



Attempt to Optimize the Role of Peer Support Group (PSG) in Increasing the Quality-of-Life Persons Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) Through the Revitalization of Peer Support Activities Program in Pati Regency

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Article Info:

Submitted: 02 January 2023

Revised: 25 March 2023

Accepted: 18 April 2023

Publisher: 19 April 2023

Keywords: Peer Support Group (PSG); People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA); Quality; Revitalization; Community Empowerment

Abstract

It is well-known that People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) are denied and avoided by their own families. This is a very heavy social burden that must be borne by PLWHA. Therefore, the role of Peer Support Groups (PSG) as community empowerment is very important to improve the living quality of PLWHA. In this study, community service activities were conducted to optimize the role of PSG in improving the living quality of PLWHA in Pati Regency. Currently, Pati is the fourth highest city with PLWHA in Central Java, Indonesia. The community service utilized guidance participation, which prioritizes the involvement of the community in the activities. The implementation involved analytical methods for problem-solving and completion of the study. Two meetings were held at the Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) Clinic of Soewondo Pati Hospital. In average, one activity was attended by 5-8 participants. They are the volunteer members from PSG Rumah Matahari. The meetings focused on brainstorming sessions and on providing counselling about the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) program, which aimed to enhance knowledge about PMTCT among PSG Rumah Matahari volunteers, especially in assisting pregnant women with PLWHA. The results show that the community service activities successfully highlighted the importance of PSG in improving the quality of life for PLWHA. The PMTCT program was well understood by the PSG Rumah Matahari volunteers, indicating the effectiveness of the training.

1. Introduction

The increasing number of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in the Pati district is a concerning issue. Data from the Pati Aids Commission indicates that there have been 1,463 reported cases in the past ten years, with 171 deaths, including an additional 71 deaths from January to May 2019 (Tomi, 2019). This makes the HIV/AIDS cases in Pati Regency the fourth highest in Central Java.

Unfortunately, individuals who are diagnosed with HIV/AIDS often face discrimination from those around them. Even though HIV/AIDS is not transmitted through casual contact like shaking hands, PLWHA often experience stigma and rejection.

This stigma stems from a lack of understanding and is a result of negative and narrow perspectives that associate HIV/AIDS with moral illness (Waluyo et al., 2015). It is no secret that people with HIV/AIDS are denied and avoided by their own families, adding to the heavy social burden they must bear.

Community empowerment can play a crucial role in addressing these challenges, and one way to achieve this is by optimizing the role of Peer Support Groups (PSG). PSGs aim to provide support for individuals living with HIV/AIDS and their families, addressing various health, social, and psychological issues (Mufarika et al., 2016). Peer support interventions have been shown to correlate with improved emotional management and treatment outcomes for those infected with HIV/AIDS (Mufarika et al., 2016). PSG activities can include home visits, group meetings, visits to health care facilities, and tailored support such as training, counseling, medication adherence, and referrals to comprehensive Sexual Health Services (CST).

PSG Rumah Matahari is the only Non-Government Organization (NGO) in Pati Regency that deals with HIV/AIDS cases (Rumah Matahari, n.d.). As a PSG partner, Rumah Matahari plays a vital role in promoting and preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS. It provides accurate knowledge about HIV/AIDS to PLWHA and their families through activities such as home visits and group meetings. Currently, Rumah Matahari is assisting a total of 523 PLWHA in the Pati Regency with only 2 volunteers. The lack of volunteers is an internal challenge faced by PSG Rumah Matahari, leading to suboptimal implementation of planned activities.

To overcome these challenges, the community service team can focus on increasing the role and function of PSG in Pati Regency. Efforts can be made through volunteer recruitment training and aiding through various program activities, with a specific emphasis on peer support. By doing so, the community service activities can effectively optimize the role of PSG Rumah Matahari in reducing HIV/AIDS transmission rates and improving the quality of life for PLWHA.

Therefore, the growing number of HIV/AIDS cases in Pati Regency highlights the need for community support and empowerment. Peer support groups, such as PSG Rumah Matahari, play a crucial role in providing holistic support to PLWHA and their families. However, the lack of volunteers poses a challenge to fully implementing planned activities. Hence, this study aims to increase the role of PSG and to address those challenges mentioned above by using community service activities to reduce HIV/AIDS transmission rates and improve the quality of life for PLWHA in Pati Regency.

2. Methods of Implementation

The method used in this community service is guidance participation, namely prioritizing the participation of the community involvement in the activities carried out. The methods used in problem solving include analytical methods. The methods used in the completion of the study are listed in this section.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

Community service activities were carried out in 2 meetings at the Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) Clinic Soewondo Pati Hospital. Overall, one activity was attended by 5-8 participants from the volunteer members of PSG Rumah Matahari. The first meeting was held on 10th December 2019 attended by five PSG Rumah Matahari volunteers. The first day's activity was focused on brainstorming about several topics, such as:

1. Program activities that had been implemented and not been implemented.
2. What were the obstacles while being a PSG Rumah Matahari volunteers?
3. What program activities could be carried out in collaboration with Institute of Health Bakti Utama Pati?

As a result, there is one program that has not been implemented, namely providing job training in the form of skills that could be a provision for PLWHA to meet their daily needs. Meanwhile, program activities that can be carried out in collaboration with Institute of Health Bakti Utama Pati are providing counseling to Rumah Matahari PSG volunteers about the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) program. Therefore, the knowledge about PMTCT will optimize the aiding activities, especially for pregnant women with PLWHA.

The second meeting was held on December 15th 2020 by eight volunteers from PSG Rumah Matahari. The second day activity was a training about PMTCT for the volunteer members of PSG Rumah Matahari. The result indicates that, in average, the participants understand the PMTCT program. There were two participants who asked about the training materials and from the feedbacks that given by these two participants, show that they already understood about the asked training materials.

3.2 Discussion

The results of implementing community service in the form of optimizing the role of PSG in improving the quality of life of PLWHA through revitalization of the peer support activity program in Pati Regency show that there is a need to optimize the program so that PSG's role in improving the quality of PLWHA could be achieved. This is in accordance with the results of research by Mufarika et al (2016). This study indicated that almost entirely received less peer support group roles of 46 (75%) of people living with HIV. The result of statistical test showed the value of *p value* (0.000) < α (0.05), meaning there is a relationship of peer support group role with quality of life in people with HIV / AIDS (PWHA) in Poly VCT Syarifah Ambami Rato Ebu Bangkalan Hospital.

According to Rasyid (2016), one of the factors that has an important role in improving the quality of life of PLWHA is PSG. Peer support is defined as comfort, attention, appreciation, or help that is felt by PLWHA from other people or fellow PLWHA (Rasyid, 2016). The pattern of peer group support begins with closed meetings for PLWHA to share experiences, fears and hopes. The pattern also developed with joint learning activities to the involvement of PLWHA more broadly in the dissemination of information and advocacy related to HIV. Implementation activities can be shown in the Figure 1:



Figure 1. Community Service Activities with the Volunteers from Rumah Matahari.

4. Conclusion

The PSG activity program in Rumah Matahari is optimal in improving the quality of PLWHA. On average, PSG Rumah Matahari volunteer participants understand the PMTCT program.

5. Acknowledgements

The author team would like to thank the PSG Coordinator of Rumah Matahari and the VCT Clinic at Soewondo Pati Hospital for given the permits. We also gratitude the PSG Rumah Matahari volunteers who were cooperatively involved in this activity.

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