

Social Rehabilitation Strategies for Homeless and Beggars: Evidence from Harapan Mulya Social Shelter, Jambi

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Abstract: Homelessness and begging remain persistent social problems that require comprehensive and context-specific interventions. This study analyzes the social rehabilitation strategies of Harapan Mulya Social Shelter in Jambi, Indonesia, which plays a central role in managing homeless individuals and beggars through institutional care. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with shelter staff and beneficiaries, participant observations of daily activities, and document analysis. Data were examined using Miles and Huberman's interactive model to identify themes related to institutional strategies and their implementation. The findings reveal that the shelter adopts a structured four-stage rehabilitation pathway: outreach, resocialization, evaluation, and termination. Outreach establishes trust and provides immediate relief, while resocialization offers spiritual guidance, social counseling, and vocational training to foster independence. Evaluation functions as a feedback loop to monitor progress and adapt programs, and termination prepares beneficiaries for reintegration into society. These strategies demonstrate a holistic model of intervention that addresses both psychosocial and economic needs. However, the effectiveness of these efforts is shaped by supporting factors such as regulatory frameworks, government funding, and committed staff, as well as hindering factors including limited professional resources, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-economic inequalities that contribute to relapse. This study contributes to the literature by highlighting how social rehabilitation operates in a resource-constrained Southeast Asian context, extending global discussions on homelessness management. It also offers practical implications for policymakers and practitioners seeking to strengthen institutional care through integrated, culturally grounded, and cross-sectoral approaches.

Keywords: Social Rehabilitation, Homelessness, Beggars, Social Welfare Institutions, Jambi, Institutional Care

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INTRODUCTION

The loss of a spouse in later life is one of the most significant stressors faced by older adults, often associated with grief, loneliness, declining physical health, and reduced social participation. Widowhood in old age has been linked to increased risks of depression, diminished well-being, and challenges in maintaining daily functioning (Carr & Utz, 2020). Nevertheless, many elderly individuals demonstrate the ability to adapt positively, drawing on resilience to cope with bereavement. Resilience, defined as the capacity to recover and grow in the face of adversity, has become a central concept in understanding how older adults navigate widowhood (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Ungar, 2019).

Homelessness and begging remain pressing social challenges across the globe, reflecting complex intersections of poverty, unemployment, migration, and social exclusion. According to the United Nations, hundreds of millions of people worldwide experience inadequate housing or street homelessness, with many resorting to begging as a survival strategy (UN-Habitat, 2020). These conditions often generate stigma, marginalization, and cycles of vulnerability that require systematic interventions. While governments and non-governmental organizations have implemented various social welfare policies, the effectiveness of these measures depends largely on how strategies for rehabilitation and reintegration are designed and managed (Toro et al., 2021).

Scholarly literature highlights diverse approaches to addressing homelessness and begging, including housing-first models, emergency shelters, skills training, and psychosocial rehabilitation. Studies from Europe and North America emphasize structural interventions such as permanent supportive housing and employment integration programs (Pleace, 2018; Shinn, 2020). In contrast, research in developing contexts underscores the importance of community-based strategies, moral-spiritual guidance, and vocational empowerment (Tipple & Speak, 2020). These variations suggest that effective rehabilitation must be context-specific, sensitive to cultural norms, and adaptable to resource constraints. However, despite increasing global attention, there remains limited empirical evidence on how institutional care and rehabilitation centers in Southeast Asia implement strategies to address homelessness and begging.

In Indonesia, homelessness and begging are categorized as part of *Penyandang Masalah Kesejahteraan Sosial* (PMKS), and their management is mandated by national and local regulations. The Ministry of Social Affairs promotes social rehabilitation as a primary approach, combining guidance, skills training, and reintegration efforts. Several studies have examined urban homelessness and street begging in Jakarta, Surabaya, and Yogyakarta, often focusing on policy gaps and enforcement challenges (Suharto, 2019; Setyawan, 2021). Yet few studies have analyzed the institutional practices of social shelters, particularly how they develop strategic management for rehabilitation. This gap is critical, as shelters remain one of the most visible and structured forms of intervention in Indonesia's welfare system.

