

Volunteers' Perceptions of the Economic Impact of the MBG Kitchen on Employment Generation Locally

Muhammad Erfan Aziz¹, R. Ayu Erni Jusnita², Nurul Suhesti³

¹⁻³ Universitas Dr. Soetomo Surabaya, Indonesia and azizerfan14@gmail.com

ABSTRAK

Program Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) telah menarik perhatian karena dampak sosial ekonomi yang ditimbulkannya, tidak hanya sebatas penyediaan makanan. Penelitian ini mengkaji persepsi relawan terhadap dampak ekonomi dapur MBG di SPPG Nginden Jangkungan Surabaya, khususnya terkait penciptaan lapangan kerja bagi masyarakat lokal. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologi kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian mengidentifikasi empat tema utama. Pertama, dapur MBG menciptakan peluang kerja dan tambahan pendapatan bagi ibu rumah tangga, pemuda pengangguran, dan pekerja informal. Kedua, aktivitas kolektif dalam program memperkuat solidaritas sosial, kerja sama, dan partisipasi masyarakat. Ketiga, keterlibatan dalam program meningkatkan rasa percaya diri, pemberdayaan, dan identitas sosial para relawan. Keempat, keterbatasan fasilitas, pembagian tugas yang belum merata, serta dukungan kelembagaan yang masih kurang menjadi tantangan bagi keberlanjutan program. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa dapur MBG berfungsi tidak hanya sebagai mekanisme pemberdayaan ekonomi, tetapi juga sebagai sarana pembangunan modal sosial masyarakat. Oleh karena itu, penguatan rekrutmen lokal, pengembangan kapasitas relawan, dukungan operasional, dan kolaborasi antarpemangku kepentingan direkomendasikan untuk menjaga dan memperluas manfaat sosial ekonomi program.

Kata Kunci: Dapur MBG, Pemberdayaan Masyarakat, Modal Sosial, Persepsi Relawan, Surabaya

ABSTRACT

The Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program has attracted attention for its socio-economic impact beyond food provision. This study examines volunteers' perceptions of the economic impact of the MBG kitchen at SPPG Nginden Jangkungan, Surabaya, particularly regarding local employment generation. A qualitative phenomenological approach was employed using semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation. The findings identified four themes. First, the MBG kitchen creates employment opportunities and additional income for housewives, unemployed youth, and informal workers. Second, collective activities strengthen social solidarity, cooperation, and community participation. Third, involvement in the program enhances volunteers' self-confidence, empowerment, and social identity. Fourth, limited facilities, uneven task allocation, and inadequate institutional support challenge program sustainability. The study concludes that the MBG kitchen functions as both an economic empowerment mechanism and a social capital-building platform. Strengthening local recruitment, volunteer capacity development, operational support, and stakeholder collaboration is recommended to sustain and expand the program's socio-economic benefits.

Keywords: MBG Kitchen, Community Empowerment, Social Capital, Volunteer Perception, Surabaya

INTRODUCTION

The Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program, which has recently gained attention within Indonesia's social policy and human development agenda, represents part of the government's effort to strengthen food security, improve the nutritional quality of the population, and promote equitable social welfare. Cleanliness in the food sector is closely related to hygiene and the implementation of hygienic practices (Putra et al., 2025). Economic sustainability enables community members to obtain more stable sources of income through their involvement in MBG kitchen activities. The employment opportunities created by the program help housewives, unemployed youth, and informal workers

meet household needs while simultaneously enhancing local economic productivity (Sufa et al., 2024).

Globally, many countries have developed community-based food provision programs as a strategy to reduce social vulnerability while creating new economic opportunities through local employment generation (Organization, 2022). In developing countries, community kitchen-based programs are viewed not only as instruments for meeting food needs but also as platforms for community empowerment through social participation and productive economic activities. This phenomenon demonstrates that food policy is closely linked to the socio-economic dimensions of society, particularly in creating employment opportunities for vulnerable groups and low-income communities.

In Indonesia, employment remains a significant development challenge. Data from Statistics Indonesia indicate that open unemployment continues to be dominated by individuals of productive age with secondary education or lower. This condition has been exacerbated by post-pandemic economic instability, which has resulted in declining incomes and limited access to formal employment opportunities for many people (Statistik, 2024). In this context, community-based initiatives such as the MBG kitchen have increasingly been viewed as alternative socio-economic solutions capable of generating both direct and indirect employment opportunities.

