

Religious and Social Empowerment of Muslim Converts: A Qualitative Case Study of Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli in Medan

Mandasari* 

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Salamuddin 

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

**Corresponding author: mandasari0103223037@uinsu.ac.id*

Abstract:

This study examines how Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli (MCIP) in Medan facilitates the religious and social empowerment of Muslim converts as a continuing process of religious socialization, identity development, and community belonging. Using a qualitative case-study approach, data were collected through field observation, in-depth interviews with MCIP administrators and one convert participating in the guidance program, and institutional documentation. The data were analyzed through condensation, display, and conclusion drawing, with credibility strengthened through source and technique triangulation. The findings show that MCIP organizes convert guidance through three interconnected stages: pre-shahada consultation, facilitation of the shahada, and continuous post-shahada mentoring. These stages integrate basic Islamic education, worship guidance, Qur'anic learning, psychological support, social assistance, economic support, skills development, and community-based mentoring. Rather than treating conversion as a discrete religious event, MCIP institutionalizes it as an ongoing process through which converts develop Islamic self-understanding, negotiate their social identity,

strengthen community belonging, and build greater personal and social capacity. These contributions remain shaped by individual readiness, family relations, participation consistency, economic conditions, and institutional resources. The study concludes that sustainable convert empowerment requires integrated religious, psychological, social, and economic support while recognizing the contextual and non-linear nature of post-conversion adaptation.

Keywords: Muslim converts, religious empowerment, social empowerment, social identity, community belonging

A. Introduction

Religious conversion to Islam is a multidimensional process involving changes in belief, behavior, family relationships, social networks, and personal identity. Converts must gradually learn Islamic teachings, worship, morality, and social practices while adjusting to a new religious environment. Because conversion is shaped by personal, spiritual, familial, and social factors, each convert may experience different challenges and require different forms of post-conversion guidance.¹

In Medan's diverse social setting, converts may face limited religious knowledge, difficulty performing worship, inability to read the Qur'an, family rejection, psychological pressure, social isolation, and economic hardship. These conditions can weaken emotional stability and complicate their integration into Muslim society. The need for continuous guidance is therefore not limited to religious instruction but also includes social acceptance, psychological support, and assistance in addressing practical difficulties experienced after conversion. Such support is consistent with the broader understanding that religiosity among converts develops through continuous learning, adaptation, and interaction with their new religious environment.²

From an empowerment perspective, assistance for converts can be understood as a process that strengthens their capacity through education, mentoring, skills development, participation, access to resources, and greater independence. In this context, empowerment should integrate religious, psychological, social, and economic dimensions. Religious guidance without adequate social support may

¹ Zaifuddin Md Rasip and Mohd Solleh Ab Razak, "Faktor Pemelukan Agama Islam: Kajian Terhadap Mualaf Di Sabah," *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)* 9, no. 10 (2024): e003016, <https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v9i10.3016>.

² Fazrin Fadhillah and Siti Qodariah, "Gambaran Religiusitas Mualaf Di Masjid Lautze 2 Di Kota Bandung," *Bandung Conference Series: Psychology Science* 2, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.29313/bcpsps.v2i1.1532>.

leave converts isolated, while material assistance without religious education may not strengthen their Islamic understanding and identity. Therefore, empowerment should not be viewed merely as the provision of short-term aid, but as a process of developing individual and social capacities that enable converts to participate more confidently in religious and community life.³ Religious empowerment strengthens understanding of belief, worship, morality, and Qur'anic literacy, while social empowerment provides psychological assistance, community acceptance, practical support, skills development, and opportunities for greater economic independence.⁴

Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli (MCIP) performs these functions in Medan through pre-conversion consultation, assistance during the *shahada*, basic Islamic education, regular study sessions, practical worship guidance, Qur'anic learning, personal mentoring, social and economic assistance, and community- and dormitory-based programs.⁵ These activities indicate that MCIP does not treat conversion merely as a formal declaration of faith. Rather, conversion is institutionally supported as a continuing process of religious learning, Islamic self-understanding, identity development, social adaptation, community participation, and capacity building.

Previous studies have emphasized several important dimensions of Muslim conversion, including religiosity, structured Islamic education, supportive communities, and the personal and social factors that influence conversion. However, these dimensions have generally been examined separately. As a result, limited attention has been given to how a convert-support institution integrates religious education, psychological assistance, social support, economic empowerment, identity development, and community belonging within a continuous post-conversion process. This gap is important because the challenges experienced by converts are not confined to religious knowledge alone but also involve family relations, psychological adjustment, social acceptance, and economic vulnerability.

³ Harry Hikmat, *Strategi Pemberdayaan Masyarakat* (Humaniora Utama Press, 2018); Edi Suharto, *Membangun Masyarakat Memberdayakan Rakyat: Kajian Strategis Pembangunan Kesejahteraan Sosial Dan Pekerjaan Sosial* (Refika Aditama, 2017).

⁴ Muhazir Fanani, "Internalisasi Pendidikan Agama Islam Dan Kemuhammadiyahan Bagi Santri Muallaf Di Pondok Pesantren Modern Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Banjarbaru Kalimantan Selatan," *AL-MIKRAJ: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora* 5, no. 1 (2024): 557–71, <https://doi.org/10.37680/almikraj.v5i01.6116>.

⁵ Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli, "Institutional Archives and Program Documentation of Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli," Institutional documentation, Medan, 2026, Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli.

This study addresses that gap by examining MCIP as an institution that supports conversion as an ongoing process rather than a discrete religious event. Empowerment theory is used to analyze how MCIP strengthens converts' religious, psychological, social, and economic capacities, while social identity theory provides an interpretive framework for understanding how converts recognize themselves as Muslims, internalize Islamic values, negotiate their social identity, and develop a sense of belonging through institutional guidance and community interaction.⁶ In this study, social identity formation is not assumed to occur in a fixed or strictly linear sequence. Instead, the processes of categorization, identification, and social comparison are treated as overlapping and context-dependent processes shaped by family relations, previous social environments, personal readiness, and institutional support.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrated analysis of MCIP's staged guidance system and its role in institutionalizing post-conversion support. Rather than merely describing the programs offered by MCIP, this study examines how religious guidance, psychological support, social assistance, economic empowerment, and community-based mentoring interact in supporting religious socialization, Islamic self-understanding, social identity negotiation, community belonging, and capacity development among converts. This analytical perspective also recognizes that the outcomes of empowerment are shaped by contextual factors such as individual readiness, family acceptance or resistance, participation consistency, economic conditions, and institutional resources.

Accordingly, this study asks how MCIP facilitates the religious and social empowerment of Muslim converts in Medan. It analyzes the forms and stages of guidance, the processes through which converts develop religious understanding and social belonging, the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting program implementation, and the institutional strategies used to sustain empowerment. Academically, this study contributes to discussions of convert empowerment, religious socialization, social identity formation, and community belonging. Practically, it offers insights for developing more integrated, contextual, and sustainable convert-support programs.

B. Review of Related Literature and Theoretical Framework

1. Convert Empowerment as an Integrated Process

⁶ Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. William G. Austin and Stephen Worchel (Brooks/Cole, 1979); Zubaedi, *Pengembangan Masyarakat: Wacana Dan Praktik* (Kencana, 2017).