Jambi Province presents a unique case, with visible street begging and homelessness concentrated in urban areas but managed primarily through

institutional interventions. The Harapan Mulya Social Shelter has become a central actor in addressing this issue, tasked with rehabilitating homeless individuals and beggars through a structured set of programs. The shelter's strategies include initial outreach, resocialization through mental-spiritual and vocational training, continuous evaluation, and termination designed to prepare clients for reintegration. These efforts highlight the importance of examining institutional strategies not only as local practices but also as contributions to broader discussions on effective rehabilitation models.

This study aims to address the research gap by analyzing the social rehabilitation strategies of Harapan Mulya Social Shelter in Jambi. Specifically, it investigates how the shelter designs and implements interventions for homeless individuals and beggars, what factors support or hinder these strategies, and how the findings contribute to the discourse on institutional responses to homelessness in developing contexts. By situating the case within both national policy frameworks and international scholarship, the research contributes conceptually to the field of social welfare management and provides practical insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to improve rehabilitation services for marginalized populations.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore the strategies of Harapan Mulya Social Shelter in rehabilitating homeless individuals and beggars in Jambi. A qualitative design was considered appropriate because it allows for an in-depth understanding of institutional practices and the lived experiences of beneficiaries within their socio-cultural context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study method enabled the researchers to capture both the formal strategies articulated by the shelter and the informal practices emerging during the implementation of rehabilitation programs.

Data were collected through three primary techniques: semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and documentation review. Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including shelter staff, social workers, vocational trainers, and selected beneficiaries who had undergone rehabilitation. Observations were carried out during daily activities such as counseling sessions, vocational training, and religious guidance programs to understand how strategies were enacted in practice. Documentation, including institutional reports, government policy documents, and training modules, was also analyzed to triangulate findings. Participants were selected using purposive sampling with the criteria of having direct involvement in planning or participating in rehabilitation activities.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (2014) interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Themes were identified around the four stages of rehabilitation: initial outreach, resocialization, evaluation, and termination. To ensure credibility, the study employed methodological triangulation and member checking, while maintaining ethical standards such as informed consent, confidentiality, and institutional

permission from the shelter management. This methodological framework ensured that the findings are both empirically grounded and analytically rigorous, enabling the study to provide meaningful contributions to the discourse on social welfare management.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Rehabilitation Strategies at Harapan Mulya Social Shelter

Harapan Mulya Social Shelter adopts a structured strategy for rehabilitating homeless individuals and beggars that revolves around four interrelated phases: outreach, resocialization, evaluation, and termination. At the initial stage of outreach, beneficiaries are identified through social service patrols and community reports and then transported to the shelter. This first encounter is crucial, because beneficiaries often distrust formal institutions due to experiences of stigma or punitive measures in the past. Therefore, shelter staff adopt a humanitarian approach that combines the provision of basic needs such as food, clothing, and healthcare with motivational dialogue. This aligns with recent international evidence that emphasizes the role of early, trust-based interventions in transitioning people from street life to structured care (Parsell & Watts, 2019).

Following outreach, the core of rehabilitation occurs in the resocialization phase. At Harapan Mulya, resocialization is multidimensional: it includes spiritual guidance, social and psychological counseling, and vocational training. Religious sessions, for example, are designed to strengthen moral values and provide hope, reflecting the importance of faith-based approaches in many developing countries (Atherton & Nicholls, 2021). Social and psychological guidance aims to address issues such as low self-esteem, while vocational programs in handicrafts, carpentry, and entrepreneurship are offered to prepare individuals for economic independence. Such integrated approaches are consistent with recent research in Europe and Asia which shows that vocational training and psychosocial support, when combined, significantly increase the chances of long-term reintegration (Baptista & Marlier, 2019; Mayock & Parker, 2020).

