

Socio-Religious Development for Muslims with Visually Impaired or Blind Disabilities in Manado City

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Abstract: *The purpose of community service by mentoring and coaching in socio-religious contexts for Muslims with visually impaired or blind disabilities in Manado city is to increase the spirit of religiosity and social lives. This community service activity was held at the Indonesian Muslim Disabilities Visibility Association office in Manado city from June to December 2021, employing the Asset Based Community Development method, prioritizing the utilization of existing assets and potential owned by them. As a result, there is an increase in knowledge in prayer practice. They can now implement fiqh thaharah and Janazah prayer practices well and perfectly. They also now can socialize by benefiting others, especially their readiness to be hosts or MCs, readers of the Qur'an, and preachers, beyond the skills they already have had. There were also jointly formulated by the program organizers and participants three follow-up solutions: continuous mental strengthening, a rapid environment learning, and constantly improving the special skills they have learned.*

Keywords: Manado; Muslims; mentoring and coaching; socio-religious; visual disability.

Abstrak: *Tujuan pengabdian kepada masyarakat dengan pendampingan dan pembinaan dalam konteks sosial keagamaan bagi tunanetra Muslim di kota Manado adalah untuk meningkatkan semangat keagamaan dan kehidupan sosial mereka. Kegiatan pengabdian masyarakat ini dilaksanakan di kantor Ikatan Tunanetra Muslim Indonesia di kota Manado pada bulan Juni hingga Desember 2021 dengan metode Asset Based Community Development yang mengutamakan pemanfaatan aset yang ada dan potensi yang telah dimiliki. Alhasil, terjadi peningkatan pengetahuan dalam amalan shalat. Mereka kini dapat melaksanakan amalan fiqh thaharah dan shalat Janazah dengan baik dan sempurna. Mereka juga kini bisa bersosialisasi dengan memberi manfaat bagi orang lain, terutama kesiapan mereka menjadi pembawa acara atau MC, pembaca Al-Qur'an, dan khatib, di luar keterampilan yang sudah mereka miliki sebelumnya. Ada pula tiga solusi tindak lanjut yang dirumuskan bersama oleh penyelenggara program dan peserta: penguatan mental terus-menerus, pembelajaran lingkungan yang cepat, dan terus-menerus meningkatkan keterampilan khusus yang telah mereka pelajari.*

Kata kunci: pembinaan; sosio-religius; tunanetra; Muslim; kota Manado.

Introduction

Manado in the national religious social frame is recognized as a tolerant area number three based on the Tolerant Cities Index Report (IKT) in 2020 (Kanwil Kemenag Prov. Sulut, 2021). As the second largest population in Manado, the Muslim population consists of 212,021 people, while Christians as the majority comprise 306,262 people out of 551,093 Manado citizens (Kanwil Kemenag Prov. Sulut, 2020). Based on the data, Muslims with disabilities in Manado city are a minority community regarding the number of the population.

An informant, Bobby, one of the administrators of the Indonesian Muslim Blind Association (abbreviated ITMI) in Manado city, explained that before the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of the organization members was more than a hundred people. However, most members came from outside Manado city and North Sulawesi Province, so during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of them had economic difficulties. They have difficulty socializing, even improving the quality of prayer in mosques, so they have to return to their respective hometowns (personal interview, June 6 2021). The rest domiciled in the city of Manado have experienced negative impacts, ranging from psychological, social, economic, and religious aspects; even an ITMI member is said as no longer willing to pray because of the stressful living during the pandemic.

Their condition is also aggravated by negative societal views because they are considered helpless people, always dependent on others, and even have a low tendency in time management and social attitudes, so they often feel inferior and release themselves from their environment (Somantri, 2007). For this reason, Carnemolla et al., (2021) & East, (2021) emphasized the importance of mentoring and coaching to the community with disabilities to improve the quality of human resources.

The condition encourages us to conduct community service by coaching and mentoring socio-religious aspects of Muslims with visual disabilities at the ITMI Office of Manado city. Our main goal is to revive quality living with spiritual strengthening affected in their hearts. By optimally functioning their normal and sensitive senses in achieving qualified skills, self-reliance in socializing and religion is present in themselves through good individual qualities. The purpose of this program is to be a study and guideline for coaches and implementers of community service engaged with blind or visually impaired communities, especially in improving socio-religious qualities for them.

Method

This community service program is carried out in the model of mentoring and coaching, but still in an casual and familiar sphere so that it becomes a place to increase their confidence in people with disabilities. The program was conducted from June to December 2021, located at the Indonesian Muslim Blind Association (Ikatan Tunanetra Muslim Indonesia - ITMI) office of Manado city. The program participants were set at 50 (fifty) people in the initial plan.

