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## **MOSQUE-BASED SOCIAL INCLUSION: A STUDY ON BENEFICIARIES' PERSPECTIVES OF THE FREE MEAL PROGRAM AT PEMUDA KONSULAT MOSQUE SURABAYA**

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**ABSTRACT:** Mosques not only serve as places of worship but also hold great potential as centers of inclusive social services. However, many mosques have yet to accommodate the



*diverse social needs of the community fully. This study aims to examine the implementation of the three dimensions of social inclusion access, participation, and empowerment in the Free Meal Program (Warung Makan Gratis). This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method, collecting data through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that the access dimension is reflected in open information and physical ease of reaching the program. The participation dimension is shown through the active involvement of beneficiaries in the implementation and development of the program. Meanwhile, the empowerment dimension is manifested in the positive transformation experienced by beneficiaries in social, economic, and spiritual aspects. This study concludes that the Free Meal Program represents a concrete example of mosque-based social inclusion practices that successfully reach vulnerable groups. These findings contribute to the development of literature on social inclusion in religious contexts and offer a replicable model of good practice for other mosques or religious institutions.*

**Keywords:** Access, Participation, Empowerment, Free Meal Program, Social Inclusion,

**ABSTRAK:** Masjid tidak hanya berperan sebagai tempat ibadah, tetapi juga memiliki potensi besar sebagai pusat layanan sosial yang inklusif. Namun, masih banyak masjid yang belum sepenuhnya mengakomodasi keberagaman kebutuhan sosial masyarakat. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji implementasi tiga dimensi inklusi sosial yakni akses, partisipasi, dan pemberdayaan dalam program Warung Makan Gratis (WMG) di Masjid Pemuda Konsulat Surabaya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode studi kasus, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dimensi akses tercermin dalam keterbukaan informasi dan kemudahan fisik dalam menjangkau program. Dimensi partisipasi terlihat dari keterlibatan aktif penerima manfaat dalam pelaksanaan dan pengembangan program. Sementara itu, dimensi pemberdayaan terwujud dalam transformasi positif yang dialami penerima manfaat dari sisi sosial, ekonomi dan spiritual. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa program WMG merupakan contoh konkret dari praktik inklusi sosial berbasis masjid yang berhasil menjangkau kelompok rentan secara luas. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pengembangan literatur inklusi sosial dalam konteks keagamaan serta menawarkan model praktik baik yang dapat direplikasi oleh masjid atau lembaga keagamaan lainnya.

**Kata Kunci:** Akses, Inklusi Sosial, Partisipasi, Pemberdayaan, Warung Makan Gratis

## INTRODUCTION

In the socio-religious context of Indonesia, mosques play a crucial role in the life of the community. Beyond functioning as places of worship, mosques also serve



as centers for da'wah, social services, and community development.<sup>1</sup> However, in practice, many mosques remain focused primarily on ritualistic functions, without expanding their role to provide inclusive social services for the broader public.<sup>2</sup> This is evident in the limited access to mosque facilities and programs for certain groups. For instance, some mosques still lack proper ablution (wudhu) facilities for women—such as enclosed spaces with adequate privacy, seating, and accessible water—which reduces the comfort and dignity of female congregants in performing their religious duties.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, based on observations and the researcher's experiences, several mosques impose restrictions on the use of mosque space for social activities, even prohibiting individuals from resting in mosque areas during emergencies.

In terms of social services, some mosques have initiated various programs such as free food distribution, healthcare services, and humanitarian assistance.<sup>4</sup> However, these programs are often limited to regular congregants or formally registered community members, leaving many outsiders feeling unwelcome or excluded from participation. These phenomena indicate that certain mosques still operate with an exclusive orientation, failing to accommodate the diverse social needs of the wider community. This suggests that the implementation of social inclusion within mosque-based services remains underdeveloped. In fact, several studies emphasize that mosques can function as inclusive spaces that accommodate social diversity, provided they are managed with principles of openness and equal access.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, a deeper understanding of the concept of social inclusion and its practical application in the context of mosque management is essential.

