

Strengthening The Psychological Capital of The Former Shiite Community

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ABSTRACT

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This community engagement project aims to strengthening of psychological capital in supporting the psychosocial readiness of former Shia residents of Jemundo prior to their return to Sampang Regency in a post-religious conflict context. Psychological capital—comprising hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience—is understood as an integrated construct that plays a crucial role in enabling individuals to navigate social transitions characterized by uncertainty. The program was implemented through a participatory approach that positioned community members as active subjects in the psychosocial accompaniment process. The findings indicate that the four dimensions of psychological capital mutually reinforce one another and contribute to participants' capacity to reconstruct the meaning of return in a more adaptive manner. Nevertheless, the development of psychological capital cannot be detached from the structural conditions shaping post-conflict experiences, including state policies and local social relations. Therefore, strengthening psychological capital should be framed as complementary to, rather than a substitute for, the state's responsibility to ensure the fulfillment of citizens' basic rights. This study recommends the integration of psychosocial interventions and responsive structural policies to support sustainable social reintegration.

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INTRODUCTION

Ideally, the resolution of religious-based social conflicts should not end with the cessation of violence or the completion of administrative procedures (Bazargan & Hejazi, 2021; Ortiz et al., 2021). Rather, it must extend to restoring

the dignity, sense of security, and psychosocial readiness of affected communities (Hamdanah et al., 2025; Ibipurwo et al., 2024; Safitri & Lateh, 2025). In contemporary conflict resolution studies, post-conflict recovery is widely understood as a multidimensional process encompassing structural, social, and psychological dimensions simultaneously (Brannon et al., 2024; Gomez et al., 2024; Raharjo et al., 2023). However, in policy and practice, the psychological dimension of recovery is frequently marginalized.

This condition is clearly reflected in the experiences of former Shia residents of Jemundo, internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Sampang Regency who have lived in displacement for nearly a decade. Although the conflict has been formally declared resolved and the residents are considered administratively ready to return to their place of origin, the actual conditions on the ground remain inadequate. In particular, the lack of proper housing and sustainable livelihood guarantees undermines the prospect of a dignified return (Chadambuka, 2022; Koç & Şeker, 2023; Natamiharja et al., 2023). This discrepancy between formal readiness and structural unpreparedness has generated profound psychological anxiety among the displaced population (Borg et al., 2023; Dattilo et al., 2021; Haiven & Athanasiou, 2022).

From the perspective of community and humanitarian psychology, the pre-return phase represents a period of heightened psychological vulnerability. Individuals and families are caught between the hope of rebuilding their lives and the fear of re-experiencing past trauma, discrimination, or violence (Harris & Levenson, 2021; Powers, 2024). In the absence of adequate psychosocial support, such conditions may result in prolonged stress, emotional withdrawal, and diminished agency, which in turn can hinder social reintegration and potentially trigger renewed tensions within the community.

One conceptual framework that offers a useful lens for understanding and strengthening individuals' capacity to cope with crisis and uncertainty is psychological capital (Jurek & Niewiadomska, 2021; Nasreen et al., 2024). The psychological capital as a positive psychological state characterized by hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience (Dudasova et al., 2021; Kakabaraei, 2024; Preston et al., 2023). Empirical studies have demonstrated that psychological capital plays a crucial role in enabling individuals to adapt, persevere, and thrive in challenging and unpredictable environments.

Nevertheless, the majority of psychological capital research has been conducted in organizational, educational, and workplace contexts (Aryani et al., 2021; Kun & Gadanecz, 2022; Loghman et al., 2023). Its application within post-conflict community settings—particularly among internally displaced populations affected by religious conflict—remains limited (Doci et al., 2023; Paul & Jena, 2022). Existing studies on the Sampang conflict and former Shia refugees have largely emphasized policy frameworks, formal reconciliation processes, and local political dynamics, while giving minimal attention to the psychosocial readiness and inner resources of residents preparing for return.

This study is important because it addresses the often-overlooked psychological dimension of post-conflict recovery, especially during the critical pre-return phase of displacement. By focusing on psychological capital, this research highlights the need to move beyond structural and administrative indicators of readiness and to consider the internal capacities that enable individuals and communities to face uncertainty, rebuild trust, and reimagine their future.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the process of strengthening the psychological capital of former Shia residents of Jemundo prior to their planned return to Sampang in 2023, as part of a broader community service initiative. The study contributes to the field in two key ways: theoretically, by extending the application of psychological capital to post-conflict and humanitarian contexts; and practically, by offering a psychosocial intervention model that can inform community service programs and post-conflict recovery policies for religiously displaced communities.

