



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT COUNSELING MODEL IN BENEFICIARY GRADUATION AS A SUSTAINABLE POVERTY ALLEVIATION STRATEGY IN BANYUMAS REGENCY

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the high dependence of beneficiaries on social assistance. Beneficiary Families (KPM) face mental, psychological, and social obstacles in achieving economic independence after graduation, so that financial-based empowerment programs are considered ineffective. This study aims to describe the community empowerment counseling model in the social assistance process for beneficiary graduates to transition to sustainable independence. The research uses a descriptive qualitative method with data collection techniques through active observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The research subjects consisted of five sub-district level social companions and fifty families of graduates from ten communities in southern Banyumas. Data were analyzed by reducing, classifying, and mapping findings by linking field results with empowerment theory and community counseling practices. The study results show that empowerment counseling plays an important role in increasing participants' confidence, self-efficacy, and motivation to be economically independent through community-based productive activities. However, challenges in the form of social stigma, lack of family support, and limited market access still hinder the empowerment process. In conclusion, empowerment counseling has been carried out using a psychosocial approach that strengthens the beneficiaries' mental readiness and socioeconomic capacity. Scientifically, this research contributes to developing an integrative model between social empowerment theory and community counseling practices in supporting the sustainability of social welfare postgraduate programs at the local level.

Keywords: Empowerment Counseling; Graduation of Beneficiaries; Social Mentoring.

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh tingginya ketergantungan penerima manfaat terhadap bantuan sosial. Keluarga Penerima Manfaat (KPM) menghadapi kendala mental, psikologis, dan sosial dalam mencapai kemandirian ekonomi pasca kelulusan, sehingga program pemberdayaan berbasis keuangan dinilai tidak cukup efektif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk medeskripsikan model konseling pemberdayaan dalam proses bansos bagi peserta graduasi penerima manfaat untuk dapat bertransisi menuju kemandirian secara berkelanjutan. Pendekatan penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi aktif, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Subjek penelitian terdiri dari lima pendamping sosial tingkat kecamatan dan lima puluh keluarga peserta graduasi dari sepuluh komunitas di Banyumas selatan. Data dianalisis melalui proses pengurangan, klasifikasi, dan pemetaan temuan dengan menghubungkan hasil lapangan dengan teori pemberdayaan dan praktik konseling masyarakat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konseling pemberdayaan berperan penting dalam meningkatkan kepercayaan diri, efikasi diri, dan motivasi peserta untuk mandiri secara ekonomi melalui kegiatan produktif berbasis masyarakat. Namun, tantangan berupa stigma sosial, kurangnya dukungan keluarga, dan terbatasnya akses pasar masih menghambat proses pemberdayaan. Kesimpulannya, konseling pemberdayaan telah dilakukan dengan pendekatan psikososial yang memperkuat kesiapan mental dan kapasitas sosial ekonomi penerima manfaat. Secara ilmiah, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan model integratif antara teori pemberdayaan sosial dan praktik konseling masyarakat dalam mendukung keberlanjutan program pascasarjana kesejahteraan sosial di tingkat lokal.

Kata Kunci: Konseling Pemberdayaan; Graduasi Penerima Manfaat; Bimbingan Sosial.

INTRODUCTION

Community empowerment is a strategic social and economic development approach that aims to improve the quality of life, strengthen economic independence, and reduce dependence on government social assistance.¹ The program includes a variety of interventions, ranging from business capital allocation, skills training, capacity building, to expanded access to sustainable economic resources. However, despite its many implementations, the effectiveness of empowerment programs is still a matter of debate among academics and practitioners.²

¹Diana Dushkova and Olga Ivlieva, 'Empowering Communities to Act for a Change: A Review of the Community Empowerment Programs towards Sustainability and Resilience', *Sustainability*, 16.19 (2024), p. 8700; Ahmad Rofiq and Anis Chariri, 'Amil Behavior Utilizing Productive Zakat for Alleviate Poverty and Empowerment of Mustahiq to Become Muzakki in Central Java Indonesia.', *International Journal of Business & Management Science*, 10.2 (2020).

²Tania Tamara Ulfa, 'Strategi Pemberdayaan Ekonomi Masyarakat Miskin: Tinjauan Atas Program Pemerintah', *Literacy Notes*, 1.2 (2023).

Data from the Central Statistics Agency (2025) shows that the percentage of poor people in September 2024 was 8.57 percent or around 24.06 million people, down 0.46 percentage points compared to March 2024 and 0.79 percentage points compared to March 2023. Although this figure shows a positive trend in poverty reduction, extreme poverty still reaches 0.85 percent of the total population.³ This fact confirms that the success of community empowerment programs has not entirely led to sustainable economic independence, especially for groups that have just come out of the social welfare list and are still in vulnerable economic conditions.

One form of empowerment that is widely applied in Indonesia is business funding assistance for individuals or groups that have come out of social welfare data. The goal is to encourage beneficiaries to build small businesses that can improve their income and economic well-being. However, a number of studies have shown a mismatch between the recipient's capacity and his or her ability to manage business assistance. Many beneficiaries are not mentally or technically ready, so capital assistance becomes a new burden.⁴ This shows that providing capital without psychosocial assistance and readiness can be counterproductive, because it has not touched the root of the problem in micro business management and economic sustainability.

In this context, empowerment counseling has an important role as a supportive approach that can increase the program's effectiveness. Empowerment counseling serves to provide guidance, emotional support, and mental capacity building for individuals or beneficiary groups to be ready to face entrepreneurial challenges.⁵ International research also conveyed similar findings. For example, a study by Jonathan Labbé, Typhaine Lebègue, and Abdel Malik Ola found that women's financial empowerment is influenced by their confidence and social status in accessing capital.⁶ Meanwhile, research by the West Science Journal (2024) in Indonesia shows that the success of business incubation is determined by non-financial factors such as mentoring and psychological support.⁷ Thus, psychosocial

³Pemerintah Indonesia, 'Badan Pusat Statistik.(2022). Kemiskinan Di Indonesia Maret 2022. Diakses Dari <https://www.bps.go.id> Badan Pusat Statistik.(2023). Distribusi Pendapatan Di Indonesia. Jakarta: BPS. Badan Pusat Statistik.(2023). Laporan Inflasi Indonesia Tahun 2022.', *Perekonomian Indonesia* 2025, 2025, p. 24.

