dalam mediasi sebagai:
A. Hakim
B. Penentu hasil
C. Fasilitator komunikasi
D. Penandatangan keputusan
Jawaban: C

Tema 5: Komunikasi Hukum dan Advokasi (5 Soal)

21. Komunikasi hukum yang baik harus menggunakan bahasa yang:
A. Rumit dan teknis
B. Sederhana dan mudah dipahami
C. Baku dan akademik
D. Hanya dimengerti oleh pengacara
Jawaban: B

22. Salah satu teknik dalam penyuluhan hukum adalah:
A. Debat terbuka
B. Pembacaan undang-undang panjang
C. Diskusi kelompok dan simulasi
D. Menghindari masyarakat
Jawaban: C

23. Advokasi hukum adalah kegiatan untuk:
A. Menghukum masyarakat
B. Memberikan pidato politik
C. Mempengaruhi kebijakan demi kepentingan masyarakat
D. Menjual jasa hukum
Jawaban: C

24. Agar advokasi efektif, paralegal perlu memahami:
A. Strategi hukum, jaringan sosial, dan kebutuhan komunitas
B. Seluruh isi KUHP
C. Cara kerja pengadilan secara detail
D. Teori hukum internasional
Jawaban: A

25. Media apa yang paling efektif untuk kampanye penyidangan hukum di pedesaan?
A. Seminar di hotel
B. Siaran radio lokal dan pertemuan warga
C. Website hukum
D. Buku akademik
Jawaban: B

Figure 1. Pre-test and post-tests multiple-choice questions

Results and Discussion

The Role of Paralegals in Fostering Legal Awareness

Community paralegals, also known as grassroots legal advocates, barefoot lawyers, or community legal workers play a critical role in bridging the justice gap, especially in marginalized rural and urban communities.¹⁰ They provide essential legal education, mediation, and advocacy, enabling individuals to navigate legal processes and assert their rights at both informal and formal levels. Their presence has been shown to enhance trust in legal institutions and improve procedural justice by facilitating early interventions and correct legal advice at the grassroots level.

Paralegal programs have demonstrated tangible societal benefits. For instances, community paralegals working on health rights in South Africa and Uganda helped clients access vital services by addressing legal barriers such as wrongful detention or discrimination, linking legal aid with improvements in public health outcomes.¹¹ Goodwin noted that legal

¹⁰ H Dancer, "Power and Rights in the Community: Paralegals as Leaders in Women's Legal Empowerment in Tanzania," *Feminist Legal Studies* 26, no. 1 (2018): 47–64, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10691-018-9371-6>; M Schaaf et al., "We All Have the Same Right to Have Health Services': A Case Study of Namati's Legal Empowerment Program in Mozambique," *BMC Public Health* 20, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-09190-7>; R V P Hartanto, S I Liestyasari, and A C Budiati, "Paralegals and Women Access to Justice: Making Access to Justice of Women Victims of Violence Effective," *International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering* 8, no. 1 (2019): 11–16; A Wirya et al., "Expanding the Role of Paralegals: Supporting Realization of the Right to Health for Vulnerable Communities," *BMC International Health and Human Rights* 20, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12914-020-00226-y>; Harris and Kelly, "COMMUNITY CARE AND ELDERLY PEOPLE: ONE WAY TRAFFIC?"

¹¹ S Perry et al., "Outsiders, Insiders, and Intermediaries: Village Health Teams' Negotiation of Roles to Provide High Quality Sexual, Reproductive and HIV Care in Nakaseke, Uganda," *BMC Health Services*

empowerment initiatives like these yielded collective remedies and structural change, extending beyond individual cases.¹²

In Pakistan's Punjab province, paralegal-led initiatives using the ABCD model facilitated more effective resolution of communal disputes, showcasing the potential of asset-based approaches when paired with legal capacity-building.¹³ Similar findings in Sierra Leone highlight paralegals' success in strengthening conflict-resolution mechanisms within communities, particularly in contexts where formal legal representation is scarce.¹⁴

Dancer further underscores that community paralegals should not be viewed merely as assistants to lawyers, but as independent frontline agents of legal empowerment.¹⁵ Their training equips them in law, policy, mediation, organization, and advocacy, enabling them to serve as both connectors to formal legal systems and catalysts for local change. Rooted in community trust and social capital, these paralegals promote awareness, facilitate dispute resolution, and empower citizens to claim their rights.

Nuque and Aban affirm that strengthening legal capacity through paralegal approaches is not only effective in reaching marginalized groups, but also in initiating sustainable social transformation at the community level.¹⁶ When adapted to local contexts such as PCA Rungkut Surabaya, the implementation of community paralegal initiatives must be aligned with the specific needs and the Islamic values embedded within the social fabric of the 'Aisiyah organization. As noted in Sharpe, the success of paralegal programs strongly depends on direct community participation in legal education and participatory advocacy.¹⁷ This approach is inherently compatible with the long-standing tradition of community empowerment that underpins the Muhammadiyah and 'Aisiyah movements.

