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Deferred Conscientization: A Sociology of Education Perspective on Elderly Empowerment

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Abstract: *The empowerment of the elderly in Indonesia is generally analyzed using the perspectives of health, welfare, and institutional role, but very few studies analyze the education aspect of it. In this paper, the Elderly-Friendly Village Program conducted by Rumah Zakat in Cangkol Village, Sukoharjo will be interpreted as non-formal education through the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire. This research employed a qualitative case study method and the data collection was conducted through semistructured interviews to two staff and four elderly people. According to the results, the program has increased the participation of the elderly; however, the pedagogy has been banking: the curriculum was based on institutional standards, actions were initiated by the facilitator, participation was mobilized via attractive activities, and agreement was reached via silence. The elderly have been perceiving their participation in relation to health, togetherness, and worshipping without challenging their living circumstances. The idea of deferred conscientization" is introduced in the article to justify increased participation in spite of lack of critical consciousness development. Such deferral takes place due to a combination of three factors: charitable organizational logic, Javanese tradition of manut (deference) and the meaning of religion, not because of any deficiency of the elderly. Increasing dialogue and agency indicate that conscientization can take place if there is room in the institution for the elderly to set the agenda.*

Keywords: *conscientization, sociology of education, elderly empowerment, Islamic philanthropy, nonformal education*

Abstrak: *Pemberdayaan lansia di Indonesia umumnya dikaji dari sisi kesehatan, kesejahteraan, dan peran lembaga, sementara dimensi pendidikannya jarang dianalisis secara kritis. Artikel ini membaca program Desa Ramah Lansia yang dijalankan Rumah Zakat di Desa Cangkol, Kabupaten Sukoharjo, sebagai praktik pendidikan nonformal melalui lensa pedagogi kritis Paulo Freire. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan dua pengelola program dan empat lansia peserta, observasi, serta dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa program berhasil meningkatkan partisipasi lansia, tetapi praktik pendidikannya bercorak gaya bank: kurikulum diturunkan dari standar lembaga, inisiatif datang dari fasilitator, partisipasi dimobilisasi melalui daya tarik kegiatan, dan kesepakatan dibentuk melalui diam. Lansia memaknai keikutsertaannya dalam kerangka kesehatan, kebersamaan, dan ibadah tanpa mempersoalkan kondisi struktural hidupnya. Artikel ini menawarkan konsep konsientisasi yang tertunda untuk menjelaskan meningkatnya partisipasi tanpa tumbuhnya kesadaran kritis. Penundaan tersebut dihasilkan oleh pertemuan logika karitas lembaga filantropi, budaya manut, dan pemaknaan religius, bukan oleh kekurangan lansia. Benih dialog dan agensi yang ditemukan menunjukkan bahwa konsientisasi masih mungkin tumbuh apabila lembaga membuka ruang bagi lansia untuk merumuskan sendiri persoalan dan prioritas program.*

Kata Kunci: *konsientisasi, sosiologi pendidikan, pemberdayaan lansia, filantropi Islam, pendidikan nonformal*

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1. Introduction

Indonesia has reached a stage of demographic aging. The 2025 Intercensal Population Survey shows that people aged 60 and over now make up 11.97 percent of the population, exceeding the 10 percent threshold that marks an ageing population structure (BPS, 2026). This is such change in demographics requires a new approach towards aging individuals, one that views the elderly as more than just a needy group that needs to be catered to, but also as active citizens capable of learning and thinking for themselves.

In practice, elderly empowerment programs at the village level rely mainly on health services such as the integrated elderly health post (*posyandu lansia*), so that programs tend to be charitable rather than empowering. The gaps in the social, economic, and educational domains have increasingly been filled by non-state actors, including Islamic philanthropic institutions. Zakat agencies such as Rumah Zakat and Dompet Dhuafa no longer only distribute aid; they also run community-based empowerment programs (Irham, 2020; Latief, 2016). One of these is the Elderly-Friendly Village (*Desa Ramah Lansia*) program within Rumah Zakat's Empowered Village (*Desa Berdaya*) scheme, which combines religious instruction, skills training, health activities, productive enterprises, and environmental management.

