

Examining Inclusiveness of a Women's Empowerment Program

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Abstract

This study examines the inclusiveness of a program called Desa PRIMA (Perempuan Indonesia Maju Mandiri) or Women's Village Empowerment Program for Advanced Indonesian Women, which was developed by the Yogyakarta Special Region Government to alleviate poverty and promote gender equality. Specifically, it examines the extent to which the program effectively reaches vulnerable groups of women, including widows, individuals with disabilities, survivors of violence, and other marginalized communities. Employing a qualitative case study approach, this research explores the program's implementation at Desa PRIMA's Productive Economic Group (Kelompok Ekonomi Produktif – KEP), Amarta Sejahtera, located in Pandowoharjo Village, Sleman Regency, Yogyakarta. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns in the program's inclusiveness. The findings indicate that while the program has a positive impact on women's collective enterprises by enhancing their confidence, facilitating knowledge-sharing, and providing social support. However, it still faces challenges in effectively reaching vulnerable women. Political interests emerge as a key barrier to the program's effectiveness, increasing the risk of exclusion and restricting access to essential resources. The study concludes that women's empowerment programs need to be redesigned to promote greater inclusivity and better align with the needs of their intended target groups. Such efforts are crucial in promoting equitable access to opportunities and resources, particularly for women in vulnerable groups.

Keywords: Desa PRIMA; Exclusion; Inclusiveness; KEP; Women empowerment

Introduction

This study examines the extent to which the Women's Village Empowerment Program for Advanced Indonesian Women (Desa PRIMA) is inclusive in its implementation, especially its Productive Economic Group (KEP Desa PRIMA). Although the program was designed to prioritize women from vulnerable groups, such as those from low-income backgrounds, female heads of households, individuals with disabilities, and survivors of violence, initial findings identified that its implementation in Pandowoharjo Village, Sleman Regency, Yogyakarta, did not fully meet this objective. Despite its stated commitment to inclusivity, the program's outreach and recruitment mechanisms have struggled to engage women from vulnerable groups, thereby limiting their participation and access to economic empowerment opportunities.

Although the concept of empowerment may seem limited in its basic definition, Prijono and Pranarka (1996), in *Empowerment: Concept, Policy and Implementation*, describe it as an effort to strengthen the weak without undermining the strong—essentially giving power to the powerless. Empowerment protects and advocates for the weak to prevent unequal competition and exploitation of vulnerable groups (Prijono and Pranarka 1996). Similarly, Naila Kabeer (1994) defines empowerment as a process of transformation from a state of powerlessness, such as being denied the ability to make choices, to one where individuals gain the capacity to make decisions and exercise agency.

One of the first women's empowerment programs initiated by the central government through the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection was the Women's Village Empowerment Program for Advanced Indonesian Women (Desa PRIMA) in 2008. Although the program was discontinued nationally in 2012, it has continued to be implemented by the Regional Government of Yogyakarta (DIY) to this day. Desa PRIMA is a model of women's empowerment that seeks to promote women's empowerment, child protection, family resilience, population control, and family planning as part of an inclusive and sustainable development agenda.

This study highlights a flaw in the implementation of the PRIMA Village Productive Economic Group (KEP) program in Pandowoharjo Village, Sleman Regency, Yogyakarta—specifically, its weakened inclusivity. It focuses on how the KEP Desa PRIMA program is implemented in Pandowoharjo Village and examines the extent to which it engages women from vulnerable groups, such as widows, individuals with disabilities, and victims of violence. Although the Desa PRIMA Program appears promising at the policy level, with its commitment to prioritizing women from vulnerable groups, in practice, it remains inaccessible and unaffordable for many of the women it aims to support.

This study argues that implementing KEP Desa PRIMA in Pandowoharjo Village has deviated from its original mission of inclusivity. Instead of actively involving women from vulnerable groups, the program has unintentionally reinforced exclusionary practices, primarily due to limited outreach, social stigmatization, and a perception that participation is restricted to certain social circles, such as village cadres or individuals closely connected to the local authorities. This exclusion, whether intentional or not, undermines the fundamental principle of empowerment, which seeks to strengthen the weak without reinforcing their exclusion. Reassessing the program's inclusivity is therefore essential to ensure the meaningful participation of vulnerable women in all stages of empowerment, supporting broader goals of sustainable development and social justice.