⁴Matthias Blum and others, 'InterPro: The Protein Sequence Classification Resource in 2025', *Mode Longmeta?*, *Nucleic Acids Research*, 53.D1 (2025), pp. D444–56; Joaquim Pinto and others, 'The Community Empowerment, Health Promotion Strategies on Implementation Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) Through Local Wisdom-Matandook', *Journal of Neonatal Surgery*, 14.4s (2025); Sushil Kumar Sahoo, Dragan Pamucar, and Shankha Shubhra Goswami, 'A Review of Multi-Criteria Decision-Making (MCDM) Applications to Solve Energy Management Problems from 2010-2025: Current State and Future Research', *Spectrum of Decision Making and Applications*, 2.1 (2025), pp. 219–41.

⁵Mohammad Zaki Bin Che Aat and Faridah Jaafar, 'Addressing Poverty Through Sustainable Development Goal 1: Progress, Challenges, and Opportunities', *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9.4 (2025), pp. 1690–95; Tan Suet May Amelia and others, 'Marine Microplastics as Vectors of Major Ocean Pollutants and Its Hazards to the Marine Ecosystem and Humans', *Progress in Earth and Planetary Science*, 8.1 (2021), p. 12; Jonathan Labbé, Typhaine Lebègue, and Abdel Malik Ola, 'Entre Choix et Contraintes: Décryptage de l'empouvoirement Financier Chez Les Femmes Entrepreneures En France', *Revue Internationale PME*, 38.1 (2025), pp. 73–93.

⁶Labbé, Lebègue, and Ola, 'Entre Choix et Contraintes: Décryptage de l'empouvoirement Financier Chez Les Femmes Entrepreneures En France'.

⁷Amelia and others, 'Marine Microplastics as Vectors of Major Ocean Pollutants and Its Hazards to the Marine Ecosystem and Humans'.

interventions in the form of counseling are an important factor in strengthening entrepreneurial resilience and community economic independence.

Women's empowerment counseling is an important strategy in supporting the transition from dependency to sustainable economic independence. Through this approach, women are not only equipped with technical and managerial skills but also mentally and emotionally strengthened to deal with post-social dynamics. This strategy is in line with *Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 1*, which targets capacity-based poverty alleviation and *SDG 5*, which emphasizes gender equality in economic participation.⁸ Counselling helps women recognize their potential, build confidence, and play an active role in economic decision-making at the family and community levels. Thus, counseling-based empowerment not only focuses on financial independence but also strengthens women's position as agents of social change that support equitable and sustainable development.⁹

However, there are still research gaps that need to be bridged. Most previous research has focused on economic aspects and technical training, but not many have assessed the effect of empowerment counseling on the mental readiness and sustainability of beneficiaries' businesses. Studies such as those by Rachman, Hidayat, and Sumarwan have focused on capital management and technical training, while the psychological dimension has not been explored in depth.¹⁰ At the global level, research on business incubation programs highlights the importance of mentoring, but does not explicitly examine the effects of counseling on business sustainability.¹¹ Thus, this study is here to fill this gap through an empirical analysis of the relationship between empowerment counseling and business success for funding aid recipients, especially women who drop out of school in social welfare programs.

This study aims to empirically analyze the factors that affect the success and failure of business funding-based empowerment programs, as well as measure the contribution of empowerment counseling to increase the economic independence of beneficiaries. Operationally, this study assesses differences in business performance, economic resilience,

⁸Tolga Ala and Cengiz Güney, 'Analysis of Academic Activities within the Scope of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): The Case of Public-Funded Research Universities in Türkiye', *EDPACS 2025*, 2025, pp. 1-38; Hasibul Islam, 'Nexus of Economic, Social, and Environmental Factors on Sustainable Development Goals: The Moderating Role of Technological Advancement and Green Innovation', *Innovation and Green Development*, 4.1 (2025), p. 100183; Sahoo, Pamucar, and Goswami, 'A Review of Multi-Criteria Decision-Making (MCDM) Applications to Solve Energy Management Problems from 2010-2025: Current State and Future Research'; Ahmad Kharis and Derry Ahmad Rizal, 'Traversing the Path of Recovery: Social Rehabilitation for Napza Survivors At the Cinta Kasih Bangsa Foundation Semarang Indonesia', *Jurnal Al-Ijtima'iyyah*, 11.1 (2025), p. 113, doi:10.22373/al-ijtima'iyyah.v11i1.29614; Prihana Vasishta and Anju Singla, 'Self-Help Groups and Women Empowerment: Developing a Framework for Sustainability of SHGs', *International Journal of Social Economics* 2025, 2025.

⁹Badiaa El Khamouchi and Souad Belhorma, 'Female Spiritual Guides (Mourchidates) in Morocco: Agents of Change or State Tools? A Case Study of Khenifra', *International Journal of Linguistics and Translation Studies*, 6.4 (2025), pp. 64-76; Labbé, Lebègue, and Ola, 'Entre Choix et Contraintes: Décryptage de l'empouvoirement Financier Chez Les Femmes Entrepreneures En France'; Ana Neves, 'The Legal Status of Women in the Portuguese Legal Order', *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law*, 25.3 (2025), pp. 235-64.

¹⁰A Rachman and H Hidayat, 'Pemberdayaan Ekonomi Masyarakat Melalui Bantuan Modal Usaha Di Indonesia', *Jurnal Pembangunan Ekonomi*, 24.2 (2019), pp. 153-167.

¹¹Amelia and others, 'Marine Microplastics as Vectors of Major Ocean Pollutants and Its Hazards to the Marine Ecosystem and Humans'.

and psychological well-being between the group receiving counseling assistance and the group receiving assistance without counseling. The results are expected to provide measurable evidence on the effectiveness of counseling-based interventions in improving business sustainability and beneficiary welfare, as well as supporting the achievement of SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 10 (Reducing Social Disparities) through strengthening people's social and psychological capacity.¹²

The novelty of this research lies in the integration of economic and psychological aspects in measuring the effectiveness of community empowerment, something that is still rarely done in the Indonesian context. This approach uses the latest post-pandemic data and explicitly considers the gender dimension, thus providing a more comprehensive picture of sustainability factors at the grassroots level. In addition to contributing to the development of counseling-based empowerment theories, this research also provides practical recommendations for governments and social institutions to design more holistic, adaptive, and sustainable interventions. Thus, this research is likely to strengthen the effectiveness of community empowerment programs in improving the quality of life and economic independence of beneficiaries in the long term.

