



TRANSFORMING ELDERLY ENTREPRENEURSHIP AT SEKOLAH LANSIA YOGYAKARTA VIA TRIKON PRINCIPLES

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ABSTRACT

This community service program aimed to strengthen the entrepreneurial mindset of elderly individuals through a qualitative and participatory approach. Implemented in collaboration with the Department of Women Empowerment, Child Protection, Population Control and Family Planning (DP3AP2KB) of Yogyakarta City, the program involved elderly participants at the Sekolah Lansia in Prawirodirjan. Recognizing the advanced age of the participants, the needs assessment was conducted through interactive discussions and participatory dialogue. Activities included entrepreneurship discussions grounded in local wisdom and Ki Hadjar Dewantara's Trikon leadership principles (Continuity, Convergence, Concentricity). This intervention shifted the entrepreneurial paradigm toward "Karya Lansia" (Elderly Creations), leveraging their existing experience, skills, social networks, and trust. Findings revealed that participants viewed business activities primarily as a means to stay busy and seek happiness, rather than solely to maximize profit. Program evaluation demonstrated increased enthusiasm and institutional pride, driven by the city government's structured educational tiers (Standard 1, 2, and 3), each lasting one year and culminating in a formal graduation ceremony (wisuda). This program generated a qualitative community-based empowerment model integrating the Resource-Based View with elderly social capital, fostering a sustainable, happiness-oriented empowerment approach aligned with healthy and productive aging.

Keywords: *Elderly empowerment, participatory dialogue, asset-based community development, Trikon leadership, active aging.*

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the world is undergoing a major demographic shift with an increasingly large elderly population. Thanks to medical and healthcare advancements, life expectancy is indeed rising. While this is certainly good news, it also brings forth new challenges, particularly regarding

social security, healthcare, and how to keep the elderly economically independent. In Yogyakarta, this global phenomenon intersects with local traditions and civic policies. Various studies (such as WHO, 2002) emphasize that maintaining the economic independence, active community participation, and mental health of the elderly is crucial for keeping our society resilient and balanced.

At the local level, the Yogyakarta City Government has been highly responsive to this situation, one example being the launch of the "*Sekolah Lansia*" (School for the Elderly) program. Initiated by the Department of Women Empowerment, Child Protection, Population Control and Family Planning (DP3AP2KB), this program has a noble goal: to keep the elderly healthy, resilient, and empowered. The school is even designed with a tiered curriculum (Standard 1, 2, and 3). However, practical implementation in the field such as in Kelurahan Prawirodirjan shows that encouraging the elderly to be productive in entrepreneurship is not easy. The obstacle is not a lack of willingness, but rather declining physical factors, psychological barriers, and difficulties in adapting to the digital era. Therefore, we need an empowerment program that goes directly into the community, engages them in heart-to-heart conversations, and provides truly elderly-friendly solutions.

One of the biggest hurdles is the misconception of the word "entrepreneurship." Thus far, entrepreneurship is often imagined as a highly competitive business that requires massive capital, demands digital marketing expertise, and constantly chases maximum profit. Naturally, an image like this immediately makes the elderly back away. For those whose physical strength has declined and who are living a relaxed life on a pension, taking on complicated business risks actually triggers stress rather than enthusiasm. Consequently, even when the elderly do have a business or a money-making hobby, it is kept very casual. Household funds and business money are often mixed without proper bookkeeping (Tambunan 2019). On the other hand, training programs from the government or universities often evaluate the elderly's success using rigid, numerical questionnaires. For the elderly, being forced to fill out such formal surveys only makes them anxious and feel as though they are being tested. To address this issue, academic institutions like Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa step in to collaborate through comfortable, conversational approaches.

Existing research on MSMEs typically focuses only on macro-level issues, such as access to capital or digital technology. Research that explores the psychological and social aspects of the potential held by the elderly remains rare. Often, the elderly are merely viewed as a burden or a demographic constantly dependent on state aid, rather than a valuable reservoir of local potential. In fact, viewed through the lens of the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory (Barney 2014), humans are extraordinary assets if they possess unique, hard-to-imitate traits. The primary asset of the elderly is certainly not strong physical energy or gadget fluency. Their true strength lies in highly valuable, invisible assets: "Experience Capital" (gained from decades of life), "Social Capital" (strong relationships with neighbors), "Skill Capital" (rare traditional expertise), and "Trust Capital" (a solid reputation in the neighborhood). Unfortunately, many empowerment programs fail because they focus exclusively on fixing the shortcomings of the elderly, while completely ignoring the abundant experience they already possess.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

This community service program was designed in a highly systematic yet flexible manner into three stages: casual conversations to map potential (participatory mapping), workshop implementation (intervention), and a heart-to-heart joint evaluation (reflective evaluation). This structure was intentionally created so that the implemented program truly originates from the voices and needs of the elderly themselves, rather than merely imposing theories or agendas from the university, as illustrated in Figure 1. Although the program's framework consists of three stages, the implementation of the reported community service activities was focused on a single, integrated meeting timeframe. In that single momentum, the implementation team directly integrated the mapping process through participatory discussion (Phase 1), the delivery of the intervention through the "*Karya Lansia*" workshop (Phase 2), and immediately concluded with a joint reflective evaluation session (Phase 3).