The concept of social inclusion is highly relevant to the development of mosque-based services, considering the mosque's role as a religious and community institution. Gidley et al. (2010) conceptualize social inclusion as comprising three key dimensions: accessibility, participation, and empowerment which form a graduated spectrum essential for fostering an inclusive society.<sup>6</sup> From

<sup>1</sup> Mustain, "Dinamika Fungsi Masjid di Indonesia: Dari Lokus Pengajaran Islam Ke Pemberdayaan Sosial Ekonomi Umat," *eL-HiKMAH Jurnal Kajian dan Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 17, no. 2 (2023): 109-21.

<sup>2</sup> Chusnul Azhar dan Krisdiyanto Krisdiyanto, "Optimalisasi Manajemen Masjid Sebagai Pusat Kegiatan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Dusun Daleman," *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Program Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 2021, 246-51, <https://doi.org/10.18196/ppm.32.201>.

<sup>3</sup> Andi Nurfajrina Amalia, "Representasi Perempuan di Masjid," 19 Juli 2020, <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/583hx>.

<sup>4</sup> Restu Rizki Amanda, Agus Fakhruddin, dan Aceng Kosasih, "Upaya Masjid dalam Meningkatkan Kepedulian Sosial di Masyarakat," *Journal of Education Research* 5, no. 3 (31 Agustus 2024): 4221-31, <https://doi.org/10.37985/jer.v5i3.1604>.

<sup>5</sup> Lukman Fajariyah, "Iklusivitas Masjid Sebagai Perekat Sosial : Studi Kasus pada Masjid Ash-Shiddiqi Demangan Kidul Yogyakarta," *SANGKÉP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 3, no. 1 (2020): 85-96, <https://doi.org/10.20414/sangkep.v2i2.p-ISSN>.

<sup>6</sup> E. Gidley, J. M., Hampson, G. P., Wheeler, L, Beredet-Samuel, "Social Inclusion : Context , Theory and Practice," *The Australasian Journal of University-Community Engagement* 5, no. 1 (2010): 6-36.



an Islamic perspective, values such as *ukhuwah islamiyah* (brotherhood), *musawah* (equality), and *ihsan* (compassion) provide a strong theological foundation for building an inclusive community. Faoziyah further asserts that these values—alongside principles like solidarity, justice, tolerance, diversity, and empathy—align with the core spirit of social inclusion, promoting openness and equality in community service.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, Islam's doctrine of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to all creation) can be seen as a spiritual basis for fostering an inclusive society. Furthermore, the concept of social inclusion has long been embedded in Islamic teachings and was practiced throughout the classical Islamic civilization.<sup>8</sup> Social practices of that era demonstrated Islam's longstanding commitment to social justice, protection of vulnerable groups, and equitable distribution of welfare—showing that Islamic social inclusion is both applicable and historically grounded.

In today's increasingly pluralistic and complex society, mosques are expected to evolve into institutions capable of serving all segments of the population equitably. The principles of social inclusion—whether through open access, active participation, or community empowerment—must be integrated into all forms of mosque services. The integration of Islamic values with the principles of social inclusion is not only feasible but should be considered a central orientation in the development of mosque-based public services. Through this approach, mosques can strengthen their moral and social legitimacy as agents of community transformation toward a more inclusive and civil society. The relevance of these values is clearly reflected in the practice of faith-based social services that emphasize openness and non-discrimination. An academic forum hosted by Universitas Gadjah Mada (2023) stressed the importance of destigmatization, equitable communication, physical accessibility, and active participation as essential elements of fair and humane social services.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, in practice, mosques must provide spaces for worship and social services that are inclusive, empowering, and accessible to all members of society regardless of religion, gender, social status, or economic background.

A prominent example of social inclusion in mosque management can be found at Pemuda Konsulat Mosque in Surabaya. Based on two days of on-site observation, the mosque is managed by young people using an open, participatory, and socially responsive management model. Unlike many other mosques that focus solely on

<sup>7</sup> Sitti Faoziyah, "Inklusi Sosial Dalam Perspektif Keislaman: Meningkatkan Kesejahteraan Sosial Untuk Semua," *Akselerasi: Jurnal Ilmiah Nasional* 5, no. 1 (2023): 47–56.

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad Yusru Hana dan Muhammad Nur Ichsan Azis, "Dinamika Inklusi Sosial Masyarakat Islam: Posisi Kaum Mawali Dalam Pembangunan Umat Islam Di Jazirah Arab," *El Tarikh : Journal of History, Culture and Islamic Civilization* 4, no. 1 (2023): 45–53, <https://doi.org/10.24042/jhcc.v4i1.16766>.