Methods

According to Purba and Simanjuntak (2011), exploratory research is conducted to understand observed symptoms and explore their underlying relationships. In this study, local political dynamics surrounding the establishment of the Desa PRIMA Program are viewed as an initial symptom of its suboptimal implementation, particularly in terms of promoting inclusivity. This has created potential spaces for social exclusion, particularly affecting women from vulnerable groups. The researchers did not have a comprehensive understanding of the conditions surrounding the Desa PRIMA Program in Pandowoharjo Village. Through the research process, the researchers analysed the phenomena from

multiple perspectives, gradually identifying symptoms or findings related to aspects of social inclusion and exclusion in the implementation of the Desa PRIMA Women's Empowerment Program in Pandowoharjo Village.

As part of the initial assessment, the researchers conducted observations and interviews regarding the program's implementation, focusing on members of KEP Desa PRIMA Amarta Sejahtera, who were the primary targets of empowerment. These observations were unstructured and not guided by predefined protocols, in line with the exploratory nature of the study. The aim was to gather preliminary data on the program's implementation to build a foundational understanding and identify key symptoms, particularly those related to local political dynamics shaping the establishment and operation of the women's empowerment program in Pandowoharjo Village. According to Purba and Simanjuntak (2011), exploratory research avoids the use of structured recording tools, as researchers may not yet know which aspects of the phenomenon are most relevant to the research objectives.

Unstructured interviews were conducted during the data collection process, guided by a flexible interview framework that outlined key discussion points (Purba and Simanjuntak 2011). This flexibility allowed the researcher to pose follow-up questions where relevant to the research objectives. The study involved several informants representing different categories, with primary informants being members of KEP Desa PRIMA Amarta Sejahtera—individuals directly involved in the social interactions under examination (Moleong 2010). According to the definition of vulnerable women in the PRIMA Village Guidebook (2023), poor women and women with disabilities were also included as key informants in this study. To examine the government program, this research analysed both policy formulation and program implementation, using the KEP Desa PRIMA Amarta Sejahtera as a case study. Data related to the program's policies were obtained through interviews with the relevant Local Government Organization (OPD), specifically DP3AP2 DIY, which served as a key informant, along with representatives from the village government.

This study utilizes a qualitative research method with a case study approach to examine the inclusiveness of the Desa PRIMA women's empowerment model. It focuses on how the Desa PRIMA Productive Economic Group (KEP) Program, implemented in Pandowoharjo Village, Sleman Regency, Yogyakarta, addresses the needs of vulnerable women. The challenges faced in this local implementation form the basis for analyzing the program's capacity to reach its intended beneficiaries—women from vulnerable groups. This case is considered representative of broader patterns often seen in top-down programs, where policy intentions struggle in practice. It highlights implementation flaws that may compromise the program's foundational commitment to inclusion.

The limited number of evaluation studies on the implementation of women's empowerment programs—particularly the Desa PRIMA Program—from the perspective of social inclusion and exclusion justifies the selection of a single case study design, specifically a revelatory case. This design is appropriate when researchers have access to a phenomenon that has not been extensively studied. The analysis adopts an embedded case study approach, which involves multiple units of analysis as it involves multiple units of analysis. The primary unit of analysis is the empowerment group as a whole, with sub-units including individual members, such as women in the empowerment group and members of KEP Desa PRIMA Amarta Sejahtera, as well as vulnerable women who are non-members of the group. Intermediate units, such as the guardian agency and the village government, are also integral to the analysis. While the study focuses on a single research locus within one KEP Desa PRIMA group, it provides a focused lens to reveal structural and practical challenges in implementation. The broader Desa PRIMA program functions as a contextual backdrop to frame the case.

Results

Interviews with relevant agencies indicate that the nomination of Desa PRIMA candidates in some regions is driven less by the urgency of poverty alleviation or improving the quality of life for vulnerable women, and more by the strategic interests of villages or

regencies aiming to obtain the *Desa Mandiri Budaya* (DMB) or Independent Cultural Village designation from the Yogyakarta Regional Government. This designation is closely associated with the potential acquisition of Special Financial Assistance, specifically “*BKK Dals: Bantuan Keuangan Khusus Dana Istimewa*,” which allocates program budgets ranging from 1 to 2 billion Rupiah annually, sustained over a minimum period of three years.