The MBG kitchen not only involves cooking and food distribution personnel but also creates opportunities for participation by volunteers, local micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), as well as administrative and logistics personnel. From an economic perspective, volunteers gain employment opportunities and additional income that help meet household needs, particularly for housewives, unemployed youth, and informal workers. Participation in MBG kitchen activities also provides work experience and practical skills that can enhance their future economic opportunities (Tobing et al., 2025).

The phenomenon of employment generation through the MBG kitchen can be observed in various urban areas, including Nginden Jangkungan, Surabaya. Based on the researcher's preliminary observations, the MBG kitchen in this area engages local residents as daily operational staff, food distribution volunteers, and supporting personnel. Several volunteers reported that the program provides additional income opportunities and assists individuals who previously lacked stable employment. These initial findings suggest that the MBG kitchen functions not only as a food provision center but also as a space for social interaction and community-based economic empowerment. From the perspective of development sociology, this condition reflects the practice of solidarity economy emerging through collective community participation (OECD, 2022; United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy, 2022; Utting, 2023).

Community Empowerment Theory explains the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals and communities to control resources, make decisions, and improve their quality of life independently. Empowerment is viewed as both a theoretical framework and a process through which individuals, organizations, and communities gain greater influence over decisions affecting their lives and community well-being (Zimmerman, 2000). Recent studies further explain that community empowerment seeks to transform conditions of powerlessness into greater independence, participation, and control over development processes by providing access to resources, knowledge, and skills (Nugraha, 2023). In the context of development, empowerment focuses not only on economic assistance but also on strengthening community capacities so that people become active agents of sustainable development.

Social Capital Theory explains that social relationships, trust, shared norms, and networks constitute valuable resources that facilitate collective action and contribute to individual and community well-being. Contemporary reviews define social capital as the structure and quality of social relationships that generate benefits for individuals, social groups, and society as a whole (Tsounis & Xanthopoulou, 2024). Building on the foundational works of Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam, social capital encompasses trust, social norms, obligations, information channels, and civic networks that enhance cooperation and collective effectiveness (Jang, 2024). Within communities, social capital strengthens solidarity, mutual support, participation, and social cohesion, thereby improving the capacity of communities to achieve shared goals and sustain socio-economic development.

Previous studies have shown that community-based food programs have significant social and economic impacts on local communities. Hariyanto (2023) explained that community-based programs for stunting prevention can increase community social participation while strengthening household economic activities. Meanwhile, Wilujeng (2021) found that volunteer involvement in community food programs fosters social solidarity, which contributes to increased community empowerment. In addition, studies on community-based economic empowerment indicate that community participation in socio-productive activities can enhance household economic capacity and expand social networks within the community (Fattah & Romadhon, 2025).

However, most previous studies have primarily focused on the effectiveness of food programs from the perspectives of health, food security, or stunting reduction. Research examining the socio-economic significance of the MBG kitchen from the perspectives of volunteers and field practitioners remains relatively limited. In fact, the experiences of volunteers as individuals directly involved in MBG kitchen activities are valuable for understanding how the program is perceived as a source of employment opportunities, social solidarity, and community empowerment. This research gap indicates that the experiences, interpretations, and perceptions of volunteers regarding the economic impact of the MBG kitchen have not been extensively explored within the context of local communities, particularly in understanding the social processes and subjective perceptions associated with the program's economic impact at the community level.

Within qualitative research, public perception is understood as a construction of meaning shaped by social experiences, interactions, and everyday realities (Creswell & Poth, 2021). Therefore, it is important to explore volunteers' experiences in depth to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the MBG kitchen is perceived in relation to local employment generation. This approach enables researchers to understand social reality not merely through statistical figures but through narratives of experience, interpretation, and social dynamics that develop within society. Accordingly, this study seeks to position volunteers not merely as program implementers but as subjects who possess distinct experiences and social interpretations of the MBG program.