Moreover, evaluation is carried out at regular intervals to monitor the progress of each beneficiary. Staff assess whether participants are gaining skills, internalizing behavioral changes, and preparing for independent living. These evaluations are not only administrative routines but also mechanisms for adaptive management, allowing strategies to be adjusted when obstacles are encountered. International literature underlines the importance of such monitoring systems: Shinn (2020) argues that program evaluation functions as a feedback loop that ensures rehabilitation is both evidence-based and responsive to changing conditions. Harapan Mulya's emphasis on continuous feedback reflects best practices in program management, although its reliance on manual reporting still limits efficiency.

The final phase, termination, prepares beneficiaries for reintegration into society. Individuals who have completed their training are released with the expectation of leading independent lives, supported informally by community ties. However, while termination is designed to mark success, the risk of relapse into

homelessness or begging remains high if structural conditions such as poverty and unemployment persist. This mirrors findings in international studies, where the transition from institutional care to community life is identified as the most vulnerable stage of rehabilitation (Busch-Geertsema & Sahlin, 2020). Thus, while the shelter provides a holistic framework, its outcomes ultimately depend on the socio-economic environment beyond the institution's control.

Supporting and Hindering Factors in Implementation

The effectiveness of these rehabilitation strategies is shaped by a complex set of supporting and hindering factors. On the supportive side, Harapan Mulya benefits from strong regulatory backing. National and provincial policies provide legitimacy and guidance for its operations, ensuring alignment with Indonesia's welfare agenda. Government funding also supports the provision of food, housing, and training materials, while the ideological emphasis on a "mental revolution" reinforces the value of character building in rehabilitation. Staff commitment further strengthens implementation, as many social workers at the shelter demonstrate dedication despite resource limitations. These findings resonate with Bretherton's (2022) work in Europe, which notes that political will and institutional legitimacy are key enablers of effective homelessness interventions.

Nevertheless, serious obstacles hinder the shelter's ability to achieve sustainable outcomes. One of the most critical challenges is the shortage of professional expertise. While the shelter provides basic counseling, it lacks trained psychologists and psychiatrists capable of addressing trauma, addiction, and complex mental health conditions common among the homeless. Without specialized care, many beneficiaries remain vulnerable to relapse. This limitation reflects broader global challenges: a 2021 FEANTSA report emphasizes that homelessness interventions often fail when they do not adequately integrate mental health and addiction services. Similarly, infrastructural limitations constrain the shelter's capacity to scale up vocational training or offer individualized support.

Additionally, socio-economic realities outside the shelter undermine rehabilitation outcomes. Many participants, upon reintegration, struggle to secure stable employment or affordable housing, which often compels them to return to street-based survival strategies. This phenomenon has been widely documented internationally. For instance, Parsell and Watts (2019) note that shelters without direct links to housing and labor markets rarely achieve long-term reductions in homelessness. In the Indonesian context, structural poverty and limited job creation exacerbate these vulnerabilities, highlighting the need for systemic reforms beyond institutional care.

Cultural attitudes also play an ambivalent role. On one hand, community norms often encourage charitable giving to beggars, inadvertently sustaining begging as a livelihood. On the other hand, cultural and religious obligations also create moral imperatives for families and communities to support the reintegration of rehabilitated individuals. This dual role of culture echoes the findings of Mayock and Parker (2020), who observed similar dynamics in Ireland,

where social norms simultaneously perpetuated and mitigated homelessness. Thus, while Harapan Mulya provides structured support, its success is inevitably constrained by external socio-economic and cultural environments.