METHOD

This community service program uses a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, which positions the assisted community as an active participant in all stages of the activity. PAR was chosen because it allows for a process of critical reflection between facilitators and residents, and encourages contextual and sustainable change (Fine et al., 2021). In a post-conflict context, a participatory approach is considered more sensitive to experiences of trauma and imbalanced power relations.

The type of community service provided was psychosocial empowerment, with a focus on strengthening the psychological capital of former Shia Jemundo residents in the transition phase toward returning home. Data collection methods included participant observation, focus group discussions (FGDs), semi-structured interviews with community leaders and residents, and documentation of the training process. These techniques are commonly used in community-based research and community service to capture emotional and social dynamics in depth (Cornish et al., 2023).

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively and reflectively, combining thematic analysis and participatory reflection. Data were categorized based on four dimensions of psychological capital: hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience. This approach aligns with the view that psychological capital is state-like and can be developed through intentional and contextual interventions.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Psychosocial Conditions of Former Shia Residents Before Returning

As they approach their return to Sampang Regency, former Shia residents of Jemundo find themselves in a psychosocial situation characterized by ambivalence, anxiety, and uncertainty. Administratively, they have been

declared “eligible for repatriation” through a series of formal processes, including the oath of allegiance (*bai’at*) and symbolic reconciliation. However, psychologically and socially, this return has not yet translated into a genuine sense of security or continuity of life. This condition illustrates the gap between formal conflict resolution mechanisms and the subjective experiences of residents affected by prolonged conflict.

In the context of internal displacement and post-conflict recovery, the transition toward return is widely recognized as a highly vulnerable phase. During this period, individuals experience tension between hope and fear, between memories of past trauma and uncertainty about the future. Similar dynamics are evident among the residents of Jemundo, who on the one hand long to return to their homeland, but on the other hand remain acutely aware of structural limitations in Sampang, particularly in relation to housing, employment opportunities, and social relations with surrounding communities.

Field findings indicate that housing uncertainty constitutes a major source of anxiety. Many residents expressed that they were “mentally ready to return home” but “not yet ready in life.” This statement reflects the understanding that return is not merely a matter of intention or administrative status, but a process of psychosocial readiness shaped by structural and material conditions. In this context, psychological capital should not be understood as a substitute for state responsibility, but rather as an internal resource that enables individuals to endure and adapt amidst ongoing limitations.

This community service activity found that, without psychosocial intervention, such ambivalent conditions risk developing into prolonged stress, emotional exhaustion, and even apathy. Strengthening psychological capital is therefore relevant not only as an individual coping strategy, but also as an integral component of broader post-conflict social recovery efforts. The ambivalence experienced by the residents indicates that return cannot be understood solely as an administrative event, but must be seen as a complex psychosocial transition that requires careful preparation and support. Without adequate psychosocial assistance, this phase may significantly weaken residents’ adaptive capacity.

The first dimension of psychological capital strengthened through this mentoring program was hope. Hope is understood not as abstract optimism, but as a cognitive and motivational capacity to set goals, identify pathways toward those goals, and sustain the energy to pursue them. Among the former Shia residents of Jemundo, initial expressions of hope tended to be passive and heavily dependent on external actors, particularly the state.

Through a participatory reflection process, residents were encouraged to reinterpret hope from merely “waiting for certainty” to actively “preparing oneself to face various possibilities.” Group discussions revealed that many residents began to recognize their long-term survival in refugee camps as concrete evidence of their own capacity for hope and perseverance, beyond

external assistance they had received.

Hope was further strengthened by helping residents distinguish between short-, medium-, and long-term goals. The return to Sampang was reframed as a medium-term objective, while economic stability and social acceptance were understood as long-term processes. This reframing helped reduce anxiety, as return was no longer perceived as a final endpoint, but as one phase within an ongoing life journey.

Strengthening hope contributed to more realistic and empowering psychosocial preparedness. By formulating gradual and attainable goals, residents were able to reinterpret their experiences of displacement not solely as suffering, but as lived evidence of endurance and adaptive capacity, which in turn supported greater emotional stability during the transition toward return.

Optimism as a Cognitive Framework

The second dimension strengthened through this mentoring program is optimism. Unlike goal-oriented hope, optimism relates to how individuals interpret life events and envision future possibilities. The optimism cultivated in this intervention does not promote risk avoidance or unrealistic expectations, but rather the ability to recognize opportunities within existing limitations. For former Shia residents of Jemundo, this form of optimism is particularly important given their long-standing experiences of stigma, marginalization, and uncertainty.