From a social perspective, this study is important because the growing number of community-based programs in Indonesia requires evaluation that extends beyond program outputs to include the socio-economic impacts experienced by communities. The presence of the MBG kitchen may influence patterns of social relationships, changes in local economic activities, and the formation of new forms of social solidarity within the surrounding environment. From a community development perspective, volunteer participation serves as an indicator of social program success because it reflects active community involvement in the development process (Wahyudin, 2025).

Therefore, understanding volunteer perceptions is essential for assessing the social and economic sustainability of the MBG program.

Furthermore, this study is relevant within the context of community-based local economic development. Various studies have shown that community empowerment through collective economic activities can strengthen household economic resilience and expand access to informal employment opportunities (Zuhroh, 2025). The MBG kitchen has the potential to serve as an alternative economic space that directly involves local residents through both employment generation and the use of locally sourced food products. This condition demonstrates that government social programs can generate multiplier effects on local economies when managed in a participatory and sustainable manner.

Empirically, preliminary interviews with several volunteers from SPPG Nginden Jangkungan indicated that the MBG kitchen creates new employment opportunities for housewives, unemployed youth, and low-income community members. Volunteers also perceived kitchen activities as having a positive impact on social interaction and the sense of togetherness among community members. Nevertheless, challenges remain, including uncertainty regarding work incentives, uneven task distribution, and limited operational facilities. These findings suggest that the economic impact of the MBG program cannot be understood in simplistic terms but must be examined through the experiences and perspectives of those directly involved in its implementation.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to analyze the perceptions of SPPG Nginden Jangkungan volunteers regarding the economic impact of the MBG kitchen, particularly in relation to local employment generation. The study focuses on volunteers' experiences in interpreting the MBG kitchen as a space for economic and social empowerment at the community level. This research is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of studies in development sociology and community-based empowerment, while also providing practical insights for policymakers and MBG program managers in designing policies that are more participatory, inclusive, and oriented toward empowering local communities economically.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Community Empowerment Theory

Community Empowerment Theory explains the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals and communities to control resources, make decisions, and improve their quality of life independently. Empowerment is viewed as both a theoretical framework and a process through which individuals, organizations, and communities gain greater influence over decisions affecting their lives and community well-being (Zimmerman, 2000). Recent studies further explain that community empowerment seeks to transform conditions of powerlessness into greater independence, participation, and control over development processes by providing access to resources, knowledge, and skills (Nugraha, 2023). In the context of development, empowerment focuses not only on economic assistance but also on strengthening community capacities so that people become active agents of sustainable development.

B. Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory explains that social relationships, trust, shared norms, and networks constitute valuable resources that facilitate collective action and contribute to individual and community well-being. Contemporary reviews define social capital as the structure and quality of

social relationships that generate benefits for individuals, social groups, and society as a whole (Tsounis & Xanthopoulou, 2024). Building on the foundational works of Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam, social capital encompasses trust, social norms, obligations, information channels, and civic networks that enhance cooperation and collective effectiveness (Jang, 2024). Within communities, social capital strengthens solidarity, mutual support, participation, and social cohesion, thereby improving the capacity of communities to achieve shared goals and sustain socio-economic development.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a phenomenological research design. A phenomenological approach was selected because the study focused on understanding the subjective experiences of SPPG Nginden Jangkungan volunteers regarding the economic impact of the MBG kitchen, particularly in relation to local employment generation. This approach enabled the researcher to explore the meanings, lived experiences, and social interpretations of volunteers who were directly involved in MBG kitchen activities. According to Creswell and Poth (2021), phenomenology is used to understand human experiences of a phenomenon through an in-depth examination of participants' perspectives. In this study, the phenomenon under investigation was not limited to economic aspects but also encompassed social experiences, community solidarity, and community empowerment that emerged through involvement in the MBG program. A phenomenological approach was considered appropriate because it can explain social reality based on the actual experiences of volunteers within the context of their everyday lives (Nurrisa & Hermina, 2025).