Although the concept of empowerment counseling has been widely recognized as a practical approach in improving an individual's self-efficacy, autonomy, and decision-making ability,¹³ its application in the context of social empowerment in Indonesia still faces quite complex challenges. Many beneficiaries of empowerment programs do not have the mental and psychological readiness to manage post-social and economic changes in social assistance programs. This often leads to low business sustainability and the emergence of a new reliance on external support. In this context, empowerment counseling is important as a bridge between economic intervention and the psychological readiness of the beneficiary, since it is oriented not only to behavioral changes (cognitive, affective, and axional), but also to the strengthening of individual personal responsibility and reflective abilities in the face of complex socioeconomic dynamics.¹⁴

Previous research has focused more on the economic aspects of empowerment, such as providing access to capital and skills training, while the psychological and social dimensions that determine the sustainability of program outcomes have received less attention.¹⁵ In fact, the success of empowerment is highly dependent on the extent to which individuals are able to understand their potential and build emotional resilience. This research gap emphasizes the need for a more in-depth study of how empowerment

¹²Aat and Jaafar, 'Addressing Poverty Through Sustainable Development Goal 1: Progress, Challenges, and Opportunities'.

¹³J J Domínguez-Cruz, J J Pereyra-Rodríguez, and R Ruiz-Villaverde, 'Empoderamiento y Dermatología', *Actas Dermo-Sifiliográficas*, 109.2 (2018), pp. 133-39; P.-A. Tengland, 'Empowerment: A Goal or a Means for Health Promotion?', *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy*, 10.2 (2007), pp. 197-207, doi:10.1007/s11019-006-9027-1.

¹⁴Sahoo, Pamucar, and Goswami, 'A Review of Multi-Criteria Decision-Making (MCDM) Applications to Solve Energy Management Problems from 2010-2025: Current State and Future Research'; Vasishtha and Singla, 'Self-Help Groups and Women Empowerment: Developing a Framework for Sustainability of SHGs'; Rizwana Yasmeen and others, 'Unveil the Role Financial Development and Natural Resources for Energy Efficiency in ECOWAS Economies: Application of Super-SBM-DEA Model', *Environment, Development and Sustainability* 2025, 2025, pp. 1-27.

¹⁵N Kabeer, 'Poverty, Gender, and Social Exclusion: Understanding the Links between the Concepts of Empowerment, Agency, and Well-Being', *Journal of Human Development*, 6.2 (2005), pp. 209-228.

counseling can be a strategic instrument in strengthening the independence, psychological resilience, and sustainability of the business of social program beneficiaries.

In practice, empowerment counseling uses several main techniques such as empowerment group education and group communication empowerment or *Empowerment speech practice*, which is effective in building active participation, self-control, and the ability of individuals to influence their own change.¹⁶ Communication empowerment techniques are used to assess the empowerment process in counseling sessions by emphasizing counseling participation and the formation of a positive emotional atmosphere.¹⁷ The benefits have been proven to be wide-ranging, including increasing self-efficacy, self-advocacy, strengthening personal competence, and reducing self-stigma, which is often an obstacle in the empowerment process.¹⁸ In addition, the social empowerment process focuses not only on strengthening the economy, but also on efforts to overcome social inequality and expand community participation in decision-making that affects their lives.¹⁹ According to Narayan, community empowerment encompasses four main dimensions: access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability, and capacity of local organizations. These four dimensions are the basis for building a socially independent and resilient community. However, in many cases, empowerment is still structural, and attention is paid less to individual empowerment as the leading actor of change.

As Banerjee and Duflo point out, social empowerment also involves transforming the power structure in society, especially in increasing the role of women in the economic and political spheres.²⁰ In this context, empowerment counseling has excellent potential as an approach that not only builds personal capacity but also strengthens critical awareness and social participation. Thus, this study is relevant to empirically examine how the integration between counseling and social empowerment can strengthen the effectiveness of empowerment programs in Indonesia and make a real contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to poverty alleviation, gender equality, inclusive economic growth, and social gap reduction.

To further clarify the relationship between the different approaches in empowerment counseling, here is a diagram illustrating the main components and focus of the intervention. This image helps show how empowerment counseling works through the integration of psychotherapy aspects, empowerment process models, and psychological models in shaping empowered, independent, and better quality of life individuals.

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¹⁶Eva Thors Adolfsson and others, 'Type 2 Diabetic Patients' Experiences of Two Different Educational Approaches—A Qualitative Study', *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 45.7 (2008), pp. 986-94.

¹⁷Tarja Kettunen and others, 'Developing Empowering Health Counseling Measurement: Preliminary Results', *Patient Education and Counseling*, 64.1-3 (2006), pp. 159-66.

¹⁸Somporn Rungreangkulkij and others, 'Voices of Thai Women Who Received Gender-Sensitive Empowerment Counseling', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 22.1 (2021), pp. 330-40; Molly K Tschopp, Michael P Frain, and Malachy Bishop, 'Empowerment Variables for Rehabilitation Clients on Perceived Beliefs Concerning Work Quality of Life Domains', *Work*, 33.1 (2009), pp. 59-65.

¹⁹J Gaventa, 'Finding the Spaces for Change: A Power Analysis of the Spaces for Civil Society Participation in Poverty Reduction', *IDS Bulletin*, 37.6 (2006), pp. 23-33; D Narayan, 'Empowerment', *Journal of Ambulatory Care Management*, 30.2 (2007), pp. 120-25, doi:10.1097/01.JAC.0000264601.19629.5f.

²⁰A V Banerjee and E Duflo, *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty* (PublicAffairs, 2011).