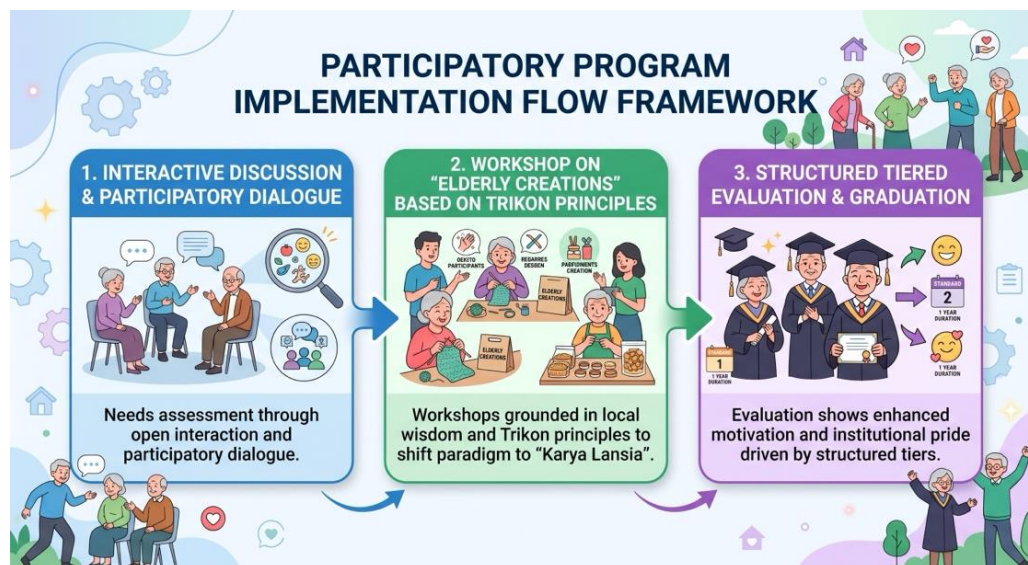


Figure 2. Participatory program

This program ran in alignment with the 2026 activity schedule of the *Sekolah Lansia* in Kelurahan Prawirodirjan, Yogyakarta City, and received official permission from the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) of Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa. To make the mentoring feel more personal and warm, the implementation team consisted of diverse academics. Led by Dr. Syamsul Hadi as the primary resource person who introduced the Trikon leadership concept (Hadi, Bidayati, and Kirana 2026), this activity was also assisted by three highly dedicated students: Wilhelmus Taek, Antonius Jun Nipu, and Hung Yeh Sun (an international student from Taiwan). The presence of these students provided a unique dynamic. They were not only tasked with preparing the event but also acted as empathetic "grandchildren" or conversation partners. They bridged the generational gap and took a personal (one-on-one) approach, ensuring that every grandfather and grandmother felt their voices were truly heard and valued.

For the elderly, questionnaires asking about "profit efficiency" or "digital capability" often feel like a frightening test. Such questions will only make them feel that their shortcomings are being highlighted, instantly triggering anxiety. Instead, data collection was conducted purely through highly relaxed, interactive, and empathetic discussions. This approach was designed in such a way that the elderly felt comfortable, psychologically safe, and able to reminisce while laughing happily.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the community service program at the *Sekolah Lansia* in Kelurahan Prawirodirjan, Yogyakarta City, was conducted through a participatory qualitative approach. Field findings were categorized into three main thematic findings: the results of mapping the elderly's mindset through dialogue, the intervention process based on Trikon principles to shift the entrepreneurship paradigm, and unexpected findings regarding the elderly's motivation rooted in the school's institutional structure.

Dialogue-Based Mapping: "Business as a Means to Stay Busy"

During the initial phase of interactive dialogue, the facilitators gently explored the participants' current daily routines, past professional lives, and any entrepreneurial experiences they might currently be running. The thematic responses from the community were highly uniform and theoretically significant. When asked why they engaged in entrepreneurship, their answers contained absolutely no capitalist terminology. The consensus was clear: their productive and commercial activities were strictly viewed as a way to keep themselves busy ("just to stay busy"). The drive for financial maximization, market expansion, or competitive dominance was completely absent. Their primary motivation for engaging in micro-scale production was entirely rooted in a triad of psychological needs:

1. **Maintaining Physical Mobility:** The act of cooking or gardening forces them to move, combating physical atrophy.
2. **Social Engagement:** Selling a few items to neighbors provides a socially acceptable excuse to chat, mitigating the profound loneliness that often accompanies old age.
3. **Seeking Daily Happiness:** Completing a task provides a daily dose of accomplishment.