The study was conducted at SPPG Nginden Jangkungan, Surabaya, East Java, from January to March 2026. The research site was purposively selected because it serves as one of the operational centers of the MBG kitchen, involving local community members in food production and distribution activities. The study participants consisted of active MBG kitchen volunteers, field coordinators, and local residents involved in the program's operational activities. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) active volunteers with at least three months of involvement, (2) direct participation in MBG kitchen operations, and (3) experience related to the economic impact of the program on the surrounding community. In addition, snowball sampling was employed to identify additional informants through recommendations from key participants, thereby enriching and deepening the data collected (Silaban & Wahyoedi, 2025). The number of informants was determined according to the principle of data saturation, which was reached when recurring themes emerged and no significant new information was identified.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were used to allow the researcher to explore volunteers' experiences and perceptions flexibly while remaining aligned with the study's objectives. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes, guided by a previously developed interview protocol. In addition to interviews, participant observation was conducted to examine MBG kitchen activities, interactions among volunteers, task allocation, and community involvement in program operations. Documentation served as supporting data and included photographs of activities, program archives, field notes, and administrative records related to MBG kitchen operations. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and methodological triangulation by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and documentation to establish

consistency of information. The study also employed member checking, a process in which interview findings were confirmed with participants to ensure that the interpreted meanings accurately reflected their experiences (Maharani & Rahmawati, 2025).

Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2020). During the data reduction stage, the researcher conducted data selection, coding, and categorization based on themes relevant to the research focus. The data were then presented in the form of descriptive narratives and thematic matrices to facilitate the identification of patterns and relationships among categories. The final stage involved drawing conclusions, which were developed gradually and continuously verified throughout the research process to ensure consistency with the field data. To enhance research transparency, the researcher also maintained an audit trail consisting of research process records, interview transcripts, and data analysis results as part of the scientific documentation of the qualitative research process (Afwan et al., 2025).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. The MBG Kitchen as a Source of Employment Opportunities and Additional Income

Volunteers perceived the presence of the MBG kitchen as an economic space that creates employment opportunities for local community members. The program provides opportunities for housewives, unemployed youth, and informal workers to engage in productive activities that generate additional income. For some volunteers, involvement in kitchen operations serves as an alternative source of income amid limited access to formal employment. These experiences indicate that the MBG kitchen is perceived as an instrument of economic empowerment that enhances productivity and supports the fulfillment of household needs.

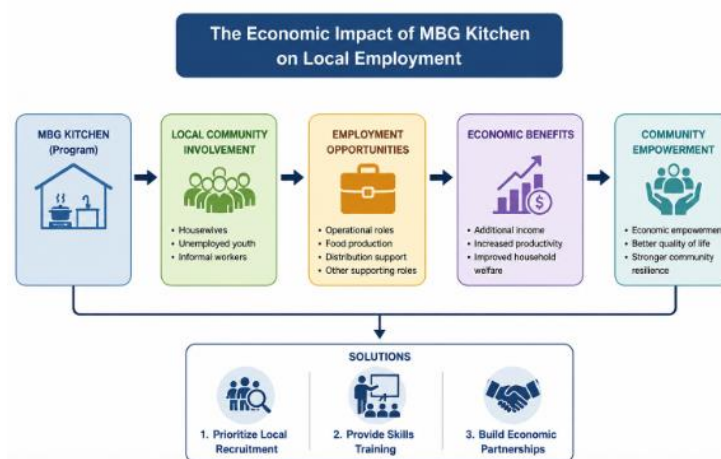


Figure 1. The Economic Impact of MBG Kitchen

MBG program managers should strengthen recruitment mechanisms that prioritize local residents as kitchen operational staff. This policy should particularly target vulnerable groups such as housewives, unemployed youth, and informal workers who have limited access to formal employment opportunities. By providing broader employment opportunities to local communities, the MBG kitchen can function not only as a nutritious food provision program but also as a

mechanism for reducing unemployment and increasing household income. This initiative can further strengthen the program's contribution to community-based economic development.

The MBG program should be complemented by relevant job skills training for volunteers and operational staff. Training programs may include food processing, logistics management, administration, entrepreneurship, and other practical skills that can be utilized beyond the MBG program. Through capacity building, volunteers can gain not only short-term economic benefits from their involvement in the MBG kitchen but also competencies that enhance future employment opportunities and economic self-reliance. This approach will reinforce the role of the MBG program as a sustainable community empowerment initiative.

To maximize the program's economic impact, MBG managers should establish stronger partnerships with MSMEs, local food suppliers, and businesses located near the kitchen facilities. The involvement of local economic actors in the program's supply chain can generate multiplier effects for the community economy. In addition to creating direct employment opportunities within the MBG kitchen, the program can stimulate demand for local products and services, thereby extending economic benefits more broadly. Through this strategy, the MBG kitchen can evolve into a center for community economic empowerment that not only creates jobs but also stimulates sustainable local economic activity.