Muslim conversion is a multidimensional process that extends beyond the formal declaration of the *shahada*. Converts may face differences in religious knowledge, psychological readiness, family acceptance, social support, and economic conditions, making post-conversion needs diverse and context-dependent.⁷ From an empowerment perspective, capacity develops through education, participation, mentoring, access to resources, skills development, and opportunities for greater independence.⁸ Religious empowerment therefore involves Islamic knowledge, worship, morality, and Qur'anic literacy, while social empowerment includes psychological support, community participation, social assistance, skills development, and economic capacity. Previous studies also emphasize the importance of structured religious learning and continuous mentoring for converts.⁹

This study consequently understands convert empowerment as an integrated institutional process involving religious, psychological, social, and economic dimensions. Institutional support may provide learning opportunities, mentoring, social networks, and access to resources, but it does not necessarily produce identical outcomes for all converts. Post-conversion adaptation remains influenced by personal readiness, family relationships, participation, socioeconomic conditions, and institutional capacity.

2. Social Identity and Religious Conversion

Social identity theory provides an interpretive framework for understanding how converts negotiate membership in a new religious community. Tajfel and Turner identify categorization, identification, and social comparison as important social identity processes. Categorization concerns recognition of group membership, identification relates to the meaning and values attached

⁷ Fadhilah and Qodariah, "Gambaran Religiusitas Mualaf Di Masjid Lautze 2 Di Kota Bandung"; Rasip and Razak, "Faktor Pemeluk Agama Islam."

⁸ Hikmat, *Strategi Pemberdayaan Masyarakat*; Suharto, *Membangun Masyarakat Memberdayakan Rakyat: Kajian Strategis Pembangunan Kesejahteraan Sosial Dan Pekerjaan Sosial*; Zubaedi, *Pengembangan Masyarakat: Wacana Dan Praktik*.

⁹ Fanani, "Internalisasi Pendidikan Agama Islam Dan Kemuhammadiyah Bagi Santri Muallaf Di Pondok Pesantren Modern Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Banjarbaru Kalimantan Selatan"; Liani Fitriana and Nasiruddin Sidqi, "Pelaksanaan Bimbingan Pendidikan Agama Islam Bagi Mualaf Dalam Mempertahankan Keimanan Di Mualaf Center Indonesia (MCI) Palangka Raya," *Jurnal Review Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran* 6, no. 4 (2023): 3076–81, <https://doi.org/10.31004/jrpp.v6i4.21759>; Umniyyatul Ulya, "Peran Yayasan Mualaf Center Indonesia Dalam Membina Keagamaan Mualaf Di Depok," *Harmoni* 19, no. 1 (2020): 162–71, <https://doi.org/10.32488/harmoni.v19i1.325>.

to that membership, and social comparison concerns how individuals understand their group position in relation to other social groups.

In this study, these processes are not treated as fixed or sequential stages. They may overlap, recur, and develop differently according to personal beliefs, family responses, previous social relationships, institutional guidance, and participation in Muslim communities. Studies of Muslim converts indicate that social pressure, minority status, family tension, and resilience can shape post-conversion adaptation.¹⁰ Islamic identity may likewise be continuously negotiated through social interaction and experiences of acceptance, difference, and belonging.¹¹ Thus, the *shahada* marks formal religious affiliation but does not automatically complete the process of identity formation.

3. Religious Identity, Islamic Self-Understanding, and Community Belonging

The identity-related concepts used in this study are analytically distinguished. Religious identity refers to the incorporation of Islamic beliefs, values, practices, and moral commitments into religious life, which may develop through worship instruction, Qur'anic learning, religious study, and participation in Islamic activities.¹² Islamic self-understanding refers to how converts interpret themselves personally in relation to the Islamic beliefs and practices they are learning, whereas social identity refers to recognition of oneself as a member of the broader Muslim social group.

Community belonging refers specifically to the experience of being accepted, connected to, and involved in a Muslim community. A convert may formally identify as Muslim while still experiencing isolation or limited social acceptance. Supportive relationships, mentoring, and community participation may therefore contribute to belonging and social resilience.¹³

¹⁰ Jannatul Asni Harefa and Zainun Zainun, "Resiliensi Sosial Mualaf Di Lingkungan Masyarakat Olor," *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Indonesia (JISI)*, June 30, 2024, 83–91, <https://doi.org/10.15408/jisi.v5i1.39897>; Ta Honn Yu and Bushrah Bt Basiron, "Resilience of Chinese Reverted Muslim in Facing Double Minorities Status: A Study in Malaysia Context," *Borneo International Journal of Islamic Studies* 4, no. 2 (2022): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.21093/bijis.v7i2.13078>.

¹¹ Anugerah Febrian Syam and Andi Nurhikmah, "Negotiating Islamic and Cultural Identities in English-Mediated Academic Interaction: A Digital Ethnography of Power, Belonging, and Difference," *Borneo International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 2 (2025): 183–202, <https://doi.org/10.21093/bijis.v7i2.13078>.

¹² Fadhillah and Qodariah, "Gambaran Religiusitas Mualaf Di Masjid Lautze 2 Di Kota Bandung,"

¹³ Harefa and Zainun, "Resiliensi Sosial Mualaf Di Lingkungan Masyarakat Olor."

Institutional identity, meanwhile, refers to identification with MCIP as an organization. Because the available data mainly show participation in MCIP programs rather than a distinct sense of organizational identification, institutional identity is not treated as a primary outcome.

Accordingly, empowerment theory is used to examine MCIP's provision of religious, psychological, social, and economic resources, while social identity theory is used to interpret how converts negotiate Muslim group membership within changing social environments. Religious identity, Islamic self-understanding, social identity, and community belonging are treated as related but distinct dimensions whose development is contextual, overlapping, and non-linear.

C. Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative case-study design to examine how Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli (MCIP) facilitates the religious and social empowerment of Muslim converts in Medan. The case-study design was selected because the research focused on MCIP Medan as a bounded institutional setting in which convert guidance, empowerment practices, and post-conversion adaptation could be examined in depth within their natural social context.¹⁴ The research was conducted at Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli, located at Jl. Amaliun No. 91, Kota Matsum IV, Medan Area District, Medan City, North Sumatra. Fieldwork was carried out from April 8 to April 16, 2026. The study focused on the forms and stages of MCIP's guidance programs, their contribution to converts' religious and social development, the challenges encountered during program implementation, and the institutional responses developed to address those challenges.

1. Participants and Sampling

The research participants were selected purposively based on their direct knowledge, involvement, and experience in MCIP's convert-support programs. The participants consisted of selected MCIP administrators and one Muslim convert who had participated in the institution's post-conversion guidance activities. The administrators were selected because they were directly involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating MCIP programs, while the convert participant was included to provide a beneficiary perspective on religious guidance, psychological assistance,

¹⁴ John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 4th ed. (SAGE Publications, 2018).

social support, and community-based mentoring. Purposive sampling was used because it enables qualitative researchers to obtain information-rich data from participants who are closely related to the phenomenon being investigated.¹⁵ The account of the convert participant was treated as a contextual beneficiary perspective and was not intended to represent the experiences of all converts assisted by MCIP.