<sup>9</sup> Departemen PSDK, "Social Development Talk: Menakar Ulang Aksi Pelayanan Sosial Berbasis Agama dalam Pembangunan Sosial yang Inklusif," Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2023, <https://pembangunansosial.fisipol.ugm.ac.id/social-development-talk-menakar-ulang-aksi-pelayanan-sosial-berbasis-agama-dalam-pembangunan-sosial-yang-inklusif/#>:



ritual activities, Pemuda Konsulat Mosque has expanded its function through various social programs such as *Pasar Bahagia* (Happy Market), *Yatim Bahagia* (Happy Orphans), free medical clinics, and the *Free Meal Program*. These initiatives are designed to reach individuals from diverse social, economic, and religious backgrounds.

The Free Meal Program is one of the most notable initiatives that embodies the principles of social inclusion in practice. According to an interview with one of the mosque caretakers (*takmir*), the program operates under the tagline "Everyone is Welcome to Eat," reflecting its openness and commitment to equal access for all in need. The caretaker explained that the program's primary goal is not merely to fulfill basic nutritional needs but also to foster harmonious relationships between mosque administrators, congregants, and the surrounding community. When it was first launched in 2022, the program provided around 50 to 60 meals per day. Today, it has expanded to serve 150 to 200 meals daily. This growth not only reflects the program's scalability but also the capacity of the mosque management to broaden its reach and ensure long-term sustainability. It also demonstrates the program's responsiveness to community needs and its ability to build robust support from various stakeholders. From the researcher's perspective, this development serves as evidence that mosque-based social services hold great potential for sustainable growth when supported by community participation and effective management systems. Direct observations confirmed that the program is open not only to regular congregants but also to the general public. Interviews with eight beneficiaries from diverse backgrounds—including informal workers, persons with disabilities, former corporate professionals, students, and non-Muslim couriers—highlight the mosque's strong commitment to inclusive and equitable service delivery. Thus, the mosque not only fulfills its spiritual function but also plays a vital role as a provider of inclusive and humanistic social services rooted in Islamic values.

Several previous studies have indicated that mosques possess significant potential as centers of social inclusion, particularly when managed with principles of openness and a strong commitment to community welfare. Masjid Ash-Shiddiiqi in Yogyakarta, for instance, functions as a social integrator by actively engaging the community in various educational and religious activities.<sup>10</sup> Masjid Sholahuddin in Sidoarjo also demonstrates inclusive practices by providing facilities that are friendly to vulnerable groups—such as persons with disabilities, the elderly, women, and children—while fostering a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere for all worshippers.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, Masjid Ulil Ijtihad and Masjid Jami' Al Aqabah in East Kalimantan have implemented social inclusion values through religious

<sup>10</sup> Fajariyah, "Iklusivitas Masjid Sebagai Perekat Sosial : Studi Kasus pada Masjid Ash-Shiddiiqi Demangan Kidul Yogyakarta."

<sup>11</sup> Arina Hayati dkk., "Participatory accessibility audits and design proposal for inclusive mosques," *Transformasi: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 20, no. 1 (30 Juni 2024): 146-57, <https://doi.org/10.20414/transformasi.v20i1.8978>.



programs and community empowerment training.<sup>12</sup> These three cases collectively demonstrate that mosques are capable of developing inclusive, adaptive, and responsive social services that meet the needs of both congregants and the surrounding community.

Nevertheless, these studies tend to focus primarily on managerial, structural, or programmatic aspects of mosque-based social inclusion. Very few have examined how beneficiaries themselves experience, perceive, and interpret the values of inclusivity in mosque-based social services. This study therefore offers a distinct perspective by centering on the lived experiences and views of beneficiaries of the Free Meal Program at Pemuda Konsulat Mosque in Surabaya. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following question: How are the three dimensions of social inclusion—access, participation, and empowerment—implemented in the Free Meal Program at Pemuda Konsulat Mosque, as perceived by its beneficiaries?