B. The Formation of Social Solidarity Through Collective Volunteer Work

Participation in MBG kitchen activities fosters closer social relationships among volunteers and members of the surrounding community. Volunteers perceive cooking, food packaging, and food distribution activities as collective efforts that strengthen cooperation, mutual assistance, and social concern. Regular interactions cultivate a sense of togetherness and shared responsibility in carrying out the program. These experiences indicate that the MBG kitchen functions not only as an economic space but also as a platform for building community-based social solidarity.



Figure 2. Strengthening Social Solidarity Flowchart

MBG program managers should develop activities specifically designed to strengthen social relationships among volunteers beyond daily operational tasks. Activities such as group discussions, joint evaluations, regular meetings, and community social events can serve as opportunities to improve communication, build mutual trust, and enhance team cohesion. More intensive interactions will strengthen volunteers' sense of belonging to the program and foster stronger

solidarity among participants. As a result, the spirit of mutual cooperation that has already been established can be maintained and continuously developed over time.

To sustain the social solidarity that has been developed, program managers should implement a work system that provides opportunities for all volunteers to participate in decision-making processes and task allocation. Volunteer involvement in identifying solutions to operational challenges can strengthen collective responsibility for the success of the program. In addition, a collaborative work system can reduce the potential for conflict, strengthen cooperation among team members, and create a more inclusive and harmonious working environment. This approach enables social solidarity to develop not only through work activities but also through shared experiences in managing the program.

The social solidarity developed within the MBG kitchen environment can be further strengthened by involving more community stakeholders in various program activities. The participation of community leaders, youth groups, local organizations, and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) can expand the social networks that support program sustainability. The greater the number of stakeholders involved, the greater the opportunity to establish mutually beneficial and supportive social relationships. Through broader participation, the MBG kitchen can evolve into a community activity center that not only strengthens social resilience but also promotes a sustainable culture of care, cooperation, and collective responsibility.

C. Increased Sense of Empowerment and Self-Confidence Among Volunteers

Participation in the MBG program provides social experiences that enhance volunteers' self-confidence and sense of empowerment. Volunteers feel that they make meaningful contributions to both their families and the broader community. Involvement in kitchen activities also helps them gain work experience, improve their ability to interact with others, and strengthen their perception of themselves as productive individuals. For some volunteers, these experiences contribute to the formation of a new social identity as active and empowered members of the community.

MBG program managers should establish a recognition and appreciation system that openly and consistently acknowledges the contributions of volunteers. Forms of recognition may include certificates, volunteer awards, publication of inspirational stories, and acknowledgment during community events. Recognizing volunteer contributions can strengthen self-confidence, increase motivation to continue participating, and reinforce the perception that their role is valuable to society. As a result, volunteers will not only feel needed by the program but will also receive psychological reinforcement that supports their personal growth and development.



Figure 3. Empowering Volunteers in The Kitchen Program

The MBG program should provide broader opportunities for volunteers to develop their personal and leadership skills through a wider range of responsibilities and roles. Volunteers can be involved in activity coordination, team management, operational problem-solving, and community education initiatives. These opportunities allow volunteers to gain broader experience, improve communication and decision-making skills, and strengthen confidence in their own abilities. Through this process, volunteers can develop from program participants into individuals with leadership capacity and positive influence within their communities.

The sense of empowerment developed through participation in the MBG program should be supported by follow-up initiatives focused on long-term economic and social development. Program managers can facilitate volunteers' access to entrepreneurship training, employment opportunities, small business mentoring, and broader community networks. Such support enables volunteers to leverage the experiences gained through the program as valuable assets for improving their quality of life. By establishing sustainable empowerment pathways, the self-confidence and positive social identity developed through the program can evolve into greater economic independence and stronger social participation within the community.

D. Operational Challenges in Supporting Program Sustainability

Although the MBG program provides economic and social benefits, volunteers also face various challenges in its implementation. Limited work facilities, suboptimal task allocation, and the need for more adequate operational support are among the most frequently reported concerns. Volunteers perceive that the sustainability of the program's economic benefits is strongly influenced by the quality of program management and the availability of supporting resources. Therefore, strengthening operational support is viewed as a critical factor in maintaining the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of the MBG program at the community level.