The village and regency governments initiated the Desa PRIMA program primarily to fulfill administrative requirements for obtaining the designation of DMB. One of the key requirements for this designation was the implementation of the Desa PRIMA program through the establishment of KEP Desa PRIMA. Consistent with these administrative objectives, the establishment of Desa PRIMA was soon followed by its official designation as DMB, a designation granted by the Governor of Yogyakarta in the same year. This approval was formalized through the issuance of the Decree of the Governor of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Number 364/KEP/2020, concerning the Determination of *Desa Mandiri Budaya* Villages/Counties in 2020.

From a procedural and administrative perspective, the establishment of Desa PRIMA does not constitute a violation if it is motivated by or aligns with the designation of Pandowoharjo Village as DMB. According to the PRIMA Village Guidebook, villages with a *Desa Budaya* (Cultural Village) or DMB status are eligible to receive recommendations from the local government to implement the Desa PRIMA program. Subsequently, these villages may propose their candidacy to be designated as *DMB* under the DMB Program.

The findings indicate a deviation from the prescribed selection process for prospective group members by the village, specifically the Kalurahan government—an administrative unit at the village level in regions such as the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY). Instead of following the official guidelines, which require the Kalurahan to propose prospective members with assistance from the PKK Kalurahan team, members were directly appointed from existing women's groups within the village, particularly the PKK Kalurahan Group. The PKK (*Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga*, or Family Welfare Empowerment) is a women-led community organization focused on improving family and community welfare across areas such as education, health, the economy, and the environment. Through

a forum agreement (deliberation), both the chairperson and other core administrators were selected from members of the PKK Kalurahan. However, this process deviates from the mechanism outlined in the KEP Desa PRIMA Implementation Guidelines for Sub-Candidate Members. According to these guidelines, the Kalurahan is required to propose prospective members with the assistance of the PKK Kalurahan Team.

The government directly incorporated the PKK Kalurahan Team as members and appointed them as the core board, which constitutes a procedural error. According to the official guidelines, the appropriate mechanism requires the village government to work collaboratively with the PKK Kalurahan Movement Team and the Section Head responsible for community affairs to identify and involve prospective members who meet specific eligibility criteria. These criteria include individuals classified as poor or at risk of poverty, female heads of households, survivors of violence, women with disabilities, and others who fall within the program's targeted demographics (DP3AP2 DIY 2023).

Based on the results of interviews and observations, this research identifies a form of collectivism within the KEP Desa PRIMA Amarta Sejahtera group. This sense of collectivism is reflected in the group's provision of social support and sharing experiences, which foster individual self-validation and shape a shared identity among KEP Desa PRIMA Amarta Sejahtera members. Social support is particularly evident in cases where members are less active, either due to illness or restrictions imposed by their husbands on participating in empowerment activities. Such support is primarily provided by the group leader, who offers moral encouragement and actively seeks to reintegrate less active members into the group's activities. One member shared her experience of receiving such support when she considered leaving the group:

"I once wanted to leave KEP, but the chairperson didn't allow me. She said, 'There's no need to leave. It's difficult to find members, especially since you already have a product.' Back then, I rarely participated in selling at the canteen because I was sick. She told me, 'Focus on recovering first, and then you can help at the canteen whenever you have the chance.'"

Support and tolerance are evident in the consistent distribution of incentives to all members, including those less active due to limited mobility caused by illness, age, or work obligations. No internal conflicts were found that could disrupt group activities. The findings also reveal a strong collective identity within the group, specifically KEP Desa PRIMA Amarta Sejahtera, which has formed through voluntary participation and shared social engagement.

The group established a collective business by managing a canteen at the Tirta Amarta Pandowoharjo Swimming Pool. While this initiative does not fully align with the program's original objective—namely, to develop local economic capacity through the creation of superior products based on local potential—it still reflects a commendable effort. Notably, the group successfully negotiated with the village-owned enterprise (BUMDesa), which operates the swimming pool, to manage the canteen through a profit-sharing agreement. Members recounted that this achievement not only strengthened their sense of agency but also enabled them to contribute to the village's Own-Source Revenue (PADes - *Pendapatan Asli Desa*), demonstrating the group's tangible impact on the local economy:

"For the income from this (canteen business unit), we are now able to contribute to the Village's Own-Source Revenue (PADes). We have already made contributions."