Using a qualitative approach, this research explores how social inclusion is manifested in mosque service practices. The study aims to provide valuable insights for mosque administrators in designing programs that are more inclusive and responsive to congregants' needs. Furthermore, it offers a useful reference for academics and practitioners in the fields of mosque management, Islamic da'wah, and socio-religious studies to develop strategies for inclusive mosque services. As such, this study not only fills a gap in the literature on mosque-based social inclusion but also enriches scholarly discourse through a beneficiary-centered approach. Additionally, it contributes to the theoretical development of social inclusion in religious contexts and provides practical recommendations for mosque administrators to enhance their role as social service providers for the broader community.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, aiming to explore how social inclusion is implemented in the *Free Meal Program* at Pemuda Konsulat Mosque in Surabaya. The data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, which allows for the identification of recurring patterns based on the lived experiences of program beneficiaries.

The research was conducted between January and April 2025 at Pemuda Konsulat Mosque, located at Jl. Kalikepiting No. 111, Pacar Kembang, Tambaksari, Surabaya. The primary subjects of this study were eight beneficiaries of the Free Meal Program, representing a diverse range of backgrounds—including informal workers, persons with disabilities, a former corporate trainer, and a non-Muslim courier. This diversity reflects the inclusive nature of the mosque's program.

Data collection was carried out using three main techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted on-site to

<sup>12</sup> Riska Dwi Agustin dkk., "NILAI-NILAI INKLUSI SOSIAL PADA MANAJEMEN MASJID DI KALIMANTAN TIMUR," *Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah* XII, no. April (2024): 54-71.



monitor the actual implementation of the Free Meal Program. Interviews were conducted face-to-face with each informant at the program location, with the assistance of mosque administrators (*takmir*) in scheduling. The interviews were designed to explore the beneficiaries' experiences and perceptions regarding their involvement in the program. Additionally, the documentation method involved collecting various written materials, activity photographs, program reports, and related publications posted on the mosque's official Instagram account (@pemudakonsulat).

Data analysis followed the model developed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three main stages. The first stage is data reduction, which involves simplifying, sorting, and selecting data relevant to the research objectives. The second stage is data display, which allows the researcher to organize and visualize the reduced data to better understand emerging patterns and relationships. The final stage is conclusion drawing and verification, in which the interpreted data is synthesized into research findings. To ensure the validity and credibility of the findings, the study employed several strategies, including source triangulation, by comparing data across the eight beneficiaries to obtain more objective and comprehensive perspectives.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and analyzes the implementation of three dimensions of social inclusion—access, participation, and empowerment—within the Free Meal Program (*Warung Makan Gratis*, WMG) at Pemuda Konsulat Mosque in Surabaya, as perceived by the program's beneficiaries. The discussion is organized systematically, integrating interview data from informants, relevant theoretical frameworks—particularly the model developed by Gidley et al.—and analytical interpretations that link empirical findings to the theory. This approach is intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of the extent of social inclusion implemented in the program and its practical implications for community-based social services.

### Access Dimension in Mosque-Based Social Inclusion: Information and Physical Accessibility for All

Access is a crucial aspect of social inclusion, referring to individuals' ability to obtain information, services, and facilities available within a society. Broadly defined, access encompasses both informational and physical ease in reaching social services.<sup>13</sup> Accessibility includes not only physical elements—such as location, transportation, and supportive infrastructure—but also informational clarity, ease of understanding, and non-discriminatory access mechanisms.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Gidley, J. M., Hampson, G. P., Wheeler, L, Beredet-Samuel, "Social Inclusion : Context , Theory and Practice."

<sup>14</sup> Dwi Arianto dan Nurliana Cipta Apsari, "Gambaran Aksesibilitas, Inklusivitas, dan Hambatan Penyandang Disabilitas Dalam Memanfaatkan Transportasi Publik: Studi Literatur di Berbagai



In the socio-religious context, access serves as the gateway to wider participation and empowerment. A mosque that opens itself inclusively and offers accessible facilities can become an effective hub for social activity with wide-reaching impacts on community well-being.<sup>15</sup> Conversely, when access is limited or difficult, the benefits of social services become less optimal, particularly for vulnerable groups.

Interview data from WMG beneficiaries highlight key aspects of informational and physical access. Most informants received information about the program via social media, especially TikTok and Instagram, or through personal referrals from family or friends. For instance, Mr. Riyanto (51, informal laborer) learned about the program through TikTok, while Farel (15, vocational student) was informed via both an invitation and social media. Other informants, such as Mr. Tonny (49, non-Muslim delivery courier) and Mr. Edy (59, former corporate trainer), accessed the information through Instagram and family members. These findings suggest that the mosque effectively utilizes digital platforms to reach a broader public.