Figure 4. Solutions for Sustainable Kitchen Operations

The sustainability of the MBG program requires adequate facilities and infrastructure to ensure that operational activities can be carried out effectively and efficiently. Program managers should assess the needs of volunteers regarding equipment and facilities, including cooking equipment, distribution supplies, workspaces, and other supporting resources. The availability of adequate facilities can help reduce operational barriers, improve productivity, and create a more comfortable working environment for volunteers. As a result, the quality of program services can be

maintained while supporting the long-term sustainability of the economic benefits generated for the community.

To enhance program effectiveness, a clearer, more structured task allocation system that aligns with the capabilities of each volunteer is needed. Program managers can develop standard operating procedures, detailed job descriptions, and coordination mechanisms that enable volunteers to understand their responsibilities more effectively. A well-organized work system can reduce task overlap, improve operational efficiency, and minimize the potential for misunderstandings among team members. This approach can also strengthen accountability and professionalism in program implementation.

The long-term success of the MBG program requires stronger institutional support through collaboration with government agencies, private-sector organizations, social organizations, and other relevant stakeholders. Such support may include financial assistance, facility provision, program management training, and the strengthening of monitoring and evaluation systems. Sustainable support can help maintain operational stability while enhancing management capacity at the community level. Through stronger institutional support, the MBG program can evolve into a more sustainable socio-economic initiative capable of delivering long-term benefits to the surrounding community.

Discussion

The findings indicate that volunteers perceive the MBG kitchen not only as a food assistance program but also as a community-based economic empowerment initiative that creates employment opportunities and additional sources of income for local residents. The involvement of housewives, unemployed youth, and informal workers in food preparation, packaging, and distribution activities demonstrates that the MBG kitchen serves as an alternative economic space capable of absorbing local labor. This finding supports Community Empowerment Theory, which emphasizes that empowerment occurs when individuals gain access to resources, opportunities, and productive activities that enable them to improve their quality of life and exercise greater control over their economic conditions (Zimmerman, 2000; Nugraha, 2023). Through participation in the MBG program, community members are not positioned merely as beneficiaries but as active contributors to local development processes. The findings also reinforce previous studies showing that community-based programs can strengthen household economic resilience while expanding opportunities for productive community participation (Fattah & Romadhon, 2025; Hariyanto, 2023). In this context, the MBG kitchen demonstrates how a social welfare program can generate broader economic impacts through local employment creation and community participation.

Beyond its economic function, the study reveals that participation in MBG kitchen activities fosters stronger social relationships among volunteers and community members. Daily interactions through collective activities such as cooking, food packaging, and food distribution create a sense of togetherness, mutual support, and shared responsibility. These findings align closely with Social Capital Theory, which argues that trust, social networks, and shared norms facilitate collective action and strengthen community cohesion (Jang, 2024; Tsounis & Xanthopoulou, 2024). The collaborative work patterns observed among volunteers reflect the development of social capital in the form of mutual trust, reciprocity, and collective commitment toward achieving common goals. This finding is consistent with Wilujeng (2021), who found that participation in community-based food programs contributes to the formation of social solidarity and stronger community engagement. The MBG

kitchen therefore functions not only as an economic institution but also as a social arena where relationships, cooperation, and collective identity are continuously developed through shared experiences.

Another important finding concerns the increased sense of empowerment and self-confidence experienced by volunteers. Participants reported feeling more productive, valuable, and capable of contributing to their families and communities. In addition to providing economic opportunities, involvement in the program enabled volunteers to gain work experience, improve communication skills, and develop a stronger sense of personal efficacy. These experiences reflect the core principles of Community Empowerment Theory, which views empowerment as a process through which individuals develop confidence, competence, and the ability to influence their own lives and social environments (Zimmerman, 2000). The findings suggest that empowerment extends beyond economic benefits and includes psychological and social dimensions. Volunteers gradually developed a new social identity as active and capable community members, indicating that empowerment is both a material and symbolic process. This finding supports Nugraha (2023), who argues that empowerment involves transforming conditions of dependency into greater participation, autonomy, and self-determination. Consequently, the MBG kitchen contributes not only to economic improvement but also to the development of human and social capacities within the community.