2. Data Collection

The researcher served as the primary research instrument and was directly involved in data collection, interpretation, categorization, and verification. Supporting instruments included a semi-structured interview guide, field-observation notes, and institutional documentation. The interview guide explored MCIP's institutional profile, stages of guidance, empowerment programs, perceived contributions, supporting and inhibiting factors, funding, mentoring, partnerships, and implementation challenges. Observations were used to record the institutional environment, religious instruction, practical worship guidance, Qur'anic learning, social assistance, mentoring activities, and interactions between administrators and participants. Documentation included program records, institutional archives, photographs, activity materials, and other documents related to MCIP's convert-guidance programs. The use of multiple data sources enabled comparison between interview accounts, observations, and documentary evidence.¹⁶

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observation, and documentation. Interviews with MCIP administrators focused on the development of the institution, the stages of convert guidance, religious and social empowerment programs, program implementation, funding, partnerships, supporting factors, and institutional barriers. The convert participant was interviewed about experiences after conversion, participation in MCIP activities, changes in religious understanding, perceived social support, confidence, and adaptation to the Muslim community. Institutional documents and field observations were used to support, contextualize, and compare the interview data.

3. Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

¹⁵ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice*, 4th ed. (SAGE Publications, 2015).

¹⁶ Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*.

The data were analyzed using the interactive qualitative analysis process of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification.¹⁷ The analysis combined deductive and inductive categorization. Initial categories were informed by the research questions and theoretical framework, including religious empowerment, social empowerment, identity development, Islamic self-understanding, community belonging, supporting factors, barriers, and institutional responses. At the same time, additional themes were allowed to emerge from the field data when they were relevant to participants' experiences and institutional practices. Social identity concepts such as categorization, identification, and social comparison were used as interpretive tools rather than as fixed or strictly linear stages of post-conversion adaptation.

The credibility of the findings was strengthened through source and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information provided by MCIP administrators with the account of the convert participant, while technique triangulation involved comparing interview findings with field observations and institutional documentation. This process was used to identify convergence, difference, and contextual variation across the data sources. The findings were therefore interpreted as a contextual account of MCIP Medan rather than as a general representation of all Muslim converts.

D. Findings

1. Institutional Profile and Stages of Convert Guidance

Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli (MCIP) is a socio-religious institution under the Jakarta-based Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli Foundation that provides religious guidance, social assistance, and empowerment programs for converts. Its presence in Medan reflects an integrated approach that combines spiritual instruction, social support, and community-based mentoring to help converts develop religious understanding and adapt to a new social identity.¹⁸ According to an MCIP administrator, convert-guidance activities in Medan began in 2018 under the name Mualaf Center Indonesia and were renamed Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli in 2023 after the death of Stephen Indra Wibowo. The institution has reportedly facilitated

¹⁷ Matthew B. Miles et al., *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 3rd ed. (SAGE Publications, 2014).

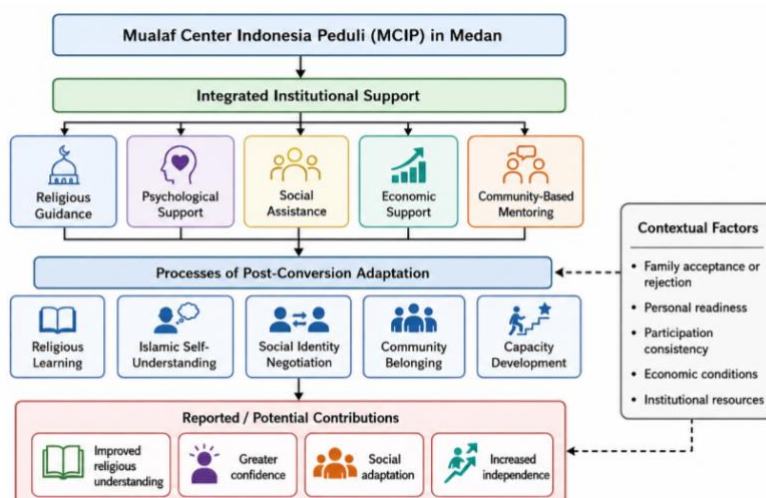
¹⁸ Reni Puspita, "Pemberdayaan Sosial Terhadap Mualaf Melalui Pembinaan Keagamaan," *Jurnal Ilmu Kesejahteraan Sosial* 3, no. 1 (2014).

the conversion of approximately 500 individuals from diverse backgrounds.¹⁹

MCIP emphasizes that conversion must be based on personal awareness, readiness, and free choice. Prospective converts are given opportunities to ask questions, learn about Islam, and consider the consequences of their decision before reciting the *shahada*. This humanistic approach respects personal freedom and reflects the Qur’anic principle of inviting others with wisdom and good instruction.²⁰

This staged structure indicates that MCIP institutionalizes conversion as a continuing process that extends beyond the formal declaration of faith. The pre-shahada, shahada, and post-shahada stages provide an organizational framework through which religious learning, personal mentoring, community participation, and social assistance can be delivered over time. Rather than implying uniform outcomes for all converts, the model shows how MCIP creates institutional conditions that may support religious development, social adaptation, and capacity building.²¹

Figure: 1 Framework of MCIP’s Contribution to the Social and Religious Empowerment of Converts in Medan



Source: Analytical Framework of MCIP’s Support for the Religious and Social Empowerment of Converts in Medan

¹⁹ Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli, “MCIP Institutional Documentation.”

²⁰ Azyumardi Azra, *Islam Nusantara: Jaringan Global Dan Lokal*. (Mizan, 2002).

²¹ Suharto, *Membangun Masyarakat Memberdayakan Rakyat: Kajian Strategis Pembangunan Kesejahteraan Sosial Dan Pekerjaan Sosial*.

2. Social and Religious Empowerment Programs

The findings indicate that MCIP organizes its support for Muslim converts through interconnected social and religious empowerment programs. These programs are not implemented as separate forms of assistance but operate alongside one another to respond to the religious, psychological, social, and economic conditions experienced by converts after embracing Islam. This integrated pattern is consistent with previous research showing that post-conversion assistance may include religious education, mentoring, social support, and assistance in coping with practical difficulties encountered during religious adaptation.²² In the MCIP context, social and religious empowerment functions as institutional support intended to create conditions in which converts can continue learning Islam, maintain social relationships, address immediate needs, and develop greater personal capacity.

Social Empowerment

MCIP's social empowerment activities include psychological and motivational support, social assistance, community-based interaction, economic assistance, and skills development. These forms of support respond to difficulties that may arise after conversion, including family rejection, uncertainty about the future, social isolation, employment problems, housing concerns, and economic vulnerability. Rather than functioning solely as material assistance, the programs provide spaces in which converts can communicate their concerns, interact with administrators and fellow Muslims, and receive practical support during the adaptation process.

Psychological and motivational support is primarily provided through personal consultation, moral encouragement, and regular interaction with MCIP administrators and mentors. Converts experiencing uncertainty, family pressure, or limited social support are given opportunities to discuss the difficulties they encounter after conversion. These interactions do not necessarily eliminate psychological or social difficulties, but they provide an institutional setting in which converts can express concerns and obtain encouragement. Community-based activities also create opportunities to develop new social relationships and participate in Muslim social environments. Such interaction may contribute to a stronger sense of

²² Dian Rosalina and Wasil Wasil, "Pembinaan Keagamaan Mualaf Di Pesantren Mualaf Indonesia Dompot Dhuafa," *Inklusiva: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 2, no. 2 (2024): 237–54, <https://doi.org/10.15408/inklusiva.v2i2.42472>.

community belonging, particularly for converts whose previous social networks become less supportive following conversion. Previous research similarly indicates that religious communities can play an important role in supporting converts' religiosity, confidence, and adjustment within a new religious environment.²³

Social assistance is provided according to the needs of beneficiaries and the availability of institutional resources. MCIP distributes *zakat*, *infaq*, *sadaqah*, food assistance, Friday meals, and rice to converts experiencing economic difficulties. These forms of assistance are primarily intended to address immediate needs rather than to function as permanent dependency-based support. Their implementation reflects MCIP's recognition that religious adaptation may be affected by practical socioeconomic conditions.