Most beneficiaries also reported ease of physical access. For example, Mr. Raka (30 whose sibling is a person with disability) mentioned no major barriers in accessing the mosque. Similarly, Mrs. Sri Wahyuni (43, cook) and Mr. Edy (59, former corporate trainer) cited the strategic location and welcoming facilities of the mosque as reasons for their continued participation. However, some informants, like Mrs. Erni (42, street tissue vendor) and Mr. Riyanto (51, informal laborer) experienced challenges such as long distances, inclement weather, and limited transportation. Despite these obstacles, they continued attending the program due to the substantial benefits they received.

According to Gidley et al. (2010), access is the foundational stage of social inclusion, underpinning both participation and empowerment.<sup>16</sup> It encompasses informational access, physical access, and open, non-discriminatory service provision. Gidley emphasizes that genuine access must reach all segments of society, regardless of socioeconomic or religious background. Inclusive institutions must ensure not only physical access but also that service-related information is broadly disseminated and easily comprehensible. Moreover, access should not be passive or symbolic; institutions must actively create communication channels that reach marginalized groups specifically. This view is supported by Gautama and Widiyahsено, who argue that openness of information is a vital first step in

Negara," *Focus : Jurnal Pekerjaan Sosial* 5, no. 2 (9 Februari 2023): 156, <https://doi.org/10.24198/focus.v5i2.42633>.

<sup>15</sup> Ahmad Faiz Khudlari Thoha dan Fatih Al-Qarni, "Optimization of Residential Mosque as The Public Space and Center of Community Activities," *Masjiduna : Jurnal Ilmiah Stidki Ar-Rahma* 4, no. 1 (2021): 1-8.

<sup>16</sup> Gidley, J. M., Hampson, G. P., Wheeler, L, Beredet-Samuel, "Social Inclusion : Context , Theory and Practice."



achieving meaningful social inclusion.<sup>17</sup>

The findings of this study, aligned with these theoretical perspectives, show that the WMG program at Pemuda Konsulat Mosque has implemented the access dimension effectively and inclusively. The use of social media as the main communication channel has successfully reached diverse community members, including non-regular mosque attendees. This aligns with Gidley's emphasis on accessible and transparent information in fostering inclusion. Furthermore, the mosque's commitment to non-discriminatory service—such as serving beneficiaries regardless of religion or background—has fostered a socially inclusive environment. Equal opportunities to receive meals serve as tangible evidence of social inclusion principles, as Gidley contends that access must be universal and equitable.

Nevertheless, certain challenges related to physical access remain and should be addressed by the program organizers to improve service quality. Issues such as long distances, limited transportation, and adverse weather conditions could be mitigated through practical solutions like providing alternative transportation or comfortable waiting areas. Ensuring improved physical access is essential to maintain the inclusion of vulnerable populations in regular program participation.

In conclusion, the implementation of the access dimension in the WMG program at Pemuda Konsulat Mosque aligns well with the theoretical framework of social inclusion proposed by Gidley et al. Its success has created a welcoming and open social space, delivering tangible benefits to beneficiaries.

#### **Participation Dimension in Mosque-Based Social Inclusion: Active Engagement of Beneficiaries in Program Implementation and Development**

Participation is one of the key components in realizing social inclusion, referring essentially to the active engagement of individuals or groups in activities that influence their lives. According to Gidley et al. (2010), participation is not merely defined by physical presence but also encompasses active involvement in decision-making, planning, implementation, and evaluation processes of services or programs offered within the community.<sup>18</sup> Thus, participation implies a dynamic interaction between service providers and beneficiaries, which facilitates the development of relevant, effective, and responsive services that address the real needs of the community.

In a socio-religious context such as the Free Meal Program (WMG) at Pemuda Konsulat Mosque, Surabaya, participation plays a critical role in ensuring that the services provided genuinely align with the needs of the beneficiaries. Participation in this context takes various forms, ranging from physical contributions to the provision of input and suggestions for program improvement.

The interview results reveal that beneficiaries' participation in the program is

<sup>17</sup> Prima Putra Budi Gutama dan Bambang Widiyahsено, "Inklusi Sosial Dalam Pembangunan Desa," *REFORMASI* 10 (2020): 70–80.