Despite these positive outcomes, the study also identifies several operational challenges that may affect the sustainability of the program. Volunteers highlighted limitations in facilities, inadequate work infrastructure, uneven task distribution, and the need for stronger operational support. These challenges suggest that community empowerment initiatives require not only participation and social commitment but also effective organizational management and institutional support. From the perspective of Community Empowerment Theory, empowerment cannot be sustained when communities lack access to sufficient resources and supporting structures (Nugraha, 2023; Zimmerman, 2000). Likewise, Social Capital Theory suggests that social solidarity alone may not be sufficient to sustain collective action if organizational systems and institutional support remain weak (Tsounis & Xanthopoulou, 2024). The findings therefore demonstrate that the long-term success of the MBG program depends on the interaction between community participation, social capital, and organizational capacity. Sustainable program outcomes require adequate facilities, effective coordination mechanisms, clear role distribution, and collaborative support from government institutions, private-sector organizations, and local stakeholders.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature on community empowerment and social capital by demonstrating how a community-based food program can simultaneously generate economic opportunities, strengthen social solidarity, enhance individual empowerment, and foster community resilience. The findings provide empirical evidence that the MBG kitchen operates as both an economic empowerment mechanism and a social institution that facilitates collective action and community development. This dual function highlights the importance of integrating empowerment strategies with social capital development in designing and implementing sustainable community-based programs. Furthermore, the study extends previous research by showing that the impact of food assistance initiatives should be understood not only in terms of nutritional outcomes but also in relation to employment generation, social cohesion, psychological empowerment, and local economic development.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the MBG kitchen at SPPG Nginden Jangkungan is perceived by volunteers not only as a nutritious food provision program but also as a community-based socio-economic empowerment initiative that contributes to local employment generation. The presence of the MBG kitchen creates employment opportunities for housewives, unemployed youth, and informal workers, providing additional income and productive activities that help improve household economic conditions. These findings demonstrate that the program functions as an alternative economic space capable of supporting community economic resilience and expanding opportunities for labor absorption at the local level.

The study further reveals that participation in the MBG program strengthens social solidarity among volunteers and community members. Collective activities such as food preparation, packaging, and distribution foster cooperation, mutual support, trust, and shared responsibility. In addition to generating economic benefits, the program promotes the development of social capital through stronger community relationships and increased collective engagement. Volunteers also experience greater self-confidence, empowerment, and social recognition as a result of their involvement in the program. These experiences contribute to the formation of positive social identities and reinforce their perception as active and valuable members of the community.

Despite these positive outcomes, the study identifies several operational challenges, including limited facilities, insufficient infrastructure, uneven task allocation, and the need for stronger institutional support. These constraints may affect the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of the program if not adequately addressed. Therefore, enhancing operational facilities, strengthening management systems, expanding volunteer capacity-building opportunities, and fostering collaboration with government agencies, private-sector organizations, and local stakeholders are essential to ensuring the sustainability of the program.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Community Empowerment Theory and Social Capital Theory by demonstrating that community-based food programs can simultaneously generate economic opportunities, strengthen social solidarity, and enhance individual empowerment. Practically, the findings provide insights for policymakers and program managers in designing more participatory, inclusive, and sustainable community-based initiatives that not only address food security concerns but also promote local economic development, social cohesion, and community resilience.

REFERENCES

- Afwan, B., Putra, A. D., & Abbas, N. A. (2025). Persepsi Guru terhadap Pendekatan Deep Learning dalam Pembelajaran Sejarah di Sekolah Menengah Atas. *Social Pedagogy: Journal of Social Science Education*, 6(1), 45–58. <https://e-journal.metrouniv.ac.id/social-pedagogy/article/view/11519>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2021). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (5th ed.).
- Fattah, M. F., & Romadhon, M. F. (2025). *Merajut Harapan Melalui Pemberdayaan Masyarakat: Usaha-Usaha Bersama*