However, because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic requiring people with disabilities to return to their respective villages, the remaining number is 40 (forty) people who are participating in the activities.

The method used was the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) method, which prioritizes the utilization of assets and potential in the disabled communities because they are and they always have valuable assets for their environment. The five critical steps to the research process described by Dureau (2013) are mentoring, including discovering, dreaming, designing, defining, and destiny.

The stages of community service program are divided into three phases. The first phase is the introduction of the program as well as a psychological approach to all participants to get their agreement in participating in the program appropriately. This phase was carried out for one month in June 2021 so that community service implementers fully accommodate their input. Besides the core team of community service, there are also supporting parties involved as a community service partner, namely members of the Indonesian Islamic Student Movement (Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia - PMII) Metro Manado.

The second phase is implementing the program, covering the distribution of materials and action programs held from July to August 2021 for strengthening religious aspects, main topics such as *wudhu*, *tayamum*, bathing *janabah* (full bath), and the practice of perfect prayer and *janazah* prayer. In addition, from September to November 2021, social development activities are carried out in the form of *tilawah* training with *tajwid* (Qur'an reading guidelines) so that one can become a reader of the Qur'an at religious social events, training to become a host (an MC), and training as a preacher. For this social development, they made three groups according to the preferred interests of each participant.

The third phase in December 2021 is the evaluation to assess all programs that have been implemented. The program results will then be outlined in the activity report to IAIN Manado as the program funder.

Results and Discussion

Mentoring Muslims with Visual Disabilities in Manado

People with visual disabilities in Manado city have diverse socializing, including their relationships with others. Iskandar, chairman of ITMI of North Sulawesi Province, confirmed the social orientation, namely to inform the public about their existence in the community with unique skills benefited the community and increase economic income for them, such as singers, music players, readers of the Qur'an, traders, and professional masseurs (personal interview, June 22, 2021).

The work experience is the result of the education they obtained while at Bina Netra *Tumou Tou* Social Home located in Paal Empat District of Manado city. Should they have

finished their education, most prefer to stay around the social home and live in a household with their fellow communities. The situation is also their reason for placing the ITMI office not far from the social home to communicate between them easily. Not only has direct communication been done, but communication using electronic devices such as the mobile phone has contributed to building their social networks. While this community service is held, some of them are learning to read the Qur'an (*tadarus*) through a WhatsApp group mentored by an *ustadz* from Malang, East Java Province.

Although they have physical limitations, they consider it a gift from God and not a punishment. In living a social life, they do not close themselves off to getting along and making social contact with the local community. They also attend many social activities, such as working together (*kerja bakti*) or attending invitations when neighbours are grieving or celebrating activities such as weddings and birthdays, despite physical limitations compared to people without disabilities.

The local community appreciated their openness, so every social and religious event held in people's homes or mosques, such as *takziah*, *maulid*, *isra' mi'raj*, *tarawih*, and *nuzul al-Qur'an* prayers, they participate actively as main task takers. Not only as listeners, but they can also take on the role of religious matters, for example, as a host or MC, a reader of the Qur'an, and a singer of *shalawat* (Hendra Habu, personal interview, June 24, 2021).

However, even though they are open with other people, they often feel a spiritual emptiness. Moreover, the religious knowledge they have is also minimal. Turned out through this community service program, of all those present as 40 trainees, 34 people did not know the proper guidelines of ablution (*wudhu*), 31 people could not read the Qur'an properly (*tatek-tatek*), and 21 people did not know the guidelines of Janazah prayer. Some people did not know and have never taken a full bath (*junub*), even though they all are adults.

The stages carried out to encourage social and religious activities in the Muslim visual disability community include: *firstly*, intensive communication with psychological touch related to community service programs prepared while understanding the participants' information. This strategy is carried out to find effective communication agreements that do not seem rigid to the trainees and coaches. Understanding and observing information and finding emotional attachment to people with visual disabilities is not easy due to abnormal feelings that cause some to be insecure. Two participants were difficult to talk to, but with perseverance and patience accompanied by practical communication skills, they finally became open and eager to follow the activity.

After good communication and measuring the effectiveness of training time, it was agreed for religious training to include *wudhu*, *tayammum*, full bath or *janabah*, and funeral prayer (Janazah). Meanwhile, for social expediency, training focused on public speaking by grouping participants according to their preferred interests, such as Quran tilawah, host (MC), and preacher training.