Studies of elderly empowerment in Indonesia have so far been dominated by three lenses. The first is health and nursing, which measures success in terms of quality of life and self-efficacy (Hutagalung *et al*., 2020). The second is family welfare and program effectiveness, as in studies of the Elderly Family Development program (Haris *et al*., 2023) and the Resilient Elderly School (Dhuhita & Hadi, 2025). The third is management and institutional roles, including studies of zakat agencies that generally assess programs affirmatively in terms of economic outcomes (Dinan & Muhtadi, 2022; Putra *et al*., 2026). Even studies that frame elderly programs as nonformal education tend to adopt managerial or andragogical approaches (Irmawita, 2018). Within these frameworks, older people appear as beneficiaries, patients, or entrepreneurs, but rarely as learning subjects whose consciousness is at stake.

Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy offers a different lens. Freire (2005) distinguishes banking education, which treats learners as containers to be filled with knowledge, from problem-posing education, which is grounded in dialogue and aims to foster critical consciousness (*conscientization*). In Indonesia, no research has yet been found that applies this framework to older people, although it has been used to examine nonformal education for low-income communities (Sanjaya, 2025). Internationally, the tradition of *critical educational gerontology* has long drawn on Freire for elderly education (Findsen, 2002; Formosa, 2011). However, its empirical studies are largely set in Europe and in universities of the third age, not in village-based empowerment programs run by religious institutions (H. Hachem & Westberg, 2023).

Meanwhile, critical studies of Islamic philanthropy have highlighted the tension between the logic of charity and that of empowerment. Latief (2016) asks whether Muslim philanthropy shapes aid recipients as rights-bearing citizens or as clients in new patron-client relations. Abidin (2012) finds that Rumah Zakat's empowerment practices remain mixed with charitable approaches and carry unintended latent functions. These studies have not addressed the educational dimension and have not focused on older people. A previous study of the same case examined the Elderly-Friendly Village program through Ife and Tesoriero's role theory and concluded that Rumah Zakat successfully performed facilitative, educational, representative, and technical roles (Rahmawati,

2026). The question of what kind of education lies behind this success, and what it means for the consciousness of older people, remains open.

To address this question, this article draws on two of Freire's concepts. The first is the distinction between banking and problem-posing education. In banking education, the teacher talks and the learners listen; the teacher chooses the content and the learners adapt, so that learners grow used to accepting the world as it is. Problem-posing education, by contrast, takes learners' life experiences as material for dialogue, so that teachers and learners alike learn to read the world and change it through praxis, that is, reflection combined with action (Freire, 2005b).

The second concept is levels of consciousness. Freire, (2005a) distinguishes magical consciousness (*semi-intransitive*), which sees living conditions as fate; naive consciousness (*naive transitivity*), which begins to recognize problems but attributes their causes to individuals; and critical consciousness (*critical transitivity*), which connects personal experience to social structures. Freire also warns that assistance which does not change power relations, what he calls false generosity, can perpetuate dependency, and that in societies long silenced, silence (*culture of silence*) becomes a habit that appears natural (Freire, 2005b).

When talking about education field about the elderly, one can mention that according to Moody (1976), the most prevalent approach is the social service approach because in this case education is viewed as the means for leisure-time activity, and the elderly are considered to have withdrawn from society. This critique became one of the starting points of *critical educational gerontology*, which was later developed through a Freirean framework. Findsen (2002) argues that elderly education should start from older people's material conditions, treat them as partners, and encourage collective action, while Formosa (2011) stresses that its ultimate aim is to empower older people to confront and change oppressive structures. This tradition resonates with critiques of the active ageing discourse. Katz (2000) shows that the demand that older people always stay active can work as a way of managing their everyday lives, Coleman, (2013) notes that productivity-centred definitions of active ageing tend to marginalize the more vulnerable, and Ranzijn (2010) asks whether the discourse has become a new way of oppressing marginalized elders. Active older people are not necessarily empowered ones.

Yet *critical educational gerontology* has itself been criticized. Hachem & Westberg (2023) Found that older learners who seemed reluctant to act were in fact able to read their social reality, and that their reluctance stemmed from structural constraints rather than naive consciousness. H.-H. Hachem et al., (2025) further question the assumption that older people hold a naive consciousness and the reliance on an enlightened teacher. This critique matters for the present article: deferred conscientization is not read as a deficit of older people, but as the outcome of how the program is designed and of the cultural and institutional context in which older people live.