- yang Mesti Diingat. Google Books.
- Hariyanto, S. S. (2023). *Optimalisasi Peran Posyandu dalam Mengurangi Stunting di Desa Randegan Kecamatan Kebasen Kabupaten Banyumas* [UIN Prof. KH Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto]. <https://repository.uinsaizu.ac.id>
- Harwiki, W., Christantyawati, N., Subaderi, & Suindyah, S. (2025). Innovation and Market Expansion Through Semi-Mechanical Herbal Drink Production. *Jurnal Karinov*, 8(3).
- Jang, S. (2024). Social Capital Theory and Quantitative Approaches in Community Research. *PMC*.
- Maharani, A., & Rahmawati, A. F. (2025). Pengalaman Emosional Siswa SD dalam Pembelajaran Matematika: Studi Fenomenologi tentang Zona Nyaman Belajar. *Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan Matematika*, 8(2), 112–124. <https://journal.institutpendidikan.ac.id/index.php/pme/article/view/2673>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2020). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (4th edition). SAGE Publications. <https://search.worldcat.org/title/1047532295>
- Nugraha, A. (2023). The Concept of Strategy in Community Empowerment: A Literature Review. *INFLUENCE: International Journal of Science Review*, 5(3), 24–34. <https://doi.org/10.54783/influencejournal.v5i3.179>
- Nurrisa, F., & Hermina, D. (2025). Pendekatan Kualitatif dalam Penelitian: Strategi, Tahapan, dan Analisis Data. *Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran*, 12(1), 1–15. <https://jurnal.kopusindo.com/index.php/jtpp/article/view/581>
- OECD. (2022). *Building Local Development and Social Cohesion through the Social and Solidarity Economy*. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- Organization, F. and A. (2022). *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). <https://www.fao.org>
- Putra, I. M. A., Sabudi, I. N. S., Gede, N., Wiarttha, M., & Desak, N. (2025). Pengaruh Hygiene & Sanitasi terhadap Kualitas Makanan Restoran Taman Gita dari Perspektif Karyawan di Hotel RIB. *Jurnal Multidisiplin West Science*, 04(07), 1067–1077.
- Silaban, B. P., & Wahyoedi, S. (2025). Studi Fenomenologi Spiritualitas Kerja Generasi Z. *Journal of Syntax Transformation*, 6(2), 88–101. <https://search.ebscohost.com>
- Statistik, B. P. (2024). *Keadaan Ketenagakerjaan Indonesia 2024*. BPS Indonesia. <https://www.bps.go.id>
- Sufa, S. A., Rachmanto, T., Adistie, G. R., Anwar, K., & Setyawan, D. (2024). Digital Literacy for MSME Actors of Sidoarjo Food and Beverage Association (ASMAMINDA). 2(03), 346–364.
- Suyanto, Krisprimandoyo, D. A., Jusnita, R. A. E., Bernardus, D., & Riyadi, S. (2024). Sustainable Development Planning of Surabaya City: Pursuing Inclusive and Sustainable Growth. *Journal of Business Management and Economic Development*, 2(01), 215–240.
- Tobing, V. M. . T. L., Asnawi, A., Arfani, M., Brumadyadisty, G., Setyawan, D., & Sufa, S. A. (2025). *When Words Become Weapons: Volunteer Communication Tactics to Combat Drugs at The Grassroots*.
- Tsounis, A., & Xanthopoulou, D. (2024). Social Capital Theory: A Review. In S. Papagiannidis (Ed.), *TheoryHub Book*. <https://open.ncl.ac.uk>
- United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy. (2022). *Promoting the Social and Solidarity Economy for Sustainable Development*. United Nations.
- Utting, P. (2023). *Social and Solidarity Economy: Beyond the Fringe*. Zed Books.
- Wahyudin, W. (2025). *Ketahanan Ekonomi Masyarakat Ciceri Jaya di Masa Pandemi Covid-19*. Google Books.
- Wilujeng, C. S. (2021). Narrative Literature Review: Studi Kualitatif Implementasi Community Based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) pada Sistem Kesehatan. <https://www.academia.edu>
- Zimmerman, M. A. (2000). Empowerment Theory: Psychological, Organizational and Community Levels of Analysis. In *Handbook of Community Psychology*. Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Zuhroh, D. (2025). *Digitalisasi Bisnis UMKM: Strategi Meraih Kinerja yang Berkelanjutan* [Universitas Merdeka Malang]. <https://eprints.unmer.ac.id>