Economic empowerment is pursued through business capital, equipment assistance, employment support, and skills development. These initiatives are intended to provide converts with opportunities to develop productive capacity and greater economic independence. However, the findings do not indicate that all beneficiaries achieve the same level of economic improvement. The contribution of economic assistance remains dependent on individual readiness, available resources, participation, and the broader economic conditions experienced by each convert. Therefore, the programs are better understood as institutional opportunities for capacity development rather than as a guaranteed pathway to economic independence.

Religious Empowerment

Religious empowerment at MCIP is implemented through gradual instruction in Islamic belief, worship, morality, Qur'anic literacy, regular religious study, practical worship guidance, and continuous post-conversion mentoring. The materials are adjusted to converts' different religious backgrounds, educational experiences, and learning abilities. This gradual approach is important because new converts do not necessarily begin their religious learning with the same level of knowledge or familiarity with Islamic teachings.

Instruction in Islamic belief introduces converts to basic understandings of faith, the principles of worship, and moral responsibilities as Muslims. Opportunities for dialogue and questions are provided so that converts can clarify aspects of Islam that remain unfamiliar or difficult to understand.

²³ Fadhillah and Qodariah, "Gambaran Religiusitas Mualaf Di Masjid Lautze 2 Di Kota Bandung."

Within this process, religious empowerment is not limited to the transfer of doctrinal knowledge. It also provides a setting in which converts can gradually develop Islamic self-understanding by relating newly learned beliefs and practices to their everyday experiences.

Practical religious guidance includes purification, ablution, prayer, daily supplications, remembrance of God, and other basic practices. Mentors demonstrate the procedures before allowing participants to practice them directly. This method enables participants to identify and correct errors in movements, recitations, and sequences. Field observations at MCIP showed that direct demonstration and practice were particularly relevant for converts who were unfamiliar with the technical aspects of Islamic worship.²⁴ Rather than assuming immediate competence after conversion, this approach recognizes religious practice as a learning process that requires repetition, guidance, and correction.

Qur'anic learning is similarly conducted gradually, beginning with the recognition of Arabic letters and progressing toward basic reading. Regular religious study sessions provide opportunities not only to acquire religious knowledge but also to interact with administrators, mentors, and fellow converts. These sessions therefore have both religious and social functions. On the religious level, they provide opportunities for continued learning of Islamic teachings. On the social level, they create spaces for interaction that may support community belonging and participation in Muslim social life.

Post-conversion mentoring connects these religious-learning activities with longer-term adaptation. Instead of treating the *shahada* as the completion of the conversion process, MCIP continues to provide opportunities for religious study, worship guidance, Qur'anic learning, consultation, and community participation. In this sense, religious empowerment can be understood as an institutional process that supports religious learning and Islamic self-understanding over time. It does not imply that every convert develops religious identity in the same way or at the same pace, because religious adaptation remains influenced by personal readiness, family relationships, previous social environments, and participation in institutional activities.

The relationship between social and religious empowerment is particularly important in the MCIP setting. Religious learning may help converts

²⁴ Mandasari, "Field Observation Notes at Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli," April 8, 2026, Mandasari's Research Data.

understand and practice Islam, while psychological support, social assistance, economic support, and community-based mentoring may provide the conditions that enable them to sustain that learning. Conversely, social assistance without continued religious guidance may address immediate vulnerability without necessarily strengthening Islamic self-understanding. The findings therefore indicate that MCIP's support operates through an integrated institutional framework in which religious and social dimensions interact rather than function independently.

Table: 1 Summary of MCIP's Social and Religious Empowerment Findings

Finding aspect	Form of implementation	Field data source	Identified contribution
Stages of guidance	Pre- <i>shahada</i> , <i>shahada</i> , and post- <i>shahada</i> programs	Administrator interviews, observation, and documentation	Provides a structured and continuous conversion process
Psychological assistance	Personal consultation, motivation, and moral support	Administrator and convert interviews	Reduces isolation and strengthens readiness to maintain a Muslim identity
Social assistance	Zakat, <i>infaq</i> , <i>sadaqah</i> , Friday meals, and rice assistance	Administrator interviews and program documentation	Supports the basic needs of converts experiencing economic hardship
Economic empowerment	Business capital, equipment, and skills development	Administrator interviews and documentation	Encourages independence and reduces long-term dependency
Religious guidance	Islamic belief, worship, morality, regular study, and Qur'anic learning	Interviews, observation, and documentation	Strengthens religious understanding and worship practices
Community-based guidance	Study sessions, personal mentoring, and dormitory programs	Administrator interviews and observation	Expands social relationships and strengthens acceptance
Identity development	Acceptance of Muslim identity and participation in religious activities	Administrator and convert interviews	Improves confidence and social adaptation

Source: Authors' compilation based on interviews, field observations, and MCIP institutional documentation, 2026.

3. Reported Contributions to Religious Understanding, Identity, and Social Adaptation

The findings indicate that MCIP's programs are associated with reported changes in converts' religious understanding, participation in Islamic practices, and social adjustment. According to MCIP administrators, regular guidance provides converts with opportunities to learn basic Islamic beliefs, practice worship, improve Qur'anic reading, and discuss difficulties encountered during the post-conversion period. Repeated learning sessions also allow participants to revisit previously learned materials, correct religious practices, and consult mentors when they experience uncertainty. These findings suggest that MCIP's contribution is not limited to the transmission of religious knowledge but also includes the provision of an institutional environment in which converts can continue developing religious understanding over time.

The findings can be interpreted through three analytical processes derived from social identity theory: categorization, identification, and social comparison.²⁵ These processes are used in this study as interpretive concepts rather than as fixed or strictly linear stages. Converts may experience them differently depending on personal readiness, family relationships, previous social environments, and the level of participation in institutional activities.

Social categorization is reflected in the process through which converts begin to recognize themselves as members of the Muslim community. The declaration of the *shahada* marks a formal change in religious affiliation, but this formal status does not automatically produce a fully developed Muslim social identity. Introductory religious guidance, interaction with MCIP administrators, and participation in Islamic activities provide a context in which converts can gradually understand what membership in the Muslim community means in practice. In this sense, categorization refers primarily to recognition of group membership rather than to the complete internalization of Islamic beliefs and practices.

Identification involves a deeper process of relating oneself to the values, norms, and practices associated with the Muslim community. Participation in worship instruction, Qur'anic learning, regular study sessions, and other religious activities provides opportunities for converts to develop Islamic self-understanding and religious identity. Islamic self-understanding in this study refers to the way converts understand themselves in relation to newly learned Islamic beliefs and practices, while religious identity refers more broadly to the incorporation of those beliefs and practices into everyday

²⁵ Tajfel and Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict."

religious life. These processes may overlap, but they should not be treated as identical or assumed to develop uniformly among all converts.