This finding is monumental. It fundamentally validates the necessity of abandoning traditional business metrics when empowering this specific demographic (Tambunan 2019). It also perfectly validates the core vision of the Mayor of Yogyakarta's initiative and the WHO (2002): the main goal is to keep the elderly healthy, engaged, and productive, rather than attempting to transform them into profit-driven corporate entities.

Paradigm Shift: From Traditional Business to "*Karya Lansia*"

Armed with the mapping results that clearly indicated a rejection of formal business pressures, the core intervention focused on validating their existing mindset rather than imposing modern business practices upon them. A highly interactive basic training session titled "Entrepreneurship for the Elderly: Staying Active, Productive, and Useful" was guided by the main resource person (Dr. Syamsul Hadi), supported by student facilitators. The primary objective of this intervention was to formalize and celebrate their natural behavior by introducing the concept of "*Karya Lansia*" (Elderly Creations). The facilitators contrasted the exhausting demands of Traditional Business (requiring money, investors, targeting hundreds of customers, aiming for maximum profit) with the enjoyable reality of *Karya Lansia* (requiring only time and experience, targeting 1 or 2 neighbors, aiming for happiness and usefulness). Through the theoretical lens of the Trikon principles, the discussion emphasized that their uncodified intrinsic assets represent a valid and strong form of capital. This activity can be seen in Figures 2 and 3 as participants were guided to map out their:

1. **Experience Capital:** Decades of life experience and resilience.
2. **Skill Capital:** Specific technical abilities.
3. **Social Capital:** Deeply rooted relationships within the community.
4. **Trust Capital:** The lifelong reputation for honesty they hold in Prawirodirjan



Figure 1. Dr. Syamsul Hadi giving all participants the opportunity to express their opinions.



Figure 2. Dr. Syamsul Hadi joyfully delivering the material.

The participants were highly enthusiastic during this session in the *Kelurahan* hall. This activity affirmed that success in their old age is defined almost exclusively by happiness and usefulness to the community, completely eliminating the crushing psychological pressure to generate large financial profits.

Institutional Pride and the Transformative Power of the Tiered Education System

A major, perhaps unexpected, thematic finding emerged during the reflective evaluation phase. This finding centered on the profound sense of institutional pride and self-esteem that the participants derived from the structure of the *Sekolah Lansia* itself, as seen in Figure 4. The Yogyakarta City Government, through DP3AP2KB, designed this program with a brilliant psychological architecture: it mirrors formal higher education. This program is divided into several distinct and structured tiers: Standard 1, Standard 2, and Standard 3. The participants revealed how they conceptualized these tiers. They proudly equated Standard 1 with achieving a Bachelor's degree (S1), Standard 2 with a Master's degree (S2), and Standard 3 with a Doctorate (S3). During the qualitative discussions, participants expressed immense and tangible enthusiasm for this academic structure. They detailed that each tier only requires a participation

commitment of one year, ensuring that the goal is always within sight. Crucially, each tier culminates in a formal graduation ceremony (*wisuda*).



Figure 4. Participants enthusiastically attending a lecture at the *Sekolah Lansia*



Figure 5. Group photo before the class ended.

The existence of this structured progression significantly boosts their self-esteem in a way that monetary handouts never could. The graduation ceremony acts as a powerful and highly emotional psychological milestone. Wearing a graduation gown and receiving a certificate proves to themselves, their peers, and most importantly to their children and grandchildren, that they are not obsolete. It proves that they are still capable of learning, advancing, and remaining truly empowered citizens (*lansia berdaya*). The "business" activities they engage in are thus

seen as practical applications of their "academic" progress at the *Sekolah Lansia*, creating a holistic ecosystem of active aging.

Redefining Entrepreneurial Capability through the Resource-Based View (RBV)

When elderly capability is evaluated based on traditional commercial metrics such as technology adoption rates, year-over-year revenue growth, or supply chain efficiency their capability appears low, leading to deficit-oriented policies. However, when viewed through a properly contextualized Resource-Based View (RBV), the capability of the elderly in Prawirodirjan is very high. Their life experience and deeply rooted community trust function as a highly stable and sustainable asset base. These resources are fully "VRIN" (Valuable, Rare, Inimitable, Non-substitutable) in the micro-economy of a neighborhood (Barney 2014). By actively confirming their organic belief that business is "just to stay busy," the intervention successfully mapped these assets without imposing stressful corporate frameworks. Theoretically, this proves that in the specific context of active aging and gerontology, capital is primarily social, reputational, and experience-based, and the most rational ultimate dividend is physical health and psychological happiness (Hadi and Bidayati 2026).