Without psychosocial support, such experiences risk fostering a sense of helplessness, in which individuals believe that their actions have little influence over their life circumstances. Strengthening optimism was therefore directed at reconstructing residents' life narratives, encouraging a shift from identifying primarily as "victims of conflict" toward seeing themselves as "survivors" who have endured and learned from adversity. Through reflective sessions, residents began to recognize positive aspects of their displacement experiences, including practical skills, social networks, and spiritual endurance that had been developed over time.

Optimism was further reinforced by emphasizing the collective dimension of the return process. Residents were encouraged to view themselves not as isolated individuals, but as members of a community with shared experiences and the potential for mutual support. This collective perspective helped foster a more open and adaptive interpretation of the future, one that acknowledges ongoing risks without becoming trapped in fear or fatalism.

Closely connected to optimism, the third dimension strengthened was self-efficacy, understood as individuals' belief in their ability to organize and carry out actions necessary to achieve desired outcomes. In contexts of prolonged displacement, a sense of control over one's life is often eroded. Field findings showed that some residents perceived major life decisions, including return, as being entirely determined by external actors, reflecting low self-efficacy.

Strengthening self-efficacy focused on helping residents recognize their own experiences, skills, and everyday achievements. Through shared reflection, many residents came to realize that managing households in refugee settings, engaging in informal economic activities, and sustaining community life were concrete expressions of competence. This recognition significantly altered how residents perceived themselves, fostering greater confidence and motivation to plan for life after return.

Increased self-efficacy was evident in emerging discussions about small-scale economic initiatives, children's education, and active participation in social life upon returning to Sampang. As residents' confidence grew, so did their willingness to take initiative and engage with others, illustrating how self-efficacy also contributes to the strengthening of social relationships and collective preparedness.

The fourth dimension strengthened was resilience, understood as a dynamic and relational process rather than a fixed individual trait. In this community service context, resilience refers to the capacity of individuals and communities to survive, adapt, and potentially transform under conditions of stress and uncertainty. The former Shia residents of Jemundo possess extensive experience living under constrained circumstances, which constitutes a significant but often unrecognized source of resilience.

Mentoring activities encouraged residents to reinterpret their lived experiences not merely as prolonged suffering, but as evidence of adaptive capacity developed through everyday struggles. Resilience was further reinforced by highlighting the importance of social support, spirituality, and shared meaning. Religious values and internal community solidarity emerged as central sources of strength, underscoring the inseparability of resilience from cultural and spiritual dimensions within this community.

Strengthening resilience also enabled residents to anticipate post-return challenges—such as social stigma or economic hardship—without becoming overwhelmed by fear. Resilience extends beyond survival toward the ongoing ability to negotiate identity, dignity, and social position in a post-conflict environment. Together, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience form an interconnected set of psychological capacities that support former Shia residents of Jemundo in navigating the complex psychosocial transition associated with return.

Integrating Psychological Capital in a Post-Religious Conflict Context

The results of this community service demonstrate that the four dimensions of psychological capital—hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience—do not operate in isolation but rather reinforce each other in shaping residents' psychosocial preparedness. Integrating these four dimensions is crucial in a post-religious conflict context, where trauma, stigma, and uncertainty are often intertwined. Psychological capital is state-like, meaning it can be

developed through appropriate interventions. The findings from Jemundo indicate that strengthening psychological capital through a participatory approach enables residents to reconstruct the meaning of return in a more adaptive and empowering manner.

Psychological capital in the context of post-religious conflict must therefore be understood as an integrated whole. The community service results show that hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience function synergistically in supporting residents' psychosocial readiness. Hope provides future orientation, optimism sustains positive yet realistic expectations, self-efficacy reinforces confidence to act, and resilience enables adaptation under pressure. Together, these dimensions form a crucial foundation for residents as they navigate complex social transitions following religious conflict.

The post-religious conflict context presents distinctive challenges that differentiate it from other social crises. Collective trauma, identity-based stigma, and uncertainty regarding social acceptance create layered psychosocial vulnerabilities. In such circumstances, psychological capital functions as an internal resource that supports individuals and communities in reinterpreting past experiences and developing more adaptive orientations toward the future. Strengthening psychological capital thus holds strategic importance for supporting psychosocial recovery in post-conflict religious communities.

Psychological capital can be developed through interventions that emphasize self-reflection, meaning-making, and active engagement. The Jemundo experience confirms that a participatory approach positions residents not merely as objects of assistance, but as active subjects in the process of psychosocial strengthening. Through facilitated discussions and collective reflection, residents were able to reframe the idea of returning home not solely as a source of threat, but as a transitional phase that could be faced with greater preparedness and agency.