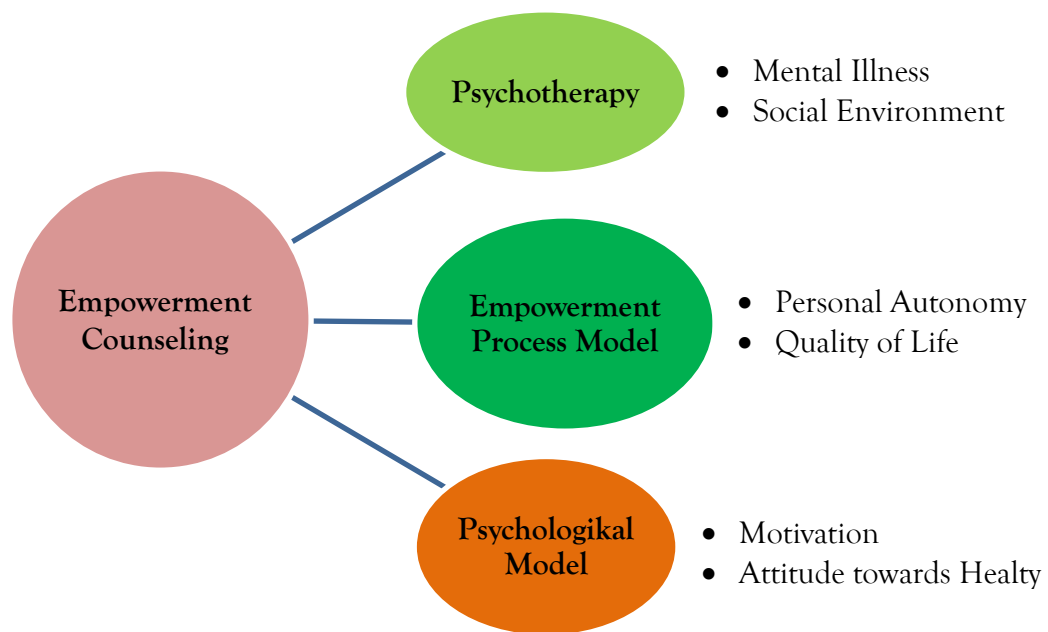


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Empowerment Counseling.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to understand the community empowerment counseling model through social assistance at the graduation of beneficiaries in Banyumas.²¹ Data is collected exploratively and holistically, adjusting to the needs and conditions of the field. The research object was focused on the social assistance process in community empowerment counseling, while the research subjects involved five sub-district level social companions representing the southern part of Banyumas, as well as beneficiary graduation participants with various characteristics.

Subjects were selected based on the number of participants, the intensity of mentoring, and the community, with participants graduating minimally due to psychological burden or unpreparedness to graduate. From the results of the initial observations, ten communities were identified that met the criteria, so that the researcher mapped the research subjects so that the data obtained could accommodate the needs completely and comprehensively.²²

Data collection techniques include active observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were made using *Participant method as an observer* So that the researcher can build relationships with the research subjects and obtain core data on social assistance. In-depth interviews were conducted individually and in groups (including FGDs) to explore implementation, mentoring stages, participant responses, and empowerment approaches. Documentation data was obtained from reports of social companion activities, routine evaluations, news, and photos of activities that supported the analysis.

Data analysis is carried out through reduction, classification, and mapping of research, with the step of comparing research indicators with the reality in the field, connecting them with theories, and then structuring the discussion. This process produces a complete picture of social assistance through community empowerment counseling at the

²¹H Zuchri Abdussamad and M Si Sik, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif* (CV. Syakir Media Press, 2021).

²²Sugiyono, 'Metode Penelitian Pendidikan Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan R&D', 2013.

graduation of beneficiaries in Banyumas, as well as the basis for providing research recommendations. The following is a flowchart describing the overall stages of the research process to provide a more systematic understanding of these research steps. This diagram explains how a descriptive qualitative approach is used to trace the social assistance process through community empowerment counseling in Banyumas, from data collection to analysis, so that it can show a logical research flow visually and in a structured manner.²³

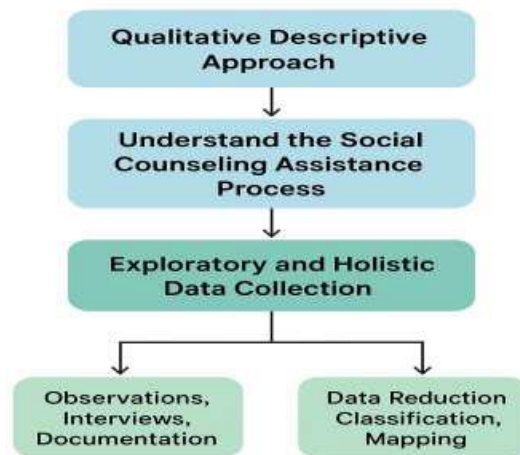


Figure 2. Research Process Flow Diagram.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Beneficiary Graduation

The study results show that empowerment counseling in social assistance significantly influences the transformation process of Beneficiary Families (KPM) towards postgraduate independence. In Banyumas Regency, the mentoring program combined with a counseling approach not only focuses on improving the economy, but also touches on the psychological and social aspects of the participants. This approach builds self-awareness that success out of poverty is not solely determined by capital assistance, but by mental readiness and a change in mindset towards self-reliance. This is in line with the findings Rungreangkulkij et al. (2021), which confirm that empowerment counseling plays a vital role in shaping an individual's self-efficacy and confidence in their own abilities.²⁴

The changes experienced by participants are not only reflected in the increase in income through small businesses such as stalls, processed food businesses, and livestock, but also in increased social participation. Many participants who were previously passive are now actively participating in group meetings, community activities, and joint ventures. These dynamics show that empowerment counseling catalyzes collective awareness, strengthens solidarity, and reduces feelings of social isolation. Psychosocially, these changes show a shift from the mindset of the beneficiary to the agent of social change in his environment (Preliminary Observations).

However, the challenges that arise are complex. Some participants still showed psychological dependence on help, fear of failure, and the perception that social assistance is a permanent right. External barriers such as negative stigma, limited market access, and lack of family support also slow down the self-sufficiency process. This condition reinforces

²³Mudjia Rahardjo, 'Metode Pengumpulan Data Penelitian Kualitatif', 2011.

²⁴Rungreangkulkij and others, 'Voices of Thai Women Who Received Gender-Sensitive Empowerment Counseling'.

the findings,²⁵ which state that the success of empowerment is highly dependent on positive social interaction and conducive environmental support. In the context of Banyumas, the community's stigma towards "poor families" is still a significant psychological barrier for participants to participate in productive economic activities actively.

When compared to previous research, such as the Kabeer study, which emphasizes empowerment from structural aspects and access to economic resources,²⁶ this study shows the expansion of the meaning of empowerment to psychosocial aspects. Empowerment in the context of social assistance in Banyumas is not only oriented towards the redistribution of resources, but also towards the beneficiaries' mental reconstruction and social identity. While Narayan's (2002) research focuses on macro indicators such as participation and accountability, this research contributes at the micro level—i.e., the counseling process as a means to change individual behaviors and motivations in the context of local communities.

In addition, the approach of this research is also different from previous research in Indonesia, which tends to focus on economic and policy aspects (for example, in the context of PKH or BLT). This study offers a new perspective that counseling-based social interventions are able to bridge the gap between macro policies and the psychological readiness of beneficiaries at the grassroots level. Counseling-based mentoring shows more sustainable outcomes because it fosters participants' self-confidence and self-efficacy, which is an important foundation for long-term economic independence.