To assess the quality of participation, this article uses Arnstein (1969) ladder of participation, which distinguishes nonparticipation, tokenism (informing, consultation, and placation), and citizen control. Cornwall (2008) adds that participation should be unpacked by asking who participates, in what, and for whose benefit. The Javanese cultural context adds another layer. Geertz (1973) describes how Javanese children are socialized to show *hormat* (respect) and to feel *wedi* (fear), *isin* (shame), and *sungkan* (reluctance) before those of higher status. Magnis-Suseno (1984), meanwhile, identifies the principles of harmony and respect as the two basic rules of Javanese ethics. Recent work links the culture of *ewuh pakewuh* (deferential unease) to low

assertiveness (Bangun et al., 2025). At the same time, religious activities such as Qur'anic study groups bring spiritual, social, and psychological benefits to older people in Solo (Sulandari et al., 2017), and religious meaning is associated with life satisfaction in late life (Krause, 2003).

Building on this discussion, this article reads elderly empowerment by an Islamic philanthropic institution as a nonformal education practice on three levels, namely pedagogical character (banking or problem-posing), level of consciousness (how older people explain their participation and living conditions), and context (the institutional, cultural, and religious logics that shape the first two levels). Three questions are posed: (1) what is the character of education in Rumah Zakat's Elderly-Friendly Village program in Cangkol Village; (2) how do older people make sense of their participation and living conditions; and (3) what factors foster or hold back the growth of critical consciousness. The article argues that the program succeeded in increasing participation but deferred conscientization. The deferral is not due to any deficiency in the older people, but the result of the alignment of the charity institution logic, the culture of *manut (deference)* and religious meaning making. The value of the work is the introduction of the notion of *deferred conscientization* as an analytical instrument for sociology of education philanthropic empowerment research.

2. Methods

In this research, the qualitative method along with a case study strategy was used. The case selected is the Elderly-Friendly Village project which has been implemented by Rumah Zakat in Cangkol Village, Mojolaban Sub-district, Sukoharjo Regency. This program was selected since it focuses on elders, and it has been conducted for almost four to five years, so that relationships between the facilitator and the elderly have been developed. Case studies enable scholars to examine how educational processes evolve in practical settings where the distinctions between the phenomenon and context are not distinct (Yin, 2021).

The data was obtained between April and May 2026 through interviews, observations, and documentation of activities. Informants were selected purposively based on their understanding of and active involvement in the program. They consisted of two program staff and four elderly participants, one of whom also served as a cadre. Interviews with the program facilitator (DA) were conducted in two sessions on 17 April 2026, interviews with the four elderly informants on 21 April 2026, and the interview with the program leader (GC) on 7 May 2026. Informants' identities are anonymized using initials, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Research Informants

Initials	Role in the Program	Sex	Age (years)	Interview Date
GC	Program Leader, Rumah Zakat Solo	Male	45	7 May 2026
DA	PIC (facilitator), Cangkol Village Program	Female	36	17 April 2026 (two sessions)
SD	Elderly participant, cadre, neighbourhood (RW) head	Female	60	21 April 2026

Initials	Role in the Program	Sex	Age (years)	Interview Date
D	Elderly participant (goat-farming mentoring)	Male	71	21 April 2026
TP	Elderly participant	Female	62	21 April 2026
SY	Elderly participant (cloth painter)	Female	64	21 April 2026

Source: Primary data processed by the authors (2026)

This article is a secondary qualitative analysis of data previously analyzed through Ife and Tesoriero's role theory (Rahmawati, 2026). The reanalysis uses different questions and a different framework, namely Freire's critical pedagogy, so that its findings and arguments do not overlap with the earlier work. Interview transcripts in Javanese (a mix of *ngoko* and *krama* registers) were translated by the authors; quotations are presented in the original language, followed by an English translation and the date of the interview.