The management of the swimming pool canteen as a business unit of KEP Desa Amarta Sejahtera is implemented to ensure that empowerment activities under the Desa PRIMA Program scheme provide income for group members, rather than serving merely as

social activities. Discussions and interviews with members of KEP Desa PRIMA Amarta Sejahtera reveal their active involvement in various empowerment initiatives, including serving as presenters in training sessions and participating in deliberation forums at both the internal group and village levels. These opportunities offer valuable experiences for women, enabling them to access economic, political, social, and other resources, thereby enhancing their skills and strengthening their bargaining positions.

On the contrary, the research revealed a stigmatization process targeting women from vulnerable groups, which further marginalizes them and limits their opportunities to access economic and other resources that could enhance their capabilities and well-being. The exclusion of these groups is reflected in the reluctance or outright rejection of their inclusion as potential new members, particularly if they belong to low-income families. This exclusion is often driven by individual assumptions and prejudices, such as the stigmatizing belief that women from vulnerable backgrounds are primarily motivated by material gain and may pose a risk to the sustainability of group activities:

"Initially, we aimed to recruit members who aligned with the concept (women from vulnerable, marginalized, and impoverished groups) (...), but then we realized that if they weren't economically stable and joined social activities, there was a concern that it wouldn't work, as they might tend to focus only on profit. Meanwhile, social activities are not profit-oriented. (...)"

Concerns persist regarding the commitment of certain members to actively participate in various empowerment activities, particularly in establishing a new collective business managed by KEP Desa PRIMA Amarta Sejahtera, which is perceived as not generating substantial income or profit. This perception stems from the experiences of several former members who eventually resigned upon realizing that the assistance was intended for collective business development rather than direct cash assistance to

individuals. Such experiences have contributed to the assumption that women from low-income families may share a similar mindset, showing reluctance to engage in empowerment activities that prioritize collective efforts over individual financial gains.

Interviews with informants not categorized as members of vulnerable groups revealed an interest in joining empowerment groups. However, this assumption was challenged by insights from women belonging to vulnerable groups, who clarified that their non-participation was not due to economic constraints. Rather, a key factor contributing to their exclusion was the lack of adequate information, which led to many vulnerable women in Pandowoharjo Village being unaware of the existence of the Desa PRIMA Program. An informant, representing women from vulnerable groups, highlighted how the lack of socialization and guidance contributed to her uncertainty about joining the program:

"Maybe it's because of a lack of socialization or something, because no one has ever invited me. (...) I'm interested in joining (KEP), but since no one has invited me... I don't know the system (the participation mechanism), whether we need to go there (to KEP) ourselves or if someone from the group recruits us."

The limited dissemination of information through program outreach and other channels has significantly constrained the program's reach, thereby reducing the opportunities available for many women in the village to access its benefits. Additionally, some informants perceived that the Desa PRIMA program is exclusive to specific groups. This perception stems from the belief that the program mainly benefits individuals with close social ties to the village government, often referred to by non-member informants as "Kalurahan people." These individuals are characterized by their frequent interactions with the village government, participation in village-organized activities, and regular visits to the village office. As a result, non-member informants with limited knowledge of Desa PRIMA were reluctant to seek information about the program from KEP Desa PRIMA members, as they had not received any invitations or outreach. One informant, reflecting this perception

of exclusivity, shared that she assumed participation was limited to cadres and did not inquire further:

"(...) To my knowledge, most of the active members of the Desa PRIMA KEP are cadres. From what I understand, members are indeed cadres, so since I don't consider myself a cadre, I never asked about (KEP) or requested to join. I assumed it was specifically for cadres."

The research findings show that physical limitations did not prevent one informant with a disability from participating in empowerment activities. In contrast, another informant with a disability opted not to join KEP Desa PRIMA, citing mobility challenges and feelings of insecurity as the main reasons. Notably, this decision was not motivated by financial considerations.

Inclusiveness in the Implementation of KEP at Desa PRIMA Amarta Sejahtera

Through interviews and observations, this research identifies a form of collectivism within the KEP Desa PRIMA Amarta Sejahtera group, fostered by social support and shared experiences. This dynamic enables individual self-validation and, in turn, cultivates a shared identity among members of the group. The inclusiveness of the Desa PRIMA program is demonstrated through the group's collectivism. While this inclusiveness is largely confined to the intragroup level, it is evident in the supportive environment fostered among members as they manage businesses and engage in other collective activities. The group leader's ability to provide moral support plays a vital role in fostering inclusion, as noted by Levine and Moreland (1994). This is reflected in the continued provision of incentive benefits to all members, including those less active due to illness, age, or work constraints. While limited in scope, the study found no internal conflicts that might disrupt group activities. Thus, cohesive intragroup engagement—marked by support and tolerance—serves as a key indicator of inclusion, manifesting as intragroup collectivism.