Thus, the main contribution of this study is developing an integrative model between social empowerment approaches and relevant community counseling practices applied in the local context of Indonesia. This model places counseling not only as an individualized intervention, but also as a community-based collective empowerment strategy. Scientifically, these findings enrich the literature on social empowerment in the context of post-mentoring, while providing a practical basis for strengthening the capacity of social mentors to overcome psychosocial barriers in the community welfare graduation process.

The criteria for the social assistance process through empowerment counseling play an important role in strengthening the psychological readiness and economic ability of graduates of the Family Hope Program (PKH) in Banyumas. Although graduation indicators have been set administratively—such as a stable income of at least Rp1.8 million, productive asset ownership, and field verification—the reality on the ground shows that the achievement of economic independence does not depend only on material factors. Most participants still faced mental unpreparedness and low self-efficacy, which had an impact on difficulty adapting after the aid was stopped. This condition reinforces the findings of Domínguez-Cruz et al. that empowerment cannot be achieved through economic intervention alone, but requires strengthening the psychosocial aspect through counseling oriented to changes in behavior and thinking patterns.²⁷

The form of anxiety and self-confidence of the participants, which reached 70% showed that the main problem lies in psychological dependence, not just financial poverty. These results are consistent with the study of Rungreangkulkij et al. (2021), which found that empowerment counseling effectively increases confidence and positive attitudes

²⁵Adolfsson and others, 'Type 2 Diabetic Patients' Experiences of Two Different Educational Approaches—A Qualitative Study'; Kettunen and others, 'Developing Empowering Health Counseling Measurement: Preliminary Results'.

²⁶Kabeer, 'Poverty, Gender, and Social Exclusion: Understanding the Links between the Concepts of Empowerment, Agency, and Well-Being'.

²⁷Domínguez-Cruz, Pereyra-Rodríguez, and Ruiz-Villaverde, 'Empoderamiento y Dermatología'.

towards economic change. However, in contrast to research conducted in urban contexts with strong social support, this study highlights the rural dynamics in Banyumas, which are still affected by social stigma and limited access to resources. Participants who were labeled "lazy" after leaving PKH experienced social pressure, which resulted in low motivation to try. This factor is in line with Gaventa's findings regarding the influence of social exclusion in inhibiting the participation of low-income people.²⁸

Quantitatively, the increase in post-graduation income of 87.5% shows the success of counseling-based mentoring strategies. Participants' income increased from an average of IDR 800,000–IDR 1,200,000 to IDR 1,500,000–IDR 3,000,000 per month, with the transformation of income sources from assistance to independent businesses. This achievement reinforces the concept of the empowerment process model put forward by Tenglund, namely that economic independence is the result of strengthening personal autonomy and belief in one's own abilities. The increase in the number of self-employed participants from 5% to 60% confirms that empowerment counseling effectively builds motivation, reduces fear of failure, and encourages courage to make economic decisions.²⁹

Compared to previous studies that focused more on macroeconomic aspects or the effectiveness of PKH programs administratively (e.g., studies)³⁰ this research offers a new contribution by highlighting the psychosocial dimension in the graduation process. The qualitative approach provides an in-depth understanding of how interactions between companions and participants shape the behavior change process. Empowerment counseling here is not just a motivational instrument, but a space for reflective dialogue that restores confidence and strengthens participants' agency in making economic decisions.

Thus, this study confirms that graduation success is not only measured by increased income but also by mental and social transformations that allow participants to sustain independence sustainably. These results enrich the treasures of empowerment theory in the context of Islam and community development, especially in placing counseling as an integral instrument of social empowerment based on human values, responsibility, and social justice.

B. Social Assistance through Community Empowerment Counseling for Beneficiary Graduation in Banyumas

1. Psychotherapy

The psychotherapy approach in social assistance through empowerment counseling in Banyumas focuses on two main aspects: *mental illness and the social environment*.

a. Mental Illness

Empowerment counseling plays an important role in overcoming the beneficiary's psychological dependence on social assistance. Social companions in Banyumas apply a motivational counseling approach that is oriented towards changing mindsets and improving self-efficacy. Through activities such as Family Capacity Building (P2K2) Meetings, participants are directed to recognize their economic potential and build confidence that they can be independent. This approach reflects the basic principles of

²⁸Gaventa, 'Finding the Spaces for Change: A Power Analysis of the Spaces for Civil Society Participation in Poverty Reduction'.

²⁹Per-Anders Tenglund, 'Empowerment: A Conceptual Discussion', *Health Care Analysis*, 16 (2008), pp. 77–96.

³⁰Banerjee and Duflo, *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*.

empowerment counseling that emphasize strengthening the individual's internal capacity to take control of their lives.³¹

Affirmative messages such as "*Temporary social assistance, empowered forever*" effectively turn passive mindsets into active ones. Empathy-based communication strategies and open dialogue also help reduce stress due to economic pressures and strengthen participants' confidence. This is in line with Rungreangkulkij's finding that empowerment counseling can increase an individual's assertiveness and confidence in facing difficult situations.³² However, this study adds a new dimension by integrating counseling in the context of community-based social assistance, not just in individuals as in most previous studies.

A significant difference from previous research lies in its focus on application. Previous studies, such as Tengland and Kabeer, have highlighted empowerment more as a theoretical framework or social policy, while this study emphasizes the practical application of empowerment counseling in the context of social welfare graduate programs.³³ In addition, field findings suggest that the psychological dynamics of beneficiaries—particularly the fear of loss of help and low self-efficacy—are determinants of the successful transition to independence.

This research also shows that economic empowerment cannot be separated from psychological and social empowerment. While skills training and access to capital are important, participants' mental and emotional changes are the primary foundation for achieving sustainable self-sufficiency. Thus, this research contributes to the development of an integrative empowerment model that combines counseling approaches, social support, and economic capacity building as effective strategies in addressing post-social assistance beneficiary dependency at the community level.

The following figure shows the distribution of the dominant symptoms experienced by the study participants, including symptoms of anxiety, *low self-esteem*, and *mild depression*. This visualization aims to describe the psychological conditions that most often appear among social assistance participants. This data is an important basis for understanding the focus of empowerment counseling interventions directed at increasing participants' confidence, emotional stability, and mental readiness in the community empowerment process.

³¹Domínguez-Cruz, Pereyra-Rodríguez, and Ruiz-Villaverde, 'Empoderamiento y Dermatología'; Clara Edith Muñoz-Márquez, Raquel Morales Barrera, and Alejandra Domínguez-Espinosa, 'Model of Psychological Empowerment Based on Structural Equations for Predicting Autonomy', *Revista Colombiana de Psicología*, 30.2 (2021), pp. 55-69.