Implications for Social Welfare Management and Policy

The findings of this study have several implications for theory, practice, and policy in the field of social welfare management. Theoretically, the case of Harapan Mulya contributes to global debates on homelessness interventions by demonstrating how institutional care operates in resource-constrained contexts. While Housing First has become the dominant model in Western scholarship (Busch-Geertsema & Sahlin, 2020), the Jambi case shows that in contexts with limited housing supply, shelters must emphasize psychosocial rehabilitation, vocational training, and community reintegration. This extends global discussions by offering alternative models grounded in cultural and economic realities of Southeast Asia.

Practically, the study underscores the need for holistic, multi-dimensional interventions. The combination of spiritual guidance, counseling, and skills training at Harapan Mulya illustrates how institutions can address not only material deprivation but also psychological and moral dimensions of homelessness. However, the limited presence of mental health professionals points to the necessity of building staff capacity in trauma-informed care, case management, and advanced counseling techniques. Moreover, the shelter's evaluation mechanisms could be strengthened through the use of digital data management tools, which would enhance efficiency and facilitate evidence-based decision-making.

From a policy perspective, the study emphasizes that institutional care must be embedded within broader welfare systems. Government agencies should strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration between shelters, housing programs, labor markets, and healthcare systems. Employment pathways and affordable housing initiatives should be linked to institutional rehabilitation to ensure that beneficiaries have sustainable alternatives upon reintegration. In addition, partnerships with NGOs, faith-based organizations, and local communities could provide layered support, extending the reach of shelters beyond their institutional boundaries. Policymakers should also address the socio-cultural dynamics that sustain begging, for example, by combining public education campaigns with poverty alleviation programs.

In sum, the strategies at Harapan Mulya Social Shelter reflect both the strengths and limitations of institutional responses to homelessness and begging. They demonstrate the potential of structured rehabilitation to transform lives but also reveal the fragility of outcomes in the absence of systemic reforms. For scholars, the findings extend theoretical frameworks by situating rehabilitation within Southeast Asian contexts. For practitioners, they offer lessons on integrating spiritual, social, and vocational elements into holistic care. For policymakers, they highlight the urgency of embedding shelters within a comprehensive welfare ecosystem. Ultimately, the study reaffirms that

homelessness and begging cannot be resolved by shelters alone; they require sustained commitments across multiple sectors to ensure dignity, inclusion, and long-term social reintegration.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the social rehabilitation strategies employed by Harapan Mulya Social Shelter in Jambi to address homelessness and begging. The findings revealed that the shelter follows a structured pathway consisting of outreach, resocialization, evaluation, and termination. Outreach establishes trust and provides immediate relief, resocialization delivers spiritual guidance, social training, and vocational empowerment, evaluation ensures that progress is monitored and adjusted, and termination prepares individuals for reintegration into society. Together, these stages demonstrate that rehabilitation is conceived not only as short-term relief but also as a process of transformation aimed at fostering independence and social reintegration.

The study also highlighted that while these strategies provide a coherent framework for intervention, their effectiveness depends heavily on contextual conditions. Internal strengths, such as committed staff and institutional alignment with national policies, support implementation, while significant obstacles such as limited professional resources, infrastructural constraints, and persistent socio-economic inequalities undermine long-term outcomes. Many rehabilitated individuals face the risk of returning to begging once they leave the shelter, suggesting that rehabilitation cannot succeed in isolation from broader structural reforms. This reinforces the view that homelessness and begging are multidimensional issues requiring systemic solutions.

The findings of this study carry significant implications for theory, practice, and policy. Theoretically, the Harapan Mulya case highlights the need to expand resilience and rehabilitation frameworks by incorporating culturally and resource-specific pathways, contrasting with Western housing-first models. Practically, the shelter's integration of spiritual, social, and vocational interventions offers a holistic model that can be adapted elsewhere, though professional psychosocial counseling and trauma-informed staff training remain necessary. From a policy perspective, the study underscores the importance of linking shelters with labor markets, community development, and public health services to ensure sustainable reintegration. Finally, the study enriches global discourse by showing that homelessness management must adapt to local realities, with Southeast Asian approaches offering alternative models for international comparative research.

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