Student Assistance in Social Activities to Increase Creativity and Independence through Free Food Program

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Abstract

This community service program aims to enhance the creativity and independence of students through social activities such as the distribution of free food to the community around the campus. Student involvement in this program is designed to provide practical experience in planning, organizing, and implementing social activities that have a positive impact. Students involved in this program not only learn about the importance of empathy and social responsibility but also develop managerial, communication, and creativity skills. Through a participatory approach, students are encouraged to identify community needs, design innovative solutions, and implement them independently. The results of this program show that students actively participating in these social activities experience significant improvements in creativity and independence. Additionally, this program successfully strengthens the relationship between students and the surrounding community, creating a beneficial synergy for both parties. These findings emphasize the importance of integrating social activities into higher education curricula as an effort to equip students with relevant skills to face future challenges. Thus, this mentoring program not only provides direct benefits to the community receiving assistance but also shapes students' character and capabilities more comprehensively.

1. Introduction

Students are agents of change with significant potential to contribute positively to society. In an effort to equip students with relevant skills and experiences, it is important to engage them in various social activities that can enhance their creativity and independence. (LaFreniere, 2024; Szlyk, 2018; Zackariasson, 2019). One form of social activity that can be implemented is a free food distribution program for the community around campus. This program not only provides direct assistance to those in need, but also provides opportunities for students to learn and develop. Through this program, students can hone their managerial, communication and teamwork skills, as well as understand more deeply the social realities that exist in the environment around them. In addition, involvement in activities like this can awaken a strong sense of empathy and social responsibility, which will be very useful for them in the future. Thus, this free food distribution program is not only beneficial for aid recipients, but also becomes an important tool in the learning process and self-development of students as future leaders. Assistance in social activities like this aims to encourage students to be more sensitive to the social problems around them, as well as hone their abilities in planning, organizing and implementing useful programs. (Lowe, 2015). Through active involvement in the free food program, students can learn about the importance of teamwork, leadership, effective communication, and creative problem-solving (Tigre et al., 2024).

In the current era of globalization and digitalization, the ability to adapt and innovate is very important (Ayanwale & Ndlovu, 2024; Bevitt, 2015; Maspul, 2024). The free food program provides a practical context for students to develop their creativity in finding innovative solutions to the challenges faced in implementing the program. Students are faced with various situations that require critical and creative thinking, such as optimizing available resources, designing effective distribution methods, and ensuring programs run in accordance with community needs. In this process, they learn to think outside the box and find new ways to overcome obstacles. Apart from that, student independence is increased through the responsibilities they carry in carrying out this program, from the planning to evaluation stages.

They are involved in every step, including identifying community needs, developing implementation strategies, coordinating with various parties, and monitoring and evaluating program results. This experience not only enriches their managerial skills, but also strengthens their self-confidence and ability to work independently. Thus, the free food program not only functions as a social effort that benefits society, but also as a comprehensive learning platform for students to develop their creativity and independence.

activity also plays a role in building closer relationships between the campus and the surrounding community, creating synergies that are beneficial for both parties. Communities receive the assistance they need, such as easier and better access to quality food, which can improve their welfare and food security. On the other hand, students gain valuable experience that not only enriches their academic knowledge, but also forms character and skills that are essential for the future (Kek & Huijser, 2011). Through direct interaction with the community, students learn to understand existing social needs and dynamics, increasing their empathy, communication skills and problem-solving skills. This experience also instills a sense of social responsibility and a strong work ethic, preparing them to become leaders who are sensitive to social issues and contribute positively to their profession in the future. Thus, this program not only creates a direct impact for beneficiaries, but also produces a young generation who is ready to face global challenges with holistic skills and attitudes.