³²Rungreangkulkij and others, 'Voices of Thai Women Who Received Gender-Sensitive Empowerment Counseling'.

³³Naila Kabeer, 'Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Critical Analysis of the Third Millennium Development Goal 1', *Gender & Development*, 13.1 (2005), pp. 13-24; Tengland, 'Empowerment: A Conceptual Discussion'.

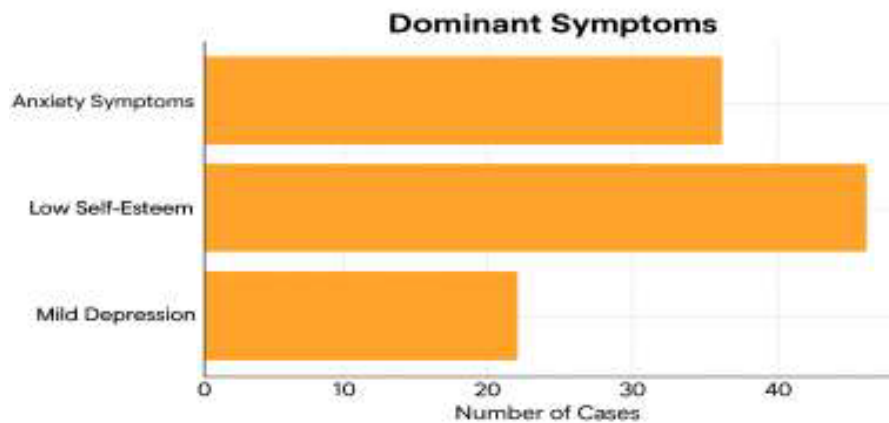


Figure 3. Dominant Symptom Distribution.

Based on the graph above, it shows that 35% of graduation participants experienced anxiety symptoms (*Fear of not being able to eat without government social assistance*) in graduation peseta interviews. Other data states that as many as 45% experience low self-esteem in continuing their lives (*"I feel like a failure because of poverty"*) - Interview of graduation participants, Mrs. H, District... Meanwhile, as many as 20% of graduation participants were included in the category of mild depression (*lazy to do activities, difficulty sleeping*), according to social companion interviews.

The leading cause, according to the Social Companion, "The majority of participants consider the social assistance program provided by the government to be a fixed income or monthly salary. When they are disconnected or dismissed as participants, they feel fired from their "job" as recipients of assistance. Based on social service data, as many as 70% of recipients of government social assistance for more than 5 years generally have difficulty adapting. According to data from women and child protection institutions in Banyumas, by 2024, as many as 40% of graduates have a history of domestic violence or abuse, which falls into the category of past trauma.

b. Social Environment

The social environment has been shown to play an important role in the success of empowerment counseling-based social assistance. The results of the study show that the success of the empowerment process is not only determined by the readiness of the individual beneficiaries but also by the social support of the family, community, and social structure at the village level. Social companions play an active role not only as individual facilitators but also as liaisons between social actors such as family, neighbors, community leaders, and village officials to create a social ecosystem conducive to independence. In the context of the Joint Business Group (KUBE) program, this social engagement is a strategic instrument. Participants gain not only economic skills but also moral and social support from members of other groups, which significantly increases business motivation and resilience.³⁴

³⁴V R Ramsden, S Mckay, and J Crowe, 'The Pursuit of Excellence: Engaging the Community in Participatory Health Research', *Global Health Promotion*, 17.4 (2010), pp. 32-42, doi:10.1177/1757975910383929.

However, the results of the study also reveal another side of the social dynamics that hinder the empowerment process. Negative stigma, such as the assumption that beneficiaries who graduate are "cut off from their aid due to corruption", becomes a psychological obstacles that erode participants' confidence. As many as 55% of graduates reported experiencing social discrimination, while another 30% admitted that they did not have family support in starting a new business due to concerns about economic risks. This fact shows that economic empowerment is inseparable from the social and emotional dimensions that surround the individual (Research Data, 2025).

Previous research confirms the original contribution of this research. Previous studies, such as those conducted by, highlighted more empowerment from structural aspects—such as access to resources and participation in decision-making without emphasizing the psychosocial dimensions of the individual. Meanwhile, this study places empowerment counseling as a bridge between individual change and social transformation. This approach suggests that behavior change, increased self-efficacy, and social support are essential foundations for post-graduation independence.

In addition, these findings expand on the research of Rungreangkulkij and Domínguez-Cruz that emphasized the importance of psychological aspects in empowerment counseling, by adding local Indonesian contexts, particularly in the graduation mechanism of social welfare program beneficiaries.³⁵ Thus, this research not only replicates existing empowerment theories but also enriches practice models through the socio-cultural context of the Banyumas community.

Conceptually, this discussion shows that social empowerment cannot stand alone without the support of a positive and inclusive social environment. Empowerment counseling is an effective strategy in building reflective awareness, facilitating communication between participants and the community, and fostering confidence to be independent in a sustainable manner. Therefore, the success of postgraduate programs in the future needs to be designed by strengthening the community-based counseling component and integrating social stigma elimination strategies through public education and cross-sectoral collaboration.

The following figure shows the environmental social barriers faced by participants in the community empowerment process:

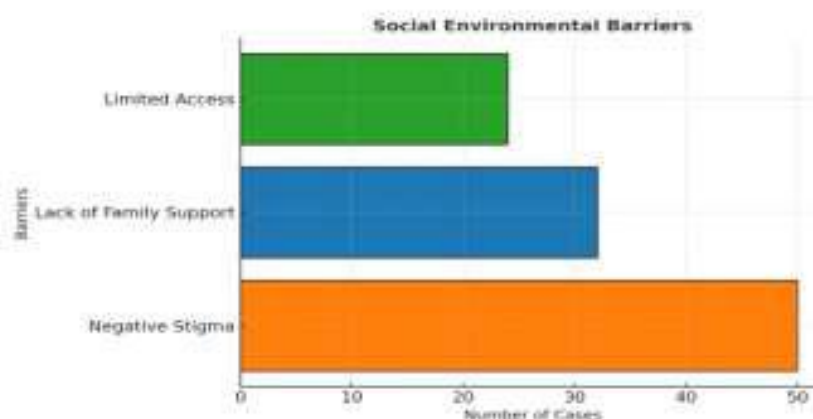


Figure 4. Environmental Social Barriers.