Inclusion within the group also takes place through the opportunity for members to share experiences (Levine and Moreland 1994), such as serving as resource persons in various training activities within the PRIMA Village programs. These activities range from internal group trainings to external events, including retirement workshops where KEP Desa PRIMA Amarta Sejahtera is frequently invited to speak. The group has developed its collective identity as a primarily voluntary social organization. As Levine and Moreland (1994) suggest, such a collective identity, rooted in shared aspirations for self-development and community involvement rather than profit, can serve as a foundation for alternative forms of inclusion. The swimming pool canteen, a joint venture managed by the group, represents a successful example of intragroup collectivism in practice.

Using the group socialization framework proposed by Levine and Moreland (1994), the inclusive transition within the group is reflected in its active efforts to strengthen member commitment. This dynamic is a critical aspect of inclusion within KEP Desa PRIMA Amarta Sejahtera, as evidenced by mutual attempts to sustain engagement. The group leader, for instance, supports less active members by offering accommodations such as flexible schedules for maintaining the PRIMA Village Canteen. In turn, these members expressed a willingness to remain involved by adjusting their external responsibilities to align with the schedule for working at the canteen. These reciprocal efforts illustrate the mutual reinforcement of commitment, where both the group and individual members work to maintain proximity to the group's core. Levine and Moreland (1994) emphasize that the key aspect of the inclusion process is the degree of effort to prevent disengagement, which is a key indicator of inclusion within group socialization.

The collective business of KEP PRIMA Amarta Sejahtera Village, which has generated income for women, will enhance women's contributions and participation in economic development and other sectors if its development continues to be encouraged. This, in turn, will expand opportunities for women to realize their potential and improve their welfare. These inclusive empowerment processes reflect an emancipatory movement aimed at enhancing women's agency and strengthening their bargaining power. As Naila Kabeer (1999) stated, empowerment is a transformative process through which individuals shift

from a position of disempowerment to one where they acquire the agency and capacity to make strategic life choices..

Exclusion in the Implementation of KEP at Desa PRIMA Amarta Sejahtera

The establishment of KEP Desa PRIMA was done within a short timeframe, resulting in insufficient socialization of the program among the village community. This has led to suboptimal selection of prospective members for the empowerment groups, particularly with regard to the inclusion of women from vulnerable groups. The program's limited success in engaging its intended target groups underscores a shortfall in achieving genuine inclusivity within the implementation of KEP Desa PRIMA. Consequently, the program has yet to fully embody its intended spirit of inclusive empowerment, particularly for those from marginalized backgrounds.

The recruitment of prospective members for KEP Desa PRIMA appears to have been conducted primarily to meet administrative requirements, rather than being guided by the objective of creating opportunities for women from vulnerable groups to access economic, social, and political resources. Such access is crucial for improving women's welfare and ultimately alleviating poverty. In Pandowoharjo Village, the composition of the empowerment group formed under the KEP Desa PRIMA scheme falls short of the inclusive ideals the program is meant to uphold. This is evident from the fact that certain vulnerable groups remain unaware of the program and are not represented in the group. These practices have the potential to undermine the program's inclusive intent, particularly in the selection mechanism, which should prioritize women from marginalized backgrounds. By failing to do so, policymakers neglect their responsibility to ensure equitable development, even when the number of affected women is small.

The empowerment group, which also includes some non-vulnerable women, presents a challenge to the sustainability of the program's inclusiveness. Moreover, the predominance of members from the PKK Kalurahan—a village-level women's organization—contributes to the perception of KEP Desa PRIMA as an exclusive initiative. The program appears to be intended primarily for women who have frequently participated in village social activities

and have close ties to the village government, thereby marginalizing those without such networks.