2. Method

The community service-based research method uses an approach *Service Learning* (Ahmad & Gul, 2023; Caspersz & Olaru, 2015). In this context, students not only become participants in the free food distribution program, but also become an integral part of the process. This research will involve the following stages: First, students will be given an in-depth understanding of social issues relevant to the program through classroom learning. Second, they will be involved in program planning and implementation, including the collection and distribution of food to communities in need. Third, during this process, students will actively reflect on their experiences and relate them to the academic concepts they have learned, thereby deepening their understanding of social involvement and community responsibility. Fourth, after the program is completed, an evaluation will be carried out to evaluate its impact on student creativity and independence as well as the benefits for the community receiving assistance. Thus, the Service Learning approach in this research not only provides direct benefits to the community through a free food distribution program, but also provides opportunities for students to learn, develop, and be actively involved in social development in their environment.
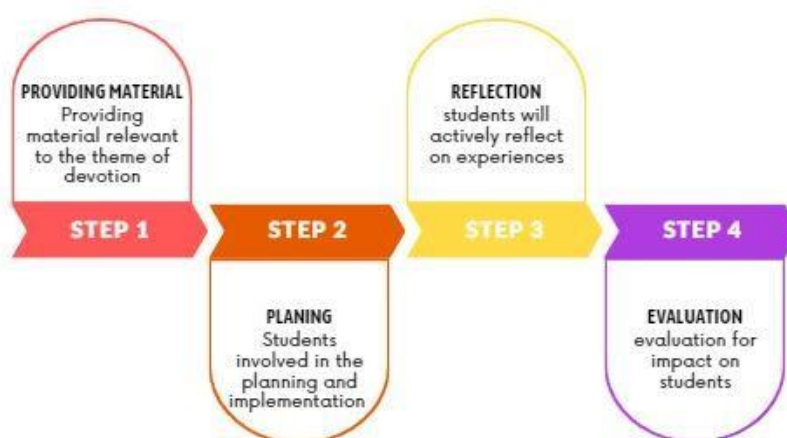
Gambar 1. Diagram Proses pelaksanaan program

3. Result and Discussion

This service activity program takes the form of providing free food to residents around the Cipta Discourse Christian campus on June 8 2024 at l. K.S Tubun No. 28A, Kebonsari, Sukun, Malang. The aim of holding the service activity program is to increase student creativity and independence through social activities, especially the free food program. This activity involves students as facilitators and main implementers in providing and distributing free food to people in need. The pictures of the activities are presented in Figure 2.

Picture 1. The atmosphere of the activity taking place

- **Student involvement participation**

A total of 50 students from various departments participated in this program, based on survey results showing high enthusiasm in participating in every activity held. The attendance and active participation rate reached 90%, reflecting the strong commitment of students to be involved in this free food distribution program. Participation from a diverse range of departments brings a rich, multidisciplinary perspective to the program, allowing for more creative approaches and innovative solutions to emerging challenges. Students from the engineering department, for example, contribute to designing efficient distribution systems, while students from the communications department help in strategies for disseminating information to the public. This diversity not only enriches the student learning experience, but also increases the overall effectiveness and impact of the program. With a high spirit of collaboration, students are able to work together and learn from each other, developing project management, leadership and teamwork skills that will be very useful in their future careers and lives.
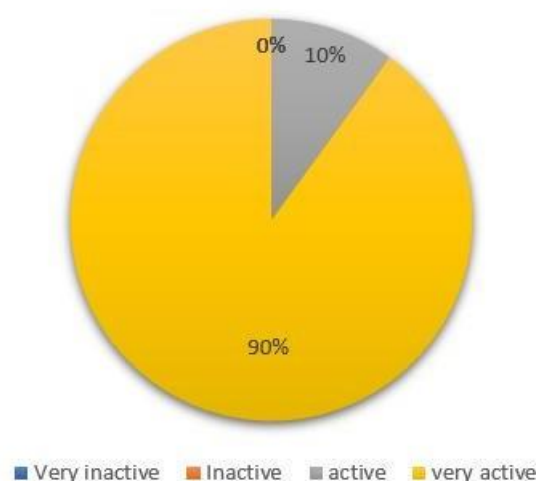
Diagram 1. Level of student attendance and active participation

- **Student Creativity:**

Social activities such as the free food program provide students with valuable opportunities to apply the theoretical knowledge they gain in class to real situations. In this process, students not only understand academic concepts in more depth, but also learn to solve problems in creative and innovative ways. Especially in the aspects of raw material procurement and logistics management, they face real challenges that require practical and efficient solutions. This experience also helps develop project management and leadership skills, as they must coordinate with various parties, ensure the availability of food ingredients, and organize distribution effectively. In this way, this program not only has a positive impact on the communities it serves, but also equips students with competencies that are invaluable for their professional future. The images related to directions to students are presented in figure 2.