³⁵Muñoz-Márquez, Morales Barrera, and Domínguez-Espinosa, 'Model of Psychological Empowerment Based on Structural Equations for Predicting Autonomy'; Rungreangkulkij and others, 'Voices of Thai Women Who Received Gender-Sensitive Empowerment Counseling'.

The graduation process of beneficiaries in Banyumas is not only an economic problem, but also closely related to psychosocial and structural aspects. The social stigma attached to graduation participants is a dominant barrier that lowers confidence and hinders participation in productive activities. These findings reinforce the results of Kabeer and Narayan's study on the importance of the social dimension in the empowerment process, but the study expands the research by highlighting psychological distress due to negative public perceptions of aid recipients.³⁶

In addition, low family support and limited access to economic resources suggest that financial empowerment alone cannot create sustainable self-sufficiency. The study also adds a new dimension to Rungreangkulkij and Domínguez-Cruz's previous research that focused more on changing individual behaviors, showing that local social contexts and gender relationships play an important role in the effectiveness of empowerment counseling.³⁷

The findings on gender inequality reinforce Banerjee and Duflo's argument that women often face a double burden in the process of economic empowerment.³⁸ However, social companion good practices that integrate environmental advocacy, cross-sectoral cooperation, and counseling approaches show a more contextual and humanistic model of mentoring. Thus, this research contributes scientifically by strengthening the community-based empowerment counseling model that not only fosters individual self-efficacy but also builds social and local institutional support as the foundation for the sustainability of social welfare graduate programs.

2. Empowerment Process Model

The empowerment model in Banyumas is designed to achieve two main goals: *personal autonomy* and *quality of life*.

a. Personal Autonomy

The results of the study show that the personal independence of graduates is built through a comprehensive and sustainable process, combining economic, psychological, and social aspects. The Socioeconomic Empowerment Program (PPSE) plays an important role in increasing economic capacity through business capital assistance, followed by entrepreneurship training, such as financial management strategies, production, and digital marketing. This assistance is not only oriented towards providing material assistance, but also strengthening critical thinking skills and independent decision-making. Data from the Social Service (2024) shows that 65% of families who graduate from 200 heads of families already have active micro-businesses after training. A concrete example can be seen in the "Tani Makmur" group in Wangon District, which managed to increase its income from Rp 800,000 to Rp 2.5 million per month through hydroponic training. In addition, a change in mindset is an important indicator of the program's success.

From interviews with 50 graduates, 75% stated that empowerment counseling helped them build confidence and the belief that success can be achieved through their own efforts. The narrative of participants such as Mrs. S from Kembaran District, who was previously passive in waiting for help but is now able to develop her stall business online,

³⁶Kabeer, 'Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Critical Analysis of the Third Millennium Development Goal 1'; Narayan, 'Empowerment'.

³⁷Domínguez-Cruz, Pereyra-Rodríguez, and Ruiz-Villaverde, 'Empoderamiento y Dermatología'; Rungreangkulkij and others, 'Voices of Thai Women Who Received Gender-Sensitive Empowerment Counseling'.

³⁸Banerjee and Duflo, *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*.

shows significant psychological changes. Personal independence is also reflected in the improvement of decision-making skills, as seen in the case of Mr. D in Rawalo District, who was initially reluctant to take risks, but now dares to apply for a People's Business Credit (KUR) of IDR 10 million to expand his business. These findings confirm that empowerment counseling plays a catalyst in shaping confidence, economic independence, and mental fortitude for beneficiaries to transform from dependency to sustainable empowerment.

b. Quality of Life

Improving the quality of life can be seen from three aspects: economy, Health, and social participation. Economically, participants reported an increase in income after growing the business. In terms of Health, the companion integrates healthy living modules in P2K2, such as the importance of balanced nutrition and washing hands with soap. One of the participants admitted that his family is now less sick after implementing a clean lifestyle. From the social aspect, participants who are already independent often become an example for other beneficiaries, thus creating a multiplier effect in society.³⁹

Based on some of the data obtained, there was an improvement in the quality of life of participants, including an increase in income with an average increase of 80% (from Rp 1,200,000 to Rp 2,200,000/family per month). The Banyumas Central Statistics Agency in 2024 also stated that the poverty rate will decrease by 1.2% in the villages where the government social assistance program is located. The improvement of participants' quality of life can also be seen from the ease of access to basic services such as: education with data that 90% of children from graduates' families can continue to attend school (thanks to the efforts of parents), and as many as 60% of graduation participants are registered as BPJS Mandiri participants who previously depended on government social assistance programs (Research Data, 2025).

Furthermore, social support in improving the quality of life of participants also occurs, as evidenced by the establishment of 15 joint business groups (KUBE). For example, KUBE "Tani Sayur Mandiri" accommodates 25 graduates with a collective turnover of Rp. 20,000,000 per month. Some of these things also have an impact on reducing negative stigma, with survey results showing that as many as 40% of people now support the efforts of graduation participants.

3. Psychological Model

The psychological aspect of social assistance through empowerment counseling includes *motivation* and *attitudes to be healthy*.

a. Motivation

The increase in motivation of graduates in this study shows that the empowerment counseling approach applied can change the passive mindset to a proactive one. Social companions build motivation through a positive approach, the use of *peer learning techniques*, and the use of success stories as real inspiration. This strategy creates a powerful psychological effect because participants not only hear the theory, but see concrete evidence from fellow beneficiaries who have successfully become independent.⁴⁰

³⁹Owin Jamasy, Yuni Pranoto, and Aditya Prakarsa Yasin, *Konsep Dan Model Pendampingan Berkelanjutan Untuk Organisasi Berbasis Masyarakat* (PT Kimhsafi Alung Cipta, 2025).

⁴⁰Sue K Adams, 'Empowering and Motivating Undergraduate Students through the Process of Developing Publishable Research', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10 (2019), p. 1007.

Through the *Motivational Interviewing* (MI) technique, participants are guided to find internal reasons for change, such as the desire to expand a business or improve family welfare. For example, Mrs. Basriyah from Sokaraja District, who was previously passive, now has a monthly savings target of Rp 500,000 for the construction of a stall. Quantitative data support these findings: 65% of graduates reported increased motivation to try after six months of group counseling, with their average self-efficacy score increasing from 3.5 to 7.2. The case of Mr. Suripto from Kebarongan shows a significant transformation, from the fear of borrowing capital to the success of managing a chicken farming business through the People's Business Credit (KUR) facility.