<sup>18</sup> Gidley, J. M., Hampson, G. P., Wheeler, L, Beredet-Samuel, "Social Inclusion : Context , Theory and Practice."



highly diverse. Most informants reported that they actively engaged in several activities supporting the mosque's daily operations. For example, Mr. Riyanto (51, informal laborer) regularly helped clean the mosque area after the meal service and actively provided suggestions to improve the seating arrangement for the collective comfort of all attendees. Likewise, Mr. Edy (59, former corporate trainer) is currently active as a volunteer, assisting in administrative tasks and contributing to the evaluation and planning of the mosque's social activities.

On the other hand, younger informants such as Farel (15, vocational student) also demonstrated participation through suggestions for community development, such as the idea of initiating *hadroh* (traditional percussion and chant) sessions for local youth. Although this suggestion has not yet been fully realized, it was positively welcomed by mosque administrators as a form of meaningful participation from the younger generation.

The theory advanced by Gidley et al. asserts that effective participation in social inclusion must be interactive, where beneficiaries' voices and perspectives are listened to and seriously considered throughout every decision-making process. In this regard, the mosque has successfully created a space for interaction where the active participation of beneficiaries is not only accepted but also appreciated. This is evident in the positive responses from the mosque administrators toward feedback and initiatives submitted by program participants.

An integrative analysis of these findings demonstrates that the Free Meal Program at Pemuda Konsulat Mosque has implemented the participation dimension of social inclusion quite effectively. The active involvement of beneficiaries—in both physical support and program development—shows the existence of an open and responsive social environment. However, to further enhance the effectiveness and impact of the program, it is essential for mosque administrators to consistently expand participatory opportunities, particularly by involving more beneficiaries in routine planning and evaluation processes.

Thus, the implementation of the participation dimension in this program not only provides real benefits in the form of services that meet actual needs but also fosters a sense of ownership and collective responsibility among beneficiaries. Ultimately, this contributes to the sustainability and long-term effectiveness of the program.

### **Empowerment Dimension in Mosque-Based Social Inclusion: Social, Economic, and Spiritual Transformation of Beneficiaries**

Empowerment is one of the core elements of social inclusion, emphasizing the development of individual and group capacities to take control over their own lives. Generally, empowerment is defined as a process aimed at encouraging constructive behavioral change within society, with the goal of improving quality of life and promoting social well-being.<sup>19</sup> In practice, community empowerment seeks to

<sup>19</sup> Esli Zuraidah, "PEMBERDAYAAN MASYARAKAT MELALUI KOTA TANPA KUMUH," *Jurnal at-Taghyir: Jurnal Dakwah dan Pengembangan Masyarakat Desa* 2, no. 1 (12 Januari 2020): 146–62, <https://doi.org/10.24952/taghyir.v2i1.1977>.



shape individuals and communities that are capable of thinking critically, acting independently, and exercising agency over decisions and actions that affect their lives.<sup>20</sup> Within the framework of social inclusion, empowerment is oriented toward creating self-reliant, productive individuals and communities that can make positive contributions to their surroundings.

According to Gidley et al. (2010), empowerment represents the highest level in the spectrum of social inclusion, attainable once access and participation have been adequately addressed. At this stage, individuals and communities do not merely participate passively but actively develop their capacities, resulting in significant transformations in their daily lives—socially, economically, and spiritually.<sup>21</sup> Empowerment also involves the transformation from dependency to sustainable independence, enabling individuals to autonomously access resources, information, and opportunities for personal development.

The findings of this study reveal that beneficiaries experienced various positive changes as a result of their involvement in the Free Meal Program (WMG) at Pemuda Konsulat Mosque, Surabaya. Socially, several informants reported increased positive interactions with their surrounding community. For instance, Mr. Riyanto (51, informal laborer) shared that he had become more proactive in inviting his neighbors to participate in mosque activities, thereby fostering a more harmonious environment and strengthening community solidarity. This finding highlights that the WMG program functions not only as a food service initiative but also as a space for strengthening social networks.

From an economic perspective, informants such as Mr. Maschun (57, mobile ice cream vendor), who now works as a salesperson for a mosque-based business initiative, reported that his involvement with the mosque has provided greater economic stability. He stated that the economic empowerment he experienced enabled him to support his family while also remaining engaged in mosque-related social activities. His participation opened up new opportunities previously unavailable to him, indicating a notable enhancement in his individual economic capacity as a result of the program.