Picture 2. Atmosphere of student briefing

- **Student Independence**

This program provides students with hands-on experience in managing social projects, covering the entire project management cycle from planning, organizing, to reporting. In the planning stage, students learn to design strategies and set clear goals. In the organizing phase, they are involved in team coordination, allocating resources, and scheduling activities. Meanwhile, at the reporting stage, students learn the importance of performance evaluation and documentation of results. The documentation related to planning is presented in Figure 3.

Picture 3. Planning atmosphere accompanied by the service team

Based on a survey conducted after the program was completed, as many as 85% of students reported that they felt more independent and confident in making decisions and carrying out responsibilities. This survey also revealed that many students experienced improvements in their time management skills, communication skills, and ability to work in teams. This experience not only strengthens their self-confidence but also enriches the practical skills essential for success in careers and everyday life. Apart from that, this program also helps students understand the importance of social contributions and the positive impact they can have on society. The survey and student independence are presented in diagram 2.
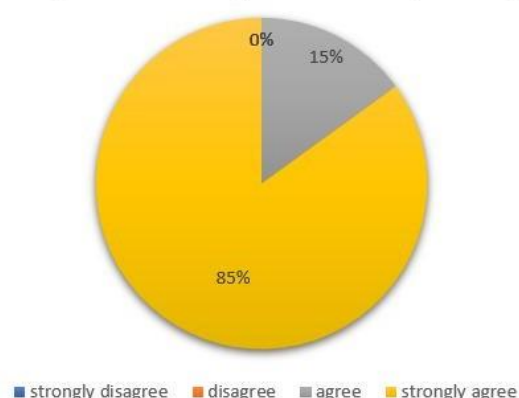

Diagram 2. Survey of students' level of independence and responsibility

Furthermore, direct interaction with the community allows students to better understand the social and economic conditions that exist in their surrounding environment. This experience provides deeper insight into the challenges faced by local communities, such as poverty, access to education and health. This understanding not only fosters empathy and

social awareness among students, but also strengthens relationships between educational institutions and local communities, creating mutually beneficial bonds. Through this program, students not only gain practical knowledge, but also develop various valuable soft skills. For example, their communication skills are honed through interactions with various individuals and community groups. They learn how to convey ideas effectively, listen attentively, and negotiate with different parties. In addition, their teamwork skills are strengthened because they have to work together in a team to achieve a common goal. Time management is also an important skill to hone, because students have to manage various tasks and responsibilities within specified time limits. Adaptability also develops, considering that they often have to face unexpected situations and find quick and effective solutions. In this context, the soft skills obtained are very valuable and necessary in the world of work and everyday life. The ability to communicate well, work in a team, manage time efficiently, and adapt to change are key skills sought by employers across a variety of industries. Apart from that, these skills also help students become more competent and confident individuals in facing various life challenges. In this way, this program not only provides short-term benefits for students and the community, but also has a long-term positive impact on their personal and professional development.

Based on the evaluation carried out after the program was implemented, several problems were found that needed to be addressed to increase the effectiveness of the program in the future. One of the main problems identified was limited funding. To overcome this, you can search for sponsors or raise funds by involving more parties, such as companies, alumni and the general public. Fundraising activities can take the form of charity events, fairs, or online donation campaigns that can attract wider attention and participation. Apart from that, coordination problems are also a major concern. To overcome this problem, special training is needed for the teams involved in the program. This training should cover important aspects such as clear division of tasks, time management, and effective communication strategies. The use of technology is also very important to facilitate communication and project management. Project management platforms, instant messaging applications, and online collaboration tools can be used to ensure information is delivered quickly and tasks can be managed efficiently. By implementing these solutions, it is hoped that future programs can run more smoothly, effectively and achieve the desired goals. Additionally, improvements in fund management and coordination will increase the program's sustainability and positive impact on students and local communities.

4. Conclusion

Student assistance program in social activities through the free food program has proven to be effective in increasing student creativity and independence. This activity is not only beneficial for students' self-development but also has a positive impact on society. With several improvements and greater support, this program has the potential to develop and provide even wider benefits. By implementing these solutions, it is hoped that future programs can run more smoothly, effectively and achieve the desired goals. Additionally, improvements in fund management and coordination will increase the program's sustainability and positive impact on students and local communities.

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