Moreover, there is a stigmatizing process against women from vulnerable groups that aggravates their exclusion from opportunities to access economic and other resources that could enhance their abilities and welfare. The exclusion stems from prevailing attitudes within certain groups that tend to marginalize the participation of economically disadvantaged women. Such attitudes can be understood as a form of social exclusion—intentional or otherwise—toward vulnerable groups. Major and Eccleston (2004) observe that exclusion occurs through the stigmatization of certain individuals and groups. Additionally, Miller and Kaiser (2001) emphasize the strong connection between stigma, rejection, and the perpetuation of prejudice. In this context, the stereotype that poor women are primarily materially motivated reinforces exclusionary practices rooted in social bias.

Marginalization that is not explicitly communicated to the marginalized group often results in indirect or latent forms of discrimination. Nonetheless, the absence of explicit exclusion does not equate to the absence of exclusionary practices. The reluctance or failure to include women from vulnerable groups within the broader community serves as a tangible indicator of social exclusion. As explained by McLaughlin-Volpe et al. (2004) in *The Social Psychology of Inclusion and Exclusion*, exclusion can occur subtly, such as when group members show limited interest or engagement with certain individuals, even in the absence of explicit rejection. In the context of the program, such latent exclusionary dynamics undermine its intended spirit of inclusion, revealing structural and interpersonal challenges that persist throughout its implementation.

Stigma-based exclusionary attitudes toward vulnerable groups, which assume that vulnerable groups are primarily motivated by cash transfers, contradict the findings of this study. One informant with a disability demonstrated a willingness to participate in empowerment activities, despite physical limitations. In contrast, another informant chose not to engage in KEP Desa PRIMA, citing insecurity and challenges with mobility as the primary reasons for their decision, rather than concerns over financial gain.

Conclusion

This exploratory research examines the implementation of the Desa PRIMA Program in the Special Region of Yogyakarta from the perspectives of social inclusion and exclusion. This case study explores the extent to which the KEP Desa PRIMA Amarta Sejahtera program in Pandowoharjo Village is implemented inclusively. The research examines how the Women's Empowerment Program fosters inclusiveness in practice, while also identifying areas of exclusion that emerge due to flaws in the implementation process in the implementation process.

The research findings show that the establishment of the Desa PRIMA Program was influenced by local political dynamics associated with the attainment of *Desa Mandiri Budaya* (DMB) status. While this does not contravene any regulations, it presents the potential for exclusion in the program's implementation. From a business perspective, the joint venture managed by KEP Desa PRIMA Amarta Sejahtera over the past three years has demonstrated significant progress. Specifically, the advancement of the PRIMA Amarta Sejahtera Pandowoharjo Village Canteen as a business unit has contributed to the Village's Original Income (PADes) in Pandowoharjo Village. It has provided additional economic incentives for group members.

This study highlights the presence of collectivism within the group. As outlined by Levine and Moreland (1994), inclusion can be promoted by offering opportunities for individuals or group members to achieve self-validation, share experiences, receive social support, and develop a collective identity. The inclusion process is evident when group members are invited to serve as resource persons in various training activities, which not only validates their expertise but also boosts their confidence. Moreover, the group leader's ability to provide moral support plays a crucial role in establishing the foundation for inclusion (Levine and Moreland 1994).

The village government's expedited establishment of KEP Desa PRIMA has led to insufficient socialization of the program, limiting its accessibility to vulnerable groups. This lack of effort to involve women from vulnerable groups highlights a diminished spirit of

inclusion in the program's implementation. Consequently, the misidentification of target beneficiaries undermines the program's ability to achieve its intended goals. Additionally, exclusion is perpetuated by group attitudes that limit the participation of economically disadvantaged women, who are often stigmatized as being primarily profit-driven. Miller and Kaiser (2001) found that stigma is closely associated with rejection and exclusion, often resulting in prejudice against stigmatized individuals. This exclusion is often deemed culturally legitimate (Crandall 1994; Major and Eccleston 2004). Consequently, a key characteristic of stigma-based exclusion is the perception that this exclusion is "justifiable."

The findings indicate that the PRIMA Village Program in Pandowoharjo Village has not been effectively implemented as an inclusive initiative that promotes the active participation of vulnerable groups in the empowerment process. In practice, the program undermines the principles of inclusion and even creates opportunities for exclusion within the community. This ineffective and non-inclusive implementation contradicts the global aspirations of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the commitment to achieving equitable development under the principle of "leaving no one behind." Empowerment, as emphasized by Prijono and Pranarka (1996), should be understood as a process of strengthening the marginalized without diminishing the position of those who are already strong.

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