Multidimensional Success and Psychological Well-being By formalizing the concept of *Karya Lansia*, this program fundamentally redefined the metrics of success into four highly accessible dimensions, drawing heavily from the workshop materials:

1. **Social Success:** The ability to gain new interactions and maintain friendships through small transactions.
2. **Psychological Success:** Building self-confidence and having a definite, structured reason to wake up and get out of bed in the morning.
3. **Knowledge Success:** The generative act of passing down traditional knowledge, recipes, or cultural skills to the younger generation.
4. **Economic Success:** Earning small amounts of pocket money purely as an additional bonus, not as the primary existential goal.

This multidimensional perspective is highly aligned with their intrinsic motivation to simply stay active. This eliminates the stigma of "failing at business" if they do not make a large

profit, replacing it with the guarantee of "succeeding at life" by staying engaged. This is in line with the city's mandate for resilient and healthy aging.

The Role of Structured Institutional Empowerment and the ABCD Framework

The extraordinary enthusiasm generated by the Standard 1, 2, and 3 tier system highlights a crucial, often overlooked aspect of elderly empowerment. From the perspective of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) framework, the physical and conceptual space of the *Sekolah Lansia* is not merely a place for top-down knowledge transfer; it is a living, vital community institution that actively restores human dignity (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993). The prospect of attending a formal graduation (*wisuda*) provides a tangible, achievable short-term goal (one year per tier) that keeps the elderly highly motivated. This provides structure to lives that have lost structure due to the absence of formal employment. This institutional framing brilliantly shifts the overarching narrative of old age. Instead of old age being viewed as a tragic period of inevitable decline, physical decay, and obsolescence, the *Sekolah Lansia* framework transforms it into a period of continuous achievement, structured personal growth, and sustainable community contribution.

Integration of Trikon Principles The application of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's Trikon principles was evident throughout the intervention's success (Hadi, Bidayati, and Kirana 2026)

1. **Continuity (*Kontinuitas*):** This program relied on the continued use of their existing skills rather than forcing new skills upon them.
2. **Convergence (*Konvergensi*):** The elderly adapted their traditional skills to meet the small-scale needs of their modern neighbors, thus remaining relevant.
3. **Concentricity (*Konsentris*):** The participants maintained their core identity as respected elders engaging in *Karya Lansia*, rather than losing their true selves trying to become aggressive modern entrepreneurs.

This proves that local philosophical frameworks are not merely theoretical platitudes, but highly effective practical tools for community empowerment when applied with empathy.

CONCLUSION

The community service program at the *Sekolah Lansia* in Kelurahan Prawirodirjan has successfully explored and strengthened the entrepreneurial mindset among the elderly through

a much more humane approach. By abandoning rigid numerical evaluation methods and shifting to interactive discussions and participatory dialogue, this program discovered an important reality: for the elderly, micro-scale entrepreneurial activities are not an arena for maximizing financial profit. Instead, these activities serve as a vital coping mechanism to stay busy, nurture social interactions, and find daily happiness. Through the touch of local wisdom namely Ki Hadjar Dewantara's Trikon principles the program's intervention successfully shifted the heavy burden of the "modern business" concept into the enjoyable paradigm of "*Karya Lansia*" (Elderly Creations). This concept proves that the elderly do not lack resources; rather, they possess highly valuable and hard-to-imitate capital (in line with the Resource-Based View theory), specifically a wealth of life experience, traditional skills, social networks, and a good reputation (trust) within the community. Furthermore, this program found that the tiered educational structure established by the city government (Standard 1, 2, and 3), which culminates in a formal graduation ceremony (*wisuda*), acts as a very powerful psychological catalyst. The hope of graduating is able to restore the self-esteem, institutional pride, and motivation of the elderly. Ultimately, this program produced a qualitative community empowerment model that integrates asset management with the social capital of the elderly, creating a healthy, productive, and sustainable active aging ecosystem that is entirely oriented toward happiness

RECOMMENDATIONS

Here are brief recommendations form the article:

1. For Local Government (Yogyakarta City Government & DP3AP2KB)
Maintain the tiered "Elderly School" model complete with graduation ceremonies to sustain motivation, and shift succes indicators form economic profit to the psychological well being and happiness of the elderly.
2. For Academics & Facilitators
Adopt an asset based approach focusing on the capital of experience, skill and neighborly trust and apply the trikon principles to enable the elderly to engage in activities at a pace suited to them, free from the pressure of modern competition.
3. For Elderly-Led Business Concepts

Shift the business paradigm to “Elderly Endeavors” focusing not on maximizing profit, but on maintaining physical health, fostering social interaction, and filling leisure time. Involve university students or the younger generation to serve as personal companions.

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