In terms of spiritual development, many informants described meaningful internal transformations. Mr. Edy (59, former corporate trainer) stated that through his active participation in the WMG program and other mosque initiatives, he felt closer to God and more motivated to engage in religious practices, including studying the Qur'an more seriously. Similarly, Mrs. Sri Wahyuni (53, cook) expressed that she felt a deeper sense of spiritual peace since becoming involved in the mosque's activities. These spiritual changes not only impacted individuals

<sup>20</sup> Fitria Rachmawati dkk., "PEMBERDAYAAN MASYARAKAT DESA BANYU RESMI DALAM MENINGKATKAN KUALITAS HIDUP MELALUI BIDANG PENDIDIKAN, KESEHATAN DAN EKONOMI," *Abdi Dosen : Jurnal Pengabdian Pada Masyarakat* 5, no. 1 (1 Maret 2021): 21, <https://doi.org/10.32832/abdidos.v5i1.829>.

<sup>21</sup> Gidley, J. M., Hampson, G. P., Wheeler, L, Beredet-Samuel, "Social Inclusion : Context , Theory and Practice."



personally but also contributed to a more positive and supportive community environment.

The theory proposed by Gidley et al. (2010) emphasizes that empowerment is a multidimensional process of capacity-building that encompasses transformations at both individual and collective levels.<sup>22</sup> In this study, it is evident that the WMG program at Pemuda Konsulat Mosque successfully created a comprehensive empowerment space. This success has been supported by the mosque's inclusive approach and consistent backing of the beneficiaries, which together fostered a conducive environment for effective and sustainable empowerment.

An integrative analysis of the interview findings and theoretical perspectives affirms that the implementation of the empowerment dimension within the WMG program has been highly effective and holistic. The program not only provides direct assistance in the form of free meals but also contributes to significant improvements in the lives of its beneficiaries by generating economic opportunities, enhancing positive social engagement, and strengthening spiritual growth. This success demonstrates the potential of mosque-based programs as inclusive empowerment models capable of effecting meaningful transformation at both the individual and community levels.

On a deeper level, the findings underscore that the key to successful empowerment in this context lies in the integration of direct services (such as free meal provision), spiritual development, and sustainable economic and social opportunities. Through such an integrated approach, the mosque transcends its conventional role as a place of worship and evolves into a genuine center of social, economic, and spiritual empowerment with long-term impact.

The practical implications of this analysis are highly relevant for mosque administrators and other social institutions seeking to design broader, more effective, and inclusive empowerment programs. A program management strategy that emphasizes active participation and multidimensional integration has proven to generate substantial positive outcomes for the community. Thus, the mosque-based inclusive empowerment model, as exemplified by the WMG program, can serve as a valuable reference for the development of similar programs in various social contexts.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the three dimensions of social inclusion – accessibility, participation, and empowerment – within the *Free Meal Program* (WMG) at Pemuda Konsulat Mosque in Surabaya, as perceived directly by the beneficiaries. The findings of this study indicate that the program has successfully realized the principles of social inclusion within the context of mosque-based social services, as conceptualized by Gidley et al..

<sup>22</sup> Gidley, J. M., Hampson, G. P., Wheeler, L, Beredet-Samuel, "Social Inclusion : Context , Theory and Practice."



The access dimension is reflected in the mosque's effective use of social media and interpersonal communication networks as inclusive information channels. The program's services are easily known and accessed by people from diverse backgrounds. Although some technical obstacles—such as distance and weather conditions—persist, both informational and physical access have generally been well facilitated.

Regarding the participation dimension, beneficiary involvement goes beyond passive attendance. They actively engage in operational activities and program development, including offering feedback that directly contributes to improving service quality. This demonstrates that the mosque has established an open and democratic participatory space for all members of the community involved.

The empowerment dimension highlights the program's positive impact on beneficiaries' social, economic, and spiritual independence. Through a holistic approach, the WMG program not only provides direct assistance but also promotes sustainable changes that enhance both individual and community capacities.

From these findings, it can be concluded that the mosque-based model of social inclusion, as implemented by Pemuda Konsulat Mosque, holds significant potential to be replicated in other communities and faith-based institutions. However, further in-depth research is needed to examine the long-term sustainability of the program's impact as well as the effectiveness of its implementation in communities with varying social and cultural characteristics.

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