The social-comparison dimension is reflected in how converts evaluate their place within the Muslim social environment through interaction with administrators, mentors, and fellow Muslims. Acceptance, support, and participation in community activities may contribute to a stronger sense of community belonging and greater confidence in maintaining a Muslim identity. Community belonging refers specifically to the experience of being socially connected to and accepted within a Muslim environment, while social identity refers to the broader recognition of oneself as a member of the Muslim social group. Previous research on Muslim converts similarly indicates that supportive social environments may contribute to resilience and adjustment when individuals experience difficulties in adapting to a new religious setting.²⁶

The experience of Yunus Ramadhan illustrates how these processes may intersect in practice. Yunus reported that after conversion he experienced difficulty learning Islam independently, limited support from his immediate environment, and pressure from family members who had not fully accepted his religious decision.²⁷ After participating in MCIP's guidance activities, he reported a stronger willingness to deepen his religious knowledge and a greater ability to interact with the Muslim community. His account suggests that continued institutional guidance may support religious learning while also providing opportunities for social interaction and adaptation.

Yunus's experience also indicates that post-conversion adaptation extends beyond the ability to perform religious rituals. Religious learning, Islamic self-understanding, community belonging, and social confidence may develop simultaneously and influence one another. However, these processes should not be interpreted as automatic outcomes of participation in MCIP programs. They remain shaped by individual circumstances, including family acceptance or resistance, prior social relationships, personal readiness, and continuity of participation in institutional guidance.

The findings therefore suggest that MCIP provides an institutional setting that may contribute to several interrelated aspects of post-conversion

²⁶ Jannatul Asni Harefa and Zainun Zainun, "Resiliensi Sosial Mualaf Di Lingkungan Masyarakat Olori," *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Indonesia (JISI)*, June 30, 2024, 83–91, <https://doi.org/10.15408/jisi.v5i1.39897>.

²⁷ Yunus Ramadhan, "Interview," interview by Mandasari, (Medan), April 8, 2026, In-person interview.

development: religious learning, Islamic self-understanding, social identity negotiation, community belonging, and social adaptation. Nevertheless, these findings should be understood cautiously because direct beneficiary data were obtained from only one convert participant. The experience of Yunus Ramadhan provides an illustrative case rather than a representative account of all converts assisted by MCIP. Broader interpretations concerning other converts are based primarily on information provided by MCIP administrators and should therefore be treated as contextual rather than generalizable findings.

4. Supporting Factors, Barriers, and Institutional Responses

The findings indicate that several institutional and community-related factors support the continuity of MCIP's empowerment programs. These include the staged guidance system, the commitment of administrators and volunteers, community participation, donor support, and an institutional environment that encourages continued religious learning and mentoring. The *pre-shahada*, *shahada*, and *post-shahada* stages provide an organizational structure through which MCIP can differentiate forms of assistance according to the needs of prospective converts and new Muslims. This staged arrangement also enables religious guidance, consultation, social support, and follow-up mentoring to be delivered beyond the formal declaration of faith.

The implementation of these programs, however, is influenced by both internal and external barriers. Internal challenges reported by MCIP include psychological unreadiness, inconsistent participation in guidance activities, difficulties in changing previous habits, and expectations that may exceed the institution's available capacity. These conditions illustrate that the effectiveness of post-conversion support is partly shaped by the readiness and participation of individual converts. From an empowerment perspective, such conditions are important because empowerment is not limited to the provision of assistance but also involves the development of individual capacity, participation, and greater ability to manage personal and social challenges.²⁸

External barriers include family rejection, social pressure, employment difficulties, housing insecurity, and economic vulnerability. These challenges may affect converts' ability to participate consistently in religious learning and community activities. Family acceptance or resistance is

²⁸ Hikmat, *Strategi Pemberdayaan Masyarakat*.

particularly significant because conversion can alter existing social relationships and create tension between a convert's new religious affiliation and previous family or social environments. The findings therefore indicate that post-conversion empowerment is shaped not only by institutional programs but also by broader contextual conditions surrounding each convert.

Institutional capacity also affects the scope and intensity of MCIP's support. Administrators reported that limitations in funding and human resources restrict the institution's ability to provide intensive and continuous assistance to all converts. MCIP relies substantially on *zakat*, *infaq*, *sadaqah*, donations, *waqf*, and broader community support to finance religious education, social assistance, economic programs, and community- or dormitory-based mentoring. This dependence on external resources means that the availability and scale of particular programs may vary according to institutional resources and donor participation.

In response to these limitations, MCIP adopts several institutional strategies. These include maintaining regular religious guidance, personal mentoring, Qur'anic education, psychological and motivational support, social assistance, economic initiatives, skills training, and employment-related support. The institution also seeks to expand cooperation with Muslim organizations, social foundations, academics, religious leaders, and donors. MCIP administrators reported receiving forms of support or collaboration involving institutions such as Baitul Maal Muamalat and Rumah Zakat.²⁹ However, the available research data do not establish whether these relationships are governed by formal partnership agreements. They are therefore more appropriately described as reported institutional support or collaboration.

Funding diversification also forms part of MCIP's institutional response. In addition to relying on *zakat*, *infaq*, *sadaqah*, *waqf*, and donations, MCIP seeks to develop community-based economic initiatives that may contribute to the sustainability of its activities. Business capital, equipment assistance, skills training, and employment support are provided within the limits of available resources. These initiatives are intended to address economic vulnerability while creating opportunities for converts to develop productive capacity and greater independence. Nevertheless, the findings do not indicate

²⁹ MCIP Administrators, "Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli," interview by Mandasari, (Medan), April 8, 2026, In-person interview.

that such assistance produces uniform economic outcomes for all beneficiaries.

Taken together, the supporting factors, barriers, and institutional responses identified in this study show that MCIP's empowerment activities operate within a dynamic institutional and social context. The continuity of guidance is influenced by administrator commitment, community participation, donor support, individual readiness, family relations, economic conditions, and institutional resources. MCIP's role therefore extends beyond facilitating the *shahada* by providing an organizational setting for continued religious learning, social support, mentoring, and capacity development. At the same time, the findings indicate that the contribution of these programs remains contextual and cannot be understood as producing identical outcomes for every convert.

E. Discussion

1. Integrated Social and Religious Empowerment

The findings show that MCIP extends its role beyond facilitating the *shahada* by integrating religious education, psychological support, social assistance, economic aid, skills development, and community-based mentoring. This approach treats conversion as a multidimensional transition requiring continuous guidance. Immediate assistance is intended to address immediate vulnerability, while religious instruction, business support, and skills development provide opportunities for longer-term capacity building.³⁰

This integrated approach reflects the Qur'anic principle of mutual responsibility among believers. Surah At-Tawbah verse 71 states:

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ
وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ
حَكِيمٌ

“The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish

³⁰ Tonny Nasdian, *Pengembangan Masyarakat* (Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2018).