Figure 1. Community Service Activity on Strengthening Psychological Capital among Former Shia Residents of Jemundo

This process is illustrated in Figure 1, which documents one of the community service activities focused on strengthening psychological capital. The image captures residents' active participation in group reflection and discussion sessions, highlighting the dialogical and participatory nature of the intervention

that underpins the development of hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience.

Discussion

The findings of this community service program demonstrate that psychological capital plays a central role in preparing conflict-affected communities for complex social transitions. The four dimensions of psychological capital—hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience—were found to operate in an interconnected and mutually reinforcing manner. Rather than functioning as isolated psychological traits, these dimensions collectively shape individuals' capacity to interpret uncertainty, manage anxiety, and envision a viable future. This finding supports the conceptualization of psychological capital as a composite and synergistic construct that is particularly relevant in crisis and transition contexts (Mahmood et al., 2024; Martínez et al., 2021).

The pre-return phase experienced by former Shia residents of Jemundo highlights the limitations of administrative indicators of conflict resolution. Although residents were formally declared eligible for return, their lived experiences revealed persistent fear, ambivalence, and insecurity. This confirms arguments within post-conflict and displacement studies that return is not merely a logistical or political event, but a deeply psychosocial transition requiring intentional preparation (Huang & Wang, 2021; Slåtten et al., 2023). Without attention to subjective readiness, formal repatriation processes risk reproducing vulnerability rather than resolving it.

The strengthening of hope emerged as a foundational element in residents' psychosocial preparedness. By reframing return as one stage within a longer life trajectory, residents were able to manage expectations and reduce anxiety. Hope functioned not as passive waiting, but as an active orientation toward future possibilities, involving goal setting and pathway thinking. This supports psychological literature suggesting that structured hope serves as a protective factor against stress and emotional distress in uncertain and transitional situations (Kakabaraei, 2024; Loghman et al., 2023).

Optimism and self-efficacy further contributed to restoring residents' sense of agency. Through narrative reconstruction and reflective engagement, residents shifted from perceiving themselves primarily as victims of conflict to recognizing themselves as survivors with accumulated skills and experience. Prolonged displacement often undermines individuals' perceived control over their lives, making this shift particularly significant. Strengthened optimism enabled residents to interpret past experiences more constructively, while enhanced self-efficacy increased motivation to engage in post-return economic, educational, and social planning (Rohsenow & Snell, 2023; Shengyao et al., 2024).

Resilience, as revealed in this study, should be understood as a collective and meaning-based process rather than an individual trait. Residents' ability to endure years of displacement was deeply embedded in social relationships, religious values, and shared community narratives. This finding aligns with

contemporary resilience frameworks that emphasize relational, cultural, and contextual dimensions of adaptation (Agorastos et al., 2021; Andari et al., 2023). In this sense, resilience extends beyond survival toward the ongoing negotiation of dignity, identity, and belonging in post-conflict settings.

The study underscores that psychological capital must be situated within broader structural and institutional contexts. While strengthening psychological capital enhances individuals' adaptive capacity, it cannot substitute for the state's responsibility to guarantee housing, livelihoods, and social protection. Empirical studies indicate that the positive impact of psychological capital is more sustainable when supported by enabling policies and institutions that allow individuals to translate psychological resources into concrete social outcomes (Sutton & Roemer, 2024). Therefore, sustainable post-religious conflict recovery requires an integrated approach that combines psychosocial strengthening with structural and rights-based interventions.

CONCLUSION

This community service highlights the importance of strengthening psychological capital as a contextual and strategic intervention for former Shia residents of Jemundo prior to their return to Sampang. Psychological capital is understood not merely as an individual attribute, but as a psychosocial resource that enables individuals to cope with uncertainty and post-conflict social pressures. Hope supports the development of a future-oriented perspective that is not solely defined by past trauma; optimism helps residents interpret return not only as a risk but also as an opportunity to rebuild social life; self-efficacy enhances confidence to actively engage in the reintegration process; and resilience enables adaptation amid limitations and potential social rejection. These four dimensions function synergistically, reinforcing one another in building psychosocial readiness. As such, strengthening psychological capital constitutes a crucial foundation for supporting vulnerable groups undergoing complex social transitions.

The effectiveness of psychological capital strengthening cannot be separated from broader structural conditions. Psychosocial interventions risk losing their transformative potential if they are not supported by responsive and equitable public policies, particularly in relation to housing provision, social security, and livelihood opportunities. Without such support, psychological capital may inadvertently shift into an individual burden to survive within unjust circumstances. This study also has limitations, including the short duration of the mentoring program and the absence of longitudinal post-return data, which restrict the ability to assess long-term impact. Future research and community service initiatives should therefore adopt longer-term and participatory approaches, including collaboration with local stakeholders and host communities.

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