The data were analyzed thematically, following Braun & Clarke (2006) Braun and Clarke (2006), using a combination of deductive and inductive coding. Deductive codes were derived from Freire's concepts: (1) indicators of banking education, such as initiatives coming from the facilitator, compulsory participation, and one-way communication, (2) indicators of problem-posing education, such as dialogue, deliberation, and initiatives from older people, and (3) markers of levels of consciousness, read from the ways older people explained their reasons for participating and their living conditions. Inductive codes emerged from the data, such as the attitude of *manut* and religious meaning-making. Trustworthiness was checked through source triangulation, comparing staff accounts with those of the elderly, and through method triangulation across interviews, observation, and program documents.

3. Results and Discussion

The Elderly-Friendly Village program in Cangkol Village functions as a nonformal education space covering four domains, namely education, health, economy, and environment. The education domain consists of the Qur'an House (learning to read the Qur'an, ablution, and prayer) and the Skills School (training in powdered herbal drinks, aloe vera products, Brazilian spinach chips, eco-bricks, and therapeutic massage), while the other domains include exercise sessions, health checks, nutrition gardens, a waste bank, and livestock mentoring. Participation grew from about 15 people at the start of the program to 85 beneficiaries, with 62–65 attending regularly each month.

3.1. The Pedagogical Character of the Program

Educational practice in the Elderly-Friendly Village program follows the banking pattern described by Freire (2005b). The substance of activities is largely determined by the institution in line with established standard operating procedures. The space for participation by cadres and older people is limited to technical aspects of implementation, such as scheduling and the duration of activities. Within the case, it is the older individuals who serve as beneficiaries of an intervention program that has been developed in advance, and not those who contribute to the formation of the

curriculum. The facilitator confirmed this, explaining that program design follows head-office standards.

> "Dirancang kan kita manut dari SOP pusat." [We design it by following the head-office SOP.] (Interview with DA, 17 April 2026)

Similarly, this same notion was confirmed directly through interviews with older participants of the programs. One explained that ideas for activities come from the facilitator who intervenes in the program, and that participants simply follow decisions about activities that have already been designed.

> "Mboten, langsung Mbak (fasilitator) nggawe ide langsung kompak og ngoten mawon." [No, the facilitator just came up with the idea, and everyone simply went along with it.] (Interview with D, 71 years old, 21 April 2026)

These interview excerpts confirm that the program is planned through a top-down mechanism of intervention. Deliberation takes place, but it is limited to technical matters. This mode of implementation has not yet opened space for older people to formulate their learning needs on the basis of their own life experiences.

Program participation is achieved through participation strategies that focus on attendance rather than discussion. For the elderly population as participants and recipients of the services, attendance is a must-do task. Strategies to encourage participation include the use of different ways to make the program attractive, like video screenings, door prizes, and meals together. These strategies have succeeded in increasing participation, but they remain directed at involvement in activities rather than at developing space for reflection on the problems older people face in their daily lives.

An individual revealed that there was an obligation for elderly persons to participate in the activities.

> "Memang diharuskan ikut Mbak semua lansia." [All the elderly are indeed required to take part.] (Interview with SD, 21 April 2026)

In the meantime, the facilitator informed everyone that audiovisual media serves as a means of attracting elderly members.

> "Cukup dibuatke video, mereka nonton itu mereka akan jadi ikut." [A video is enough; once they watch it, they will join.] (Interview with DA, 17 April 2026)

In decision-making, participants' consent is understood mostly through the absence of objection rather than through explicit signs of agreement. Silence by the participants is considered to be an approval of the activities planne.

> "Selama dua hari itu nggak ada yang komen berarti mereka setuju." [If no one comments within two days, it means they agree.] (Interview with DA, 17 April 2026)

From the outcome, it can be concluded that participation is achieved through attendance and the creation of consensus. Even though this process has been successful in terms of keeping up participation, this process lacks any kind of constructive dialogue through which the elderly people can voice their demands or objections regarding the program.

Knowledge within the program is transferred primarily through the giving of advice instead of constructive discussion. Older people receive material prepared by the facilitator, while

corrections of religious practice are made persuasively so as not to cause embarrassment. The following phrase was used to describe such matters; "ngajari sing sae," meaning teaching something that is good so that the process of learning is similar to the exchange of values between educator and learner.