*prayer and give zakah and obey Allah and His Messenger. Those - Allah will have mercy upon them. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise”.*³¹

The verse links religious commitment with solidarity and social responsibility. Accordingly, MCIP combines religious guidance with psychological, social, and economic support because religious instruction alone cannot resolve family rejection, isolation, or financial hardship, while material assistance alone may not strengthen Islamic identity.³²

According to an MCIP administrator, guidance begins before the *shahada* and continues through religious studies, worship instruction, community activities, social aid, and economic assistance after conversion.³³ These findings support research on structured learning and supportive religious environments, while extending it by showing that religious internalization is strengthened through integrated psychological, social, economic, and institutional support.³⁴

Previous studies similarly indicate that religious studies and social mentoring can strengthen converts' basic understanding of Islam and their commitment to their new faith.³⁵ Research in Medan also emphasizes that a humanistic and persuasive approach can increase religious awareness among converts.³⁶ Meanwhile, intensive guidance has been associated with improved ability to perform obligatory worship and read the Qur'an.³⁷ This study expands those

³¹ Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya: Edisi Penyempurnaan 2019* (Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an, 2019).

³² Rosalina and Wasil, "Pembinaan Keagamaan Mualaf Di Pesantren Mualaf Indonesia Dompot Dhuafa."

³³ MCIP Administrators, "Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli."

³⁴ Liani Fitriana and Nasiruddin Sidqi, "Pelaksanaan Bimbingan Pendidikan Agama Islam Bagi Mualaf Dalam Mempertahankan Keimanan Di Mualaf Center Indonesia (MCI) Palangka Raya," *Jurnal Review Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran* 6, no. 4 (2023): 3076–81, <https://doi.org/10.31004/jrpp.v6i4.21759>.

³⁵ Umniyyatul Ulya, "Peran Yayasan Mualaf Center Indonesia Dalam Membina Keagamaan Mualaf Di Depok," *Harmoni* 19, no. 1 (2020): 162–71, <https://doi.org/10.32488/harmoni.v19i1.325>.

³⁶ Ridha Widya Lubis and Irwansyah, "Strategi Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli (MCIP) Dalam Membentuk Sosial Keagamaan Muslim Baru Di Kota Medan," *Al-Mada: Jurnal Agama, Sosial, Dan Budaya* 8, no. 1 (2025): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.31538/almada.v8i1.6231>.

³⁷ Hafidzatul Muslimah and Zainap Hartati, "Dampak Pembinaan Muallaf Terhadap Ibadah Di Muallaf Center Indonesia Kota Palangka Raya," *Journal on Education* 6, no. 3 (2024): 15842–50, <https://doi.org/10.31004/joe.v6i3.5434>.

findings by demonstrating that religious education becomes more meaningful when combined with psychological support, economic assistance, skills development, and community acceptance.

2. Religious Identity Formation and Social Adaptation

MCIP's contribution can be interpreted through social identity theory, particularly through the interrelated processes of categorization, identification, and social comparison.³⁸ In the context of religious conversion, these processes should not be understood as fixed or strictly sequential stages. Categorization is reflected when converts begin to recognize themselves as members of the Muslim community, while the *shahada* represents the formal affirmation of their new religious affiliation. This initial recognition may then develop through continued religious learning, interaction with Muslim communities, and institutional guidance. Pre-conversion consultation and subsequent mentoring therefore provide contexts in which converts can gradually understand the beliefs, practices, responsibilities, and social meanings associated with being Muslim.

This perspective is consistent with the view that Islamic identity should not be understood as a fixed condition but as a dynamic and contextual process shaped through social interaction, negotiation, and experiences of belonging. Recent research similarly shows that Islamic identity can be continuously negotiated in relation to social contexts, power relations, and experiences of acceptance and difference.³⁹ This perspective supports the present study's interpretation that post-conversion identity development may occur through overlapping and context-dependent processes rather than through a uniform sequence.

At the identification stage, converts internalize Islamic values through worship instruction, Qur'anic learning, regular study, and community participation. Because their educational, familial, and psychological conditions differ, guidance must be adapted to individual needs. Practical

³⁸ Tajfel and Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict."

³⁹ Anugerah Febrian Syam and Andi Nurhikmah, "Negotiating Islamic and Cultural Identities in English-Mediated Academic Interaction: A Digital Ethnography of Power, Belonging, and Difference," *Borneo International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 2 (2025): 183–202, <https://doi.org/10.21093/bijis.v7i2.13078>.

demonstrations of ablution and prayer are especially important for beginners because they reduce uncertainty and increase confidence.⁴⁰

The psychological dimension of guidance is also important in supporting identity development. Group guidance has been found to contribute to converts' self-awareness, while Islamic counseling can support self-actualization and the development of religious potential.⁴¹ Religious mentors may further serve as educators, motivators, stabilizers, and directors who help converts develop confidence in understanding and practicing Islam.⁴² These findings reinforce the importance of adapting guidance to the psychological and religious needs of each convert.

At the social-comparison stage, acceptance from administrators, mentors, and the Muslim community strengthens belonging and confidence. A supportive institution can also provide an alternative social network for converts facing rejection from their former environment. Social solidarity among Muslim minorities further illustrates how shared religious identity and community interaction can support belonging in challenging social environments.⁴³

Yunus Ramadhan's experience illustrates this process. After initially facing difficulty learning Islam, limited support, and family pressure, he became more motivated and better able to adapt through MCIP's guidance.⁴⁴ Although one participant's experience cannot represent all converts, it shows how institutional support may strengthen religious learning, psychological resilience, and social adaptation.

The challenges of post-conversion adaptation may also involve psychological and social pressures associated with changes in religious and

⁴⁰ Fanani, "Internalisasi Pendidikan Agama Islam Dan Kemuhammadiyah Bagi Santri Muallaf Di Pondok Pesantren Modern Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Banjarbaru Kalimantan Selatan."

⁴¹ Alif Nur Hamzah, "Pengaruh Bimbingan Kelompok Untuk Meningkatkan Self-Awareness Pada Mualaf Di Mualaf Center Yogyakarta" (Skripsi, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2024); Aditya Dorin Widyanto, "Peran Bimbingan Konseling Islam Dalam Meningkatkan Aktualisasi Diri Mualaf Di Yayasan Mualaf Center Yogyakarta" (Skripsi, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, 2022).

⁴² Fania Nuranisa, "Peran Pembimbing Agama Dalam Meningkatkan Kepercayaan Diri Pada Pemahaman Agama Mualaf Di Mualaf Center Yogyakarta" (Skripsi, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2023).

⁴³ Herlambang Dwi Prasetyo Rakhmadi, "Solidaritas Sosial Muslim Minoritas Di Inggris Dalam Film *Blinded by the Light*," *Gemi: Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengabdian* 3, no. 2 (2024): 110–19, <https://doi.org/10.47200/gemi.v3i2.1545>.

⁴⁴ Yunus Ramadhan, "Interview."

social identity. Research on Chinese Muslim converts similarly shows that minority status, discrimination, and social pressure can make resilience an important element of post-conversion adjustment.⁴⁵ This finding reinforces the present study's observation that institutional and community support may become particularly important when converts experience limited support or pressure from their previous social environment.

These findings are consistent with research showing that conversion is shaped by continuing personal, spiritual, familial, and social factors.⁴⁶ Thus, social identity theory is used as an interpretive framework rather than as an assumption that all converts follow the same linear process. MCIP facilitates identity development, but the pace and form of adaptation remain influenced by each convert's family relationships, previous social environment, personal readiness, and access to institutional support.