Second, the implementation of mentoring with the slow and systematic delivery of improving the quality of religion with the theme of *wudhu*, *tayammum*, *janabah* bath, and funeral prayer. The delivery of material in a lecture accounts for no more than 20% of total training activities; the remaining 80% is learning while doing.

For this reason, training materials and prayer practices can be absorbed and implemented correctly, so it is expected that one companion accompanies every participant. Therefore, the core team invites students of PMII Metro Manado as a companion for the activities. The benefit of the companion is significant. All movements and prayer readings in practice are helped and repeated to be addressed to them by the companion, so the companions' ability, perseverance, and patience become a priority (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Companing trainees

Third, implementing mentoring and coaching to improve self-abilities and bring out new skills other than the skills that people with disabilities possess can be obtained from the social care system where they are trained for their self-benefit in society. Before starting the activity, the community service team divides the three groups according to their choice of interests. For the skill of being a reader of the Qur'an with the *mujawwad tilawah* model, thirteen participants belong to Group 1; for the skill as a host (MC), Group 2 was followed by nineteen participants; and the remaining eight people took training as preachers (Group 3).

All participants follow the mentoring and coaching diligently and earnestly. The main thing is not to force them to instantly succeed in the mentoring and coaching period. It takes perseverance to practice personally outside of the training days. Some people are very diligent in contacting coaches and trainers outside of activity time to ask or listen to and review the results of their training. Their engagement is what we found significant, and all coaches of the core team are obliged to respond and appreciate them gratefully.

Instilling Socio-Religious Spirits

Fara Dhanialia Aulia and Nurliana Cipta Apsari (2020) explained that people with disabilities need gradual and sustainable training through self-reliance activities. The aim is to instil an independent attitude so as not to rely on others to meet their living needs. The role of social workers in providing independence services activities for people with disabilities, especially as a facilitator, educator, counsellor, empowerer, and social group guide, is then crucial.

They need education and mentoring. It is the responsibility of everyone without disabilities, especially those who have more agency, power, and knowledge, both personally and institutionally. The aim of providing education and assistance is to support them, and Allah Swt has hinted in the Qur'an as a rebuke to the Prophet Muhammad. He once denied the arrival of a disabled person and his desire to learn about Islam favouring a more prominent person. Allah then rebuked his messenger through the verse *abasa wa tawalla* (He, Muhammad, was sour-faced and turned away) (al-Qur'an, 80:1).

Moreover, Indonesian Law No. 8 of 2016 on People with Disabilities states that the government has guaranteed equal opportunities for all people with disabilities in all aspects of life, including getting an education and mentoring. The Ministry of Religious Affairs also responded to the ratification of CRPD (The Convention of the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities) in its education policy through issuing the Circular Letter of the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs No. SJ / B.I / I / HM.00 / 1655 / 2012 dated April 24, 2012, that all units under the Ministry of Religious Affairs are encouraged to implement CRPD by opening accession for persons with disabilities (Andayani & Afandi, 2019).

Referring to legal norms, intensive and continuous engagement is essential for people with visual disabilities in Manado city. At the beginning of the development, by attracting information and establishing effective communication with people with disabilities, the importance of increasing self-potential is also explained so that it is helpful in society and improves the quality of *mahdhah* prayer properly.

In addition, it conveyed the importance of having a high fighting spirit. The way to make it happen is to put in work practices in the form of daring to appear before the community. One of the activities held to show their appearance is the Prophet Muhammad's Maulid, which is invited by the public and broadcast by TVRI North Sulawesi. However, it is not easy to foster and train them with technical constraints. Hence, the preparation needs a longer time so that all participants can listen to and ask questions on the discussed topic.

There is an interesting phenomenon in this socio-religious instilment, especially in the early coaching moments. They present motivation in life and the opportunity to compete in society within physical limitations. At that time, not all listened well to the material delivered; even some participants seemed rigid in their attitude. It was due to the coach who gave the subject and the participants; if there was no chemistry, then a more dynamic and humanist

approach was sought. Participants got guidance from their companions to be more relaxed during the program activities.

Later, a more effective pattern is found in delivering material, namely with an active learning approach. Participants are invited to participate in coaching activities, especially in presenting the material they feel is more suitable with the best formulation for increasing self-potential. One example is a question from one of the participants about how to make society accept their existence and not make them a second-class society. In the lengthy discussion, it was found that the need was not for other people to accept them, but how to be better so that others can see their existence.