This program is expected to empower both branch and sub-branch levels of the Muhammadiyah organization. Ultimately, it aims to align with the mission and vision of 'Aisiyah in promoting the transformation of social welfare through various dimensions,

Research 19, no. 1 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-019-4395-4>; B M Meier, C Pardue, and L London, "Implementing Community Participation through Legislative Reform: A Study of the Policy Framework for Community Participation in the Western Cape Province of South Africa," *BMC International Health and Human Rights* 12, no. 1 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-698X-12-15>.

¹² L Goodwin and V Maru, "What Do We Know about Legal Empowerment? Mapping the Evidence," *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law* 9, no. 1 (2017): 157–94, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40803-016-0047-5>.

¹³ S Usman et al., "Identifying Root Causes of Conflicts at Farm Level and Conflicts Resolution Strategies in Punjab, Pakistan," *International Journal of Agricultural Extension* 9, no. 2 (2021): 193–200, <https://doi.org/10.33687/ijae.009.02.3427>.

¹⁴ United Nations Development Programme, "Legal Aid Service Provision: A Guide to Programming in Africa," 2016.

¹⁵ Dancer, "Power and Rights in the Community: Paralegals as Leaders in Women's Legal Empowerment in Tanzania."

¹⁶ A F G Nuque and A P Aban, "Women's Access to Justice Through Legal Aid Clinics and Paralegal Formations," in *Asia in Transition*, vol. 21 (University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS), Quezon City, Philippines: Springer Science and Business Media Deutschland GmbH, 2025), 271–84, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-9140-8_16.

¹⁷ P A Sharpe et al., "Building Capacity in Disadvantaged Communities: Development of the Community Advocacy and Leadership Program," *Progress in Community Health Partnerships: Research, Education, and Action* 9, no. 1 (2015): 113–27, <https://doi.org/10.1353/cpr.2015.0003>.

including gender equality education—both in terms of awareness and implementation—digital literacy for easy and accurate access to information, and education for strengthening family-based economic resilience. The primary target groups of this program are Muhammadiyah members and residents of the target villages. Specifically, the legal and political sectors have become focal areas within the Qoryah Thayyibah Village Program (QT Village), which aims to provide civic education and raise awareness of constitutional rights so that citizens may develop a comprehensive understanding of law and civic responsibility. The broader objective is to encourage public participation in decision-making processes that serve the common interest.

In response to this need, concrete steps are required to enhance legal capacity within the community—particularly through the development and optimization of paralegal roles. The urgency of strengthening paralegals in PCA Rungkut is grounded in a baseline study conducted by the Community Service Team of the Faculty of Law at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya. The study revealed that 99% of branch and sub-branch leaders within ‘Aisiyiah in Rungkut had no formal legal education and limited understanding of basic legal practices. Simultaneously, the working area of PCA Rungkut has experienced frequent legal issues such as violence against women and children and the legal challenges faced by migrant workers.

This reality highlights a substantial capacity gap between the community’s need for justice and the readiness of local leadership to respond. Therefore, the paralegal training conducted by the PKM Team is intended to equip PCA Rungkut members with two essential competencies: first, a foundational understanding of constitutional rights and basic legal principles; and second, practical advocacy skills to address legal issues through humanistic, solution-oriented approaches. Additionally, the training seeks to establish a cross-sector paralegal network and a Community Legal Aid Post (Posbakum), which will serve as a frontline mechanism for community-based legal assistance.

This training initiative goes beyond technical skill-building. It is designed to foster holistic legal awareness in accordance with the four dimensions outlined by Soerjono Soekanto, namely legal knowledge, legal understanding, legal attitudes, and legal behavior.¹⁸ Within this framework, paralegals are envisioned as local change agents—individuals who bridge the gap between the community and the formal legal system, and who strengthen justice and equity at the grassroots level.

From Legal Literacy to Legal Action: Strengthening Civic Participation in PCA Rungkut

The paralegal training conducted by the Community Service Team (PKM) of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya demonstrated significant outcomes in advancing grassroots legal

¹⁸ D Nitiyoga, A M Rahmah, and N Alawiya, “Legal Awareness of The Public Towards the Prohibition of Giving Money to Beggar (Study in Grendeng Village, North Purwokerto District, Banyumas),” *Jurnal Hukum In Concreto* 4, no. 1 (2025): 87–102.

empowerment, particularly within the organizational environment of the 'Aisiyiah Branch Leadership (PCA) in Rungkut. The training was attended by 30 participants, consisting of branch and sub-branch leaders of 'Aisiyiah, and was delivered over three sessions covering topics such as basic legal knowledge, human rights, advocacy skills, and non-litigation dispute resolution.