Based on data from the Banyumas Cooperative Office (2024), graduates with a high level of motivation (score ≥ 7) have business growth twice as fast as participants with low motivation. Companions also reinforce intrinsic encouragement through symbolic rewards, such as charters for participants that demonstrate real progress, as well as peer support groups to maintain the sustainability of the spirit. These findings confirm that increased motivation and *self-efficacy* are not only the result of economic interventions but also the fruit of a counseling process that awakens participants' awareness, responsibility, and confidence in their own potential for success.

b. Attitude towards Health

A healthy lifestyle attitude is fostered through practical education. For example, in the P2K2 module, participants are taught how to process nutritious food on a budget or use the yard to grow vegetables. The companions also work with the local health center to arrange free health checkups. One of the real impacts is the decrease in stunting cases in some areas, thanks to a new understanding of child nutrition.⁴¹

Based on the results of the Graduation Health Survey, there has been a change in mindset about Health. There are 70% who do not have regular health check-ups due to cost and lack of awareness. 45% think that "the important thing is to be able to eat" without paying attention to nutrition. 60% of the population starts to go to Posyandu/Puskesmas regularly (data from the Banyumas Health Office). 50% eat more nutritious foods (e.g., local vegetables and proteins). The Impact of Mentoring on Healthy Behavior of the "Healthy Mandiri" Program (Dinsos & Dinkes): Nutrition Training: 40% of graduates change their family menu after counseling.

C. Practical Implications and Recommendations

The social assistance program in Banyumas has resulted in significant changes at three levels, namely the Individual Level, Family Level, and Community Level: At the individual level, empowerment counseling shows a significant impact on changes in participants' attitudes and behaviors. Individuals who initially tend to be passive, lack confidence, and have limitations in taking initiative begin to show increased confidence and productivity after participating in mentoring programs. This is reflected in the results of the evaluation, which showed that as many as 60% of the beneficiaries of the Socioeconomic Empowerment Program (PPSE) experienced an increase in income within six months. This increase not only reflects economic success, but also a transformation of

⁴¹Bernadette Mazurek Melnyk and others, 'Mental Health Correlates of Healthy Lifestyle Attitudes, Beliefs, Choices, and Behaviors in Overweight Adolescents', *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, 20.6 (2006), pp. 401-06.

psychological aspects, as well as participants' self-motivation to develop more independently.⁴²

At the family level, the implementation of a healthy lifestyle and sound financial planning has an important role in creating independence and improving well-being. A healthy lifestyle helps family members maintain their physical and mental health to be more productive in carrying out daily activities. Meanwhile, planned financial management allows families to meet basic needs, manage expenses, and save for the future. Thus, families no longer rely on debt or emergency assistance when facing difficult situations. It shows that a balance between Health and finances is an important foundation for family resilience.

At the community level, empowerment programs realized through joint business groups (KUBE) have an important role in creating new jobs while strengthening the local economy. Through this collective forum, people not only get additional income but also build social solidarity that encourages economic independence. KUBE serves as a means to foster awareness that communities can manage businesses together, reduce dependence on social assistance, and increase the competitiveness of local products. However, implementation in the field still faces a number of challenges that need to be overcome systematically. Limited business capital is one of the main obstacles that reduces the group's flexibility in developing business innovations. In addition, resistance was still found from some participants who felt comfortable depending on social assistance, so they were reluctant to adapt to the new empowerment pattern that demanded hard work, consistency, and active involvement. This condition shows the need for a more comprehensive mentoring strategy so that empowerment can truly run effectively and inclusively.

As a solution in the future, there are several recommendations that can be the basis for strengthening the program and first, expanding collaboration with microfinance institutions so that groups have easier and more affordable access to capital. Second, the frequency of intensive mentoring, especially for participants who are slow to adapt, should be increased so as to receive continuous guidance and be motivated to transform towards independence. Third, utilizing digital technology to expand the marketing reach of participating products, for example, through social media or e-commerce platforms, so that local businesses have a greater opportunity to penetrate a broader market. With the implementation of this strategy, social assistance in Banyumas has not only proven to be able to encourage independent graduation from dependence on social assistance, but also has the potential to create a model of community empowerment that is sustainable, adaptive, and relevant to the dynamics of current socioeconomic development.

This research has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. The number of participants was limited to five social facilitators and 50 beneficiary families from ten communities in southern Banyumas, so the findings may not be fully representative of the entire region. Social and psychological barriers, such as stigma and low self-efficacy, made some respondents less open during interviews. Time constraints and limited field access also hinder optimal data collection. In addition, external factors such as limited market

⁴²Roqi Yasin, 'Kebijakan Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH) Dalam Pengentasan Kemiskinan di Kabupaten Banyumas' (Universitas Islam Negeri Saifuddin Zuhri (Indonesia), 2021.

access and weak coordination between stakeholders affect the implementation of the program, making it difficult to measure the effectiveness of empowerment counseling fully.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research on social assistance through community empowerment counseling for beneficiary graduates (PKH) in Banyumas, it can be concluded that assistance through empowerment counseling carried out by social companions to beneficiary graduation participants (PKH) is expected to be able to build independence. The approach carried out through the process of socialization, access, partnerships, and independent business is expected to increase personal autonomy by increasing the motivation of graduates to be more confident and able to change their dependency mindset, or a more confident way of thinking through micro businesses. Counseling with cognitive restructuring techniques carried out through social assistance activities can reduce post-graduation anxiety. Counseling strategies to increase participant motivation are Motivational Interviewing (MI), Support Group, and target setting. The social environment must also play an important role in the success of social assistance through empowerment counseling, community support through KUBE, and community leaders who strengthen the graduates' social networks.

The limitations of implementing social assistance through empowerment counseling in Banyumas are the negative stigma of participants or graduation members and the main challenge of market access. Improving the quality of life occurs economically by increasing income, the welfare aspect of graduates through routine examinations at health services such as health centers, and the educational aspect of children from the graduates' families can continue to attend school or higher education. The challenges faced in social assistance services through empowerment counseling for beneficiary graduates in Banyumas are the mental unpreparedness of prospective graduates, such as anxiety, low self-efficacy, dependence on assistance, and some graduates are still vulnerable to poverty again, and the digital training infrastructure is still limited, especially in remote areas.

The researcher expressed his deepest gratitude to the sub-district social facilitators in Banyumas Regency for their valuable assistance and cooperation during the data collection process. Special thanks are also extended to the beneficiary families from ten communities in southern Banyumas willing to participate and share their experiences, which is an important part of this study. Appreciation was conveyed to UIN Prof. KH Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto who has provided research funding support, as well as to the academic community who offered guidance and encouragement, so that research on empowerment counseling and the graduation process of social assistance recipients could be successfully completed.

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