3. Humanistic Da'wah and Continuous Guidance

MCIP's pre-*shahada* consultation reflects a humanistic and persuasive approach to *da'wah*. Prospective converts are given opportunities to ask questions, learn about Islam, explain their motivations, and consider the consequences of their decisions. This approach respects personal freedom and recognizes that conversion should be based on awareness and readiness rather than coercion.

This practice corresponds with the principle stated in Surah An-Nahl verse 125:

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ
أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most

⁴⁵ Ta Honn Yu and Bushrah Bt Basiron, "Resilience of Chinese Reverted Muslim in Facing Double Minorities Status: A Study in Malaysia Context," *Borneo International Journal of Islamic Studies* 4, no. 2 (2022): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.21093/bijis.v7i2.13078>.

⁴⁶ Rasip and Razak, "Faktor Pemelukan Agama Islam."

*knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided”.*⁴⁷

The verse emphasizes wisdom, good advice, and respectful communication, reflected in MCIP’s pre-conversion consultation, non-coercive approach, and attention to prospective converts’ personal circumstances.⁴⁸ This approach is also consistent with findings that persuasive and humanistic *da’wah* can help increase converts’ religious awareness without disregarding their personal and social backgrounds.⁴⁹

Humanistic *da’wah* must continue after the *shahada* through guidance adapted to converts’ educational, familial, psychological, and economic conditions. MCIP provides regular Islamic studies, worship instruction, Qur’anic education, personal consultation, community activities, and dormitory-based mentoring. Religious mentors are particularly important because they do not only transfer knowledge but also provide motivation, emotional stability, and direction throughout the adaptation process.⁵⁰

The findings suggest the importance of continuous guidance because post-conversion difficulties may involve religious uncertainty, social isolation, and pressure from previous social environments uncertain about worship, socially isolated, or vulnerable to pressure from their former environment. Previous research also shows that intensive post-conversion education can improve converts’ competence in worship and Qur’anic reading. Islamic counseling and group guidance may further strengthen self-awareness and self-actualization, particularly among converts facing psychological uncertainty after conversion.⁵¹

MCIP’s pre-*shahada*, *shahada*, and post-*shahada* stages also demonstrate the importance of planning, committed administrators, qualified mentors, funding, and evaluation. Effective management can strengthen converts’ motivation and participation, although program success remains influenced

⁴⁷ Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, *Al-Qur’an Dan Terjemahannya: Edisi Penyempurnaan 2019*.

⁴⁸ Azra, *Islam Nusantara: Jaringan Global Dan Lokal*.

⁴⁹ Lubis and Irwansyah, “Strategi Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli (MCIP) Dalam Membentuk Sosial Keagamaan Muslim Baru Di Kota Medan.”

⁵⁰ Nuranisa, “Peran Pembimbing Agama Dalam Meningkatkan Kepercayaan Diri Pada Pemahaman Agama Mualaf Di Mualaf Center Yogyakarta.”

⁵¹ Hamzah, “Pengaruh Bimbingan Kelompok Untuk Meningkatkan Self-Awareness Pada Mualaf Di Mualaf Center Yogyakarta”; Widyanto, “Peran Bimbingan Konseling Islam Dalam Meningkatkan Aktualisasi Diri Mualaf Di Yayasan Mualaf Center Yogyakarta.”

by mentor availability, participant consistency, financial resources, and family support.⁵² Humanistic *da'wah* therefore requires both respectful communication and sustainable institutional capacity.

4. Institutional Sustainability, Implications, and Research Limitations

MCIP faces internal barriers, including limited staff and mentors, inconsistent participation, psychological unreadiness, and expectations beyond institutional capacity, as well as external challenges such as family rejection, social pressure, employment and housing difficulties, and economic vulnerability. These conditions show that empowerment depends not only on program design but also on the institution's ability to respond to practical obstacles.⁵³

The sustainability of economic assistance also depends on institutional capacity, governance, and collaboration with external stakeholders. This is consistent with research on zakat institutions in Indonesia, which emphasizes that stronger institutional capacity and cross-sector collaboration are important for developing more inclusive and sustainable empowerment programs.⁵⁴ In the context of MCIP, this perspective highlights the importance of strengthening institutional networks and diversifying funding sources to support the continuity of convert-empowerment programs.

Funding is another major limitation because MCIP relies heavily on donations and community support. To sustain its programs, the institution collaborates with Muslim organizations, social foundations, academics, religious leaders, donors, and zakat institutions. Support has reportedly come from Baitul Maal Muamalat and Rumah Zakat, although these relationships should be described as collaboration unless formal agreements exist.⁵⁵

Zakat, *infaq*, *sadaqah*, food assistance, business capital, skills training, and community-based enterprises can address immediate needs while supporting long-term independence. However, economic empowerment should also

⁵² Dwi Indah Handayani, "Pengaruh Efektivitas Manajemen Organisasi Cordofa Medan Dalam Meningkatkan Motivasi Beribadah Bagi Para Mualaf," *Maddah: Journal of Advanced Da'wah Management Research* 3, no. 1 (2024): 11–20.

⁵³ Hikmat, *Strategi Pemberdayaan Masyarakat*.

⁵⁴ Yuri Arlin Thahir and Muhibbuddin, "Enhancing the Effectiveness of Zakat Institutions in Indonesia: Governance Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Poverty Alleviation," *Borneo International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 2 (2025): 203–22, <https://doi.org/10.21093/bijis.v7i2.10960>.

⁵⁵ MCIP Administrators, "Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli."

include mentoring, market access, needs assessment, and regular evaluation because capital alone may be insufficient.

Theoretically, the findings show that convert empowerment combines capacity building with social identity formation. Education, assistance, participation, and access to resources reduce vulnerability, while community interaction strengthens Muslim identity and belonging. The inclusion of psychological guidance is also important because earlier studies indicate that group counseling, Islamic counseling, and religious mentoring can strengthen self-awareness, self-actualization, and confidence among converts.

Practically, convert-support institutions need staged guidance, trained mentors, diversified funding, reliable records, evaluation, and referral mechanisms for complex psychological, social, or legal problems. Previous studies also suggest that religious instruction, persuasive *da'wah*, and intensive mentoring should remain central components of convert guidance. Nevertheless, these elements should be integrated with social protection and economic empowerment rather than implemented separately.

This study is limited by its reliance on one convert participant, information mainly from MCIP administrators, and a short fieldwork period from April 8 to April 16, 2026. The findings should therefore be understood as a contextual account of MCIP Medan. Future research should involve more diverse participants and examine the long-term outcomes of religious, social, psychological, and economic empowerment.

F. Conclusion

This study concludes that Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli (MCIP) provides an integrated framework for the religious and social empowerment of Muslim converts in Medan through pre-*shahada* consultation, assistance during the declaration of faith, and continuous post-*shahada* mentoring. Its programs include basic Islamic education, practical worship guidance, Qur'anic learning, regular religious study, psychological support, social assistance, economic support, skills development, and community-based mentoring. These findings indicate that MCIP does not treat conversion merely as a formal declaration of faith but institutionalizes it as a continuing process of religious learning, Islamic self-understanding, social identity negotiation, community belonging, and capacity development. Religious and social empowerment therefore operate as interrelated processes whose outcomes remain influenced by personal readiness, family acceptance or resistance, participation consistency, economic circumstances, and available institutional resources.