Evaluation was conducted through post-tests comprising 25 multiple-choice questions designed to measure participants' understanding across five main subject areas. **Figure 2** shows that paralegal training was generally considered successful and effective, with over 90% of participants achieving an average score above 85. Ten participants scored in the 71–85 range, which is also considered quite high. This indicates that most of the other participants also understood the material well, although not as well as the first group. Only two participants scored in the 61–70 range, indicating that a small number of participants had less than optimal understanding of the material. No participants scored below 60, indicating that all participants had a fairly good to very good level of understanding. Most participants had a very good understanding of the paralegal training material, especially after completing the training. The results of this paralegal training demonstrate that the material delivery method, instructor quality, and training design were quite optimal.

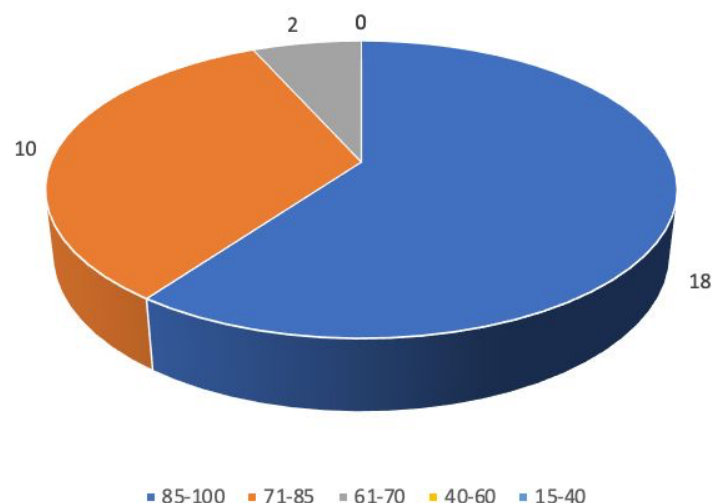


Figure 2. Result of post-test

In addition to the quantitative gains, qualitative findings further supported the program's impact. In post-training reflection sessions, participants expressed a notable shift in perspective toward the law. One participant stated, “We used to think law was only for the highly educated. Now we understand that we, too, can learn the law to defend ourselves and help our community.” Such testimonials indicate that the training not only enhanced legal knowledge but also fostered a deeper sense of legal confidence and civic responsibility.

These outcomes can be analyzed using the four dimensions of legal awareness proposed by Soerjono Soekanto: legal knowledge, legal understanding, legal attitude, and legal behavior. The improvement in test scores reflects growth in the first two dimensions, while participant reflections reveal the early development of a critical attitude and a willingness to be involved

in local conflict resolution. This suggests a foundational shift in legal consciousness that could be expanded through continuous mentoring and community-based legal initiatives.

Following the training, PCA Rungkut committed to establishing a Cross-Sector Paralegal Network and initiating a Community Legal Aid Post (Posbakum) at the subdistrict level. The PKM Team also facilitated a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to map the community's social and institutional assets and to identify local leaders who could support and sustain paralegal efforts. This process followed the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, emphasizing the mobilization of community-owned resources as a foundation for social and legal problem-solving.

While the training produced significant results, challenges remain in sustaining momentum and expanding the reach of the program. Some participants expressed the need for advanced modules and case-based mentoring to reinforce their capacity in real-world scenarios. This suggests that paralegal development should be part of a broader roadmap of continuous empowerment rather than an isolated intervention. Furthermore, this paralegal training model—rooted in a women's Islamic organization—offers a uniquely Indonesian approach that combines religious values, social justice, and grassroots legal consciousness. With appropriate institutional support, this model holds strong potential for replication in other Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah communities across the country.

In summary, this initiative not only succeeded in achieving its immediate objectives but also laid the groundwork for a justice-oriented, community-driven legal culture. It represents a significant contribution to the broader vision of Desa Qoryah Thayyibah as a legally literate and empowered community.

Conclusion

The implementation of paralegal training in PCA Rungkut by the Community Service Team of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya has proven to be an effective and impactful effort in strengthening grassroots legal empowerment. The significant increase in participants' legal knowledge demonstrates the success of participatory and contextually relevant legal education. Beyond quantitative gains, the training fostered critical awareness, legal confidence, and civic responsibility among women leaders at the community level. This initiative has contributed meaningfully to the broader mission of Desa Qoryah Thayyibah, not only by enhancing legal literacy but also by preparing a network of community-based paralegals committed to promoting access to justice. The integration of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach further ensured that the empowerment process was rooted in local strengths and social capital. However, the sustainability of this empowerment process requires ongoing mentoring, institutional support, and policy integration to ensure that community legal services continue to thrive. The PCA Rungkut model offers a promising, replicable example of how faith-based women's organizations can serve as agents of transformative legal change particularly in promoting justice, gender equality, and community resilience. Overall, this program demonstrates that legal empowerment through paralegal development is not merely an educational intervention, but

a strategic entry point toward building a more just, aware, and participatory society at the grassroots level.

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