Some formulated dictums of self-development obliged to be implemented personally and collectively while being mentored by coaches and companions, including:

1. Mental strengthening. They agreed that the main thing before everything else was mental strength. As humans with visual impairment, they must be stronger in living their lives. The term in the Manado language is, "*kase tabal tu telinga kong maju terus,*" (Do not listen to negative expressions from others and go forward to work);
2. Learn to recognize the environment quickly. People with disabilities cannot see around, including where they live in society. However, they must learn to live independently in life, so they must quickly learn about the atmosphere of their environment through their sense of touch and hearing. Uniquely, the participants naturally have been gifted to remember more strongly than ordinary people. This gift is further maximized by remembering and understanding the environment so that their independence can be realized and the needs of others can be minimized. Iskandar, chairman of ITMI mentioned, "*butul tong pe idop nimbole tagantung pa dorang*" (It is true that those who live a normal life around us, but we must not continue to depend on life with them) (personal interview, August 17, 2021).
3. Learn special skills. Two skills must be possessed by them, namely, primary and secondary. Their primary skill is to become professional masseuses, and this skill is acquired while they are still in Tumou Tou social home. Tatang, a teacher of the Panti, mentioned that professional massage exercises are mandatory because their sensitive hands, as a sense of taste, must be maximized so that their hands are optimally useful, like the sense of vision (personal interview, August 17, 2021). As for secondary skills under their respective talents and hobbies, when some do not have secondary skills, on the occasion of the coaching, one session is scheduled to becoming a host (MC). Furthermore, to run household business, such as making yellow *janur* (coconut leaves) into ketupat to be sold in the market, considering that Manado City is also popular of *Coto* and *Konro* (introduced by Buginese community as a local food).

What they formulated has been under the study of Fatimah (2010), explaining that confidence is a positive attitude of every individual who strives to be the best can increase

positive assessment, not only for himself but also for the environment or circumstances in which they live. Purnama and Ikhsanuddin's research (2020) also explained that increasing self-potential can help realize economic coffers for the family but cannot demand the role of the sense of sight. Therefore, the guidance and verdict of the individual on his career must be adjusted to the type of work that does not demand the role of sense of vision function (visualization) but can maximize the function of other senses.

One of the important special skills for them is public speaking, with a training model to be a good host (MC) (Figure 2). They can deliver Islamic da'wa in the community, especially to their community, with excellent and friendly delivery. The importance of public speaking training is affirmed by Fathoni et al. (2021) as an effort to provide new insights and knowledge in terms of speaking in front of a crowd, which further develops a new ability that is useful in front of the community. That is why this activity gets a good response from the trainees and coaches because it has a clear and appropriate output for them.



Figure 2. The session of public speaking performance

However, social support must also be grown from the hearts and minds of the community because human beings who enter into social life need other members of society, including those who have physical limitations. Rosalina and Apsari (2020) explained that social support provided by a person or community group in their environment could help overcome some of the difficulties they face, such as daily activities and education. Even Silverman (2015) quite "radically" wants "blindness simulation" as social support in the established education sector when learning from ordinary teachers to those with visual disabilities.

After delivering a lesson regarding motivation and increasing self-potential, we talked about understanding Islam's *'ubudiyyah mahdhah* (vertical prayers towards Allah Swt). As for all the series of prayers contained in the books of the representative *fiqh (al-mu'tabarah)*. Two lessons are strengthened to be their handles, namely the guidelines of the full bath (*janabah*) and the ordinance of Janazah prayer directly or indirectly.

To practise a full bath, forty participants found some difficulties, particularly in terms of time efficiency, because they had to demonstrate directly by holding their hands and directing them in cleaning all limbs from the head (including interrupted hair) to the legs. However, the fun training sphere accompanied by jokes makes everyone feels happy. In addition, the full bath training session whose contents are more of practice are delivered effectively and can be well received by the participants. The results are very satisfactory, with the fulfilment of optimal knowledge and practice of training in all participants.

Based on the above explanations, there is a contribution of knowledge in mentoring the community of visual disabilities. The main finding is that training with them cannot be limited by time and work plan; it takes a psychological approach to encourage their spirit and communication power and more intensity of time to get solutions to their constraints. Furthermore, they want to show their desire to participate in more expressive activities, even with talents that have been hidden.

Conclusion

The community service program with the concept of training and mentoring Muslims with visual disabilities was done and engaged with forty participants. Despite some obstacles in the beginning, in the end, all participants had gained increased knowledge in aspects of prayer practice and were able to implement *fiqh* and *Janazah* prayer properly and perfectly according to the guidelines. In addition, now they can socialize better by being a benefit to others, especially with their readiness to be hosts (MC), readers of the Qur'an, and preachers, in addition to the skills they have acquired from the previous social house they once lived. There were also jointly formulated by the program organizers and participants three follow-up solutions: continuous mental strengthening, a rapid environment learning, and constantly improving the special skills they have learned.

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