The continuity of MCIP's programs is supported by the commitment of administrators and volunteers, community participation, donor support, and institutional collaboration, while limited funding, human resources, family resistance, social pressure, and economic vulnerability remain important challenges. Strengthening convert-support programs therefore requires sustainable funding, trained mentors, continued evaluation, and stronger collaboration with relevant stakeholders. This study is limited by the involvement of only one direct convert participant, the predominance of administrator perspectives, and a relatively short fieldwork period. Accordingly, the findings should be understood as a contextual account of MCIP Medan rather than a general representation of all Muslim converts. Future research should involve more diverse participants and longer-term observation to examine the development of religious learning, social identity, community belonging, psychological adaptation, and economic empowerment over time.

References

- Azra, Azyumardi. *Islam Nusantara: Jaringan Global Dan Lokal*. Mizan, 2002.
- Creswell, John W., and Cheryl N. Poth. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. 4th ed. SAGE Publications, 2018.
- Fadhillah, Fazrin, and Siti Qodariah. "Gambaran Religiusitas Mualaf Di Masjid Lautze 2 Di Kota Bandung." *Bandung Conference Series: Psychology Science* 2, no. 1 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.29313/bcsps.v2i1.1532>.
- Fanani, Muhazir. "Internalisasi Pendidikan Agama Islam Dan Kemuhammadiyah Bagi Santri Muallaf Di Pondok Pesantren Modern Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Banjarbaru Kalimantan Selatan." *AL-MIKRAJ: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora* 5, no. 1 (2024): 557–71. <https://doi.org/10.37680/almikraj.v5i01.6116>.
- Fitriana, Liani, and Nasiruddin Sidqi. "Pelaksanaan Bimbingan Pendidikan Agama Islam Bagi Mualaf Dalam Mempertahankan Keimanan Di Mualaf Center Indonesia (MCI) Palangka Raya." *Jurnal Review Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran* 6, no. 4 (2023): 3076–81. <https://doi.org/10.31004/jrpp.v6i4.21759>.
- Hamzah, Alif Nur. "Pengaruh Bimbingan Kelompok Untuk Meningkatkan Self-Awareness Pada Mualaf Di Mualaf Center Yogyakarta." Skripsi, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2024.
- Handayani, Dwi Indah. "Pengaruh Efektivitas Manajemen Organisasi Cordofa Medan Dalam Meningkatkan Motivasi Beribadah Bagi Para Mualaf." *Maddah: Journal of Advanced Da'wah Management Research* 3, no. 1

- (2024): 11–20.
- Harefa, Jannatul Asni, and Zainun Zainun. “Resiliensi Sosial Mualaf Di Lingkungan Masyarakat Olora.” *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Indonesia (JISI)*, June 30, 2024, 83–91. <https://doi.org/10.15408/jisi.v5i1.39897>.
- Hikmat, Harry. *Strategi Pemberdayaan Masyarakat*. Humaniora Utama Press, 2018.
- Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia. *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya: Edisi Penyempurnaan 2019*. Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an, 2019.
- Lubis, Ridha Widya and Irwansyah. “Strategi Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli (MCIP) Dalam Membentuk Sosial Keagamaan Muslim Baru Di Kota Medan.” *Al-Mada: Jurnal Agama, Sosial, Dan Budaya* 8, no. 1 (2025): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.31538/almada.v8i1.6231>.
- Mandasari. “Field Observation Notes at Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli.” April 8, 2026. Mandasari’s Research Data.
- Miles, Matthew B., A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. 3rd ed. SAGE Publications, 2014.
- Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli. “Institutional Archives and Program Documentation of Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli.” Institutional documentation. Medan, 2026. Mualaf Center Indonesia Peduli.
- Muslimah, Hafidzatul, and Zainap Hartati. “Dampak Pembinaan Muallaf Terhadap Ibadah Di Muallaf Center Indonesia Kota Palangka Raya.” *Journal on Education* 6, no. 3 (2024): 15842–50. <https://doi.org/10.31004/joe.v6i3.5434>.
- Nasdian, Tonny. *Pengembangan Masyarakat*. Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2018.
- Nuranisa, Fania. “Peran Pembimbing Agama Dalam Meningkatkan Kepercayaan Diri Pada Pemahaman Agama Mualaf Di Mualaf Center Yogyakarta.” Skripsi, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2023.
- Patton, Michael Quinn. *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice*. 4th ed. SAGE Publications, 2015.
- Puspita, Reni. “Pemberdayaan Sosial Terhadap Mualaf Melalui Pembinaan Keagamaan.” *Jurnal Ilmu Kesejahteraan Sosial* 3, no. 1 (2014).
- Rakhmadi, Herlambang Dwi Prasetyo. “Solidaritas Sosial Muslim Minoritas Di Inggris Dalam Film Blinded by the Light.” *Gemi: Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengabdian* 3, no. 2 (2024): 110–19. <https://doi.org/10.47200/gemi.v3i2.1545>.
- Rasip, Zaifuddin Md, and Mohd Solleh Ab Razak. “Faktor Pemeluk Agama Islam: Kajian Terhadap Mualaf Di Sabah.” *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)* 9, no. 10 (2024): e003016. <https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v9i10.3016>.

- Rosalina, Dian, and Wasil Wasil. "Pembinaan Keagamaan Mualaf Di Pesantren Mualaf Indonesia Dompok Dhuafa." *Inklusiva: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 2, no. 2 (2024): 237–54. <https://doi.org/10.15408/inklusiva.v2i2.42472>.
- Suharto, Edi. *Membangun Masyarakat Memberdayakan Rakyat: Kajian Strategis Pembangunan Kesejahteraan Sosial Dan Pekerjaan Sosial*. Refika Aditama, 2017.
- Syam, Anugerah Febrian, and Andi Nurhikmah. "Negotiating Islamic and Cultural Identities in English-Mediated Academic Interaction: A Digital Ethnography of Power, Belonging, and Difference." *Borneo International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 2 (2025): 183–202. <https://doi.org/10.21093/bijis.v7i2.13078>.
- Tajfel, Henri, and John C. Turner. "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict." In *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, edited by William G. Austin and Stephen Worchel. Brooks/Cole, 1979.
- Thahir, Yuri Arlin and Muhibbuddin. "Enhancing the Effectiveness of Zakat Institutions in Indonesia: Governance Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Poverty Alleviation." *Borneo International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 2 (2025): 203–22. <https://doi.org/10.21093/bijis.v7i2.10960>.
- Ulya, Umniyyatul. "Peran Yayasan Mualaf Center Indonesia Dalam Membina Keagamaan Mualaf Di Depok." *Harmoni* 19, no. 1 (2020): 162–71. <https://doi.org/10.32488/harmoni.v19i1.325>.
- Widyanto, Aditya Dorin. "Peran Bimbingan Konseling Islam Dalam Meningkatkan Aktualisasi Diri Mualaf Di Yayasan Mualaf Center Yogyakarta." Skripsi, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, 2022.
- Yu, Ta Honn, and Bushrah Bt Basiron. "Resilience of Chinese Reverted Muslim in Facing Double Minorities Status: A Study in Malaysia Context." *Borneo International Journal of Islamic Studies* 4, no. 2 (2022): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.21093/bijis.v7i2.13078>.
- Zubaedi. *Pengembangan Masyarakat: Wacana Dan Praktik*. Kencana, 2017.