> "Ngajari sing sae." [Teaching what is good.]
> (Interview with SY, 21 April 2026)

The educational character is inseparable from the logic of the institution behind the program. In determining who are the beneficiaries, Rumah Zakat utilizes the asnaf classification of zakat beneficiaries, thus placing the older individuals as *lansia dhuafa*, or poor elderly. In this system, success of the program is defined through institutional criteria like that of raising the participants above the poverty line instead of letting the participant take charge of the process of learning. According to the facilitator, mentoring is regarded as an aspect of program management.

> "Saat kita kelola seperti perusahaan." [When we manage it like a company.]
> (Interview with DA, 17 April 2026)

Since, The orientation towards the institution that the negotiation space between the facilitator and the participants, it becomes narrow when the proposal fails to meet the requirements of the funding agency.

> "Ngapunten mboten iso, soale danane dari sini." [Sorry, we can't, because the funds come from here.]
> (Interview with DA, 17 April 2026)

Both excerpts demonstrate that there is room for participation within the constraints of the organization for the participants. Older people can join and enjoy the program, but they have limited room to influence the content and direction of activities.

3.2. Elderly Consciousness and Silent Voices

When space for questions is opened, older people tend to leave decisions to the facilitator. The voices that do emerge come from those categorized as dominant, and even these are steered, particularly on budgetary matters. The facilitator described this situation when asking participants to choose a destination for an outing.

> "Mbah sesok arep rencana piknik enake piknik endi ya, mbah? … terus mereka *mboh mbak, manut*." [Grandma, where would you like to go for the trip tomorrow? … and they answer: I don't know, Miss, I'll just follow.]
> (Interview with DA, 17 April 2026)

This response shows that the tendency toward *manut* appears not merely as a personal attitude but also as a pattern of interaction in decision-making. Opportunities to express opinions exist, but they are not used as a space for formulating shared needs.

Meanings associated with the involvement of older adults are more connected to individual advantages rather than reflective consideration of social contexts. Health, companionship, recreation, and worship are the primary motives behind the participation in programs. One participant noted that he participates in the program to remain healthy in old age, and another one believes that she has an opportunity to do more good deeds and be useful for her family.

> "Ngge njogo kesehatan wong tua." [To keep old people healthy.]
> (Interview with D, 21 April 2026)

"Buat ibadah neng akherat." [For worship, for the hereafter.]
(Interview with SD, 21 April 2026)

Such an approach is confirmed by the role of the facilitator, who sees the actions of the elderly as a combination of mundane issues and readiness for dying. In the interviews conducted, none of the informants associated their experience with any structural issues like poor payment, social protection issues, or economic insecurities at old age. Some of the informants were even not sure about the institution conducting the program.

The case of SD is one example of how structural issues are solved on an individual basis. After being fired from her factory job, she learned how to paint *lurik* fabric from her neighbor and now earns a piece rate salary from a businessman who lives outside the village.

"Ini saya cuma kerja, bukan bathi tapi upah." [I just work; it's not profit but wages.]
(Interview with SD, 21 April 2026)

TP and SY work under the same arrangement, yet wage labour in old age has never been raised as an issue in the program, nor has it become a topic of discussion or shared reflection in empowerment activities. Individual experiences do surface, but they have not developed into a collective awareness of the problems older people face as a social group.

Nevertheless, this study found spaces that show potential for constructive dialogue. Duck farming mentoring can be taken as an example where the process of learning begins with issues that exist in the community, such as feeding cost. In this case, the facilitator and the elders came up with solutions that could be obtained locally. Participants' initiative appeared when they applied for business capital, chose the type of work they would pursue, and managed the group's cash fund openly through a WhatsApp group. The facilitator herself expressed awareness of the importance of reducing dependency.

"Mengatur tapi jangan dia yang tampil." [Managing, but she should not be the one in the spotlight.]
(Interview with DA, 17 April 2026)

These findings show that educational practice in the program is not entirely one-directional. Behind the dominance of a banking approach lie spaces for dialogue that start from participants' concrete experiences. These spaces form the basis for the following discussion of conscientization, namely a condition in which participation has grown but critical consciousness has not yet fully developed.

3.3. Deferred Conscientization

The findings show that participation and conscientization move in different directions. In terms of participation, the program has succeeded: participants increased from 15 to 85 and some technical matters are already managed by cadres. Yet, read through Arnstein's (1969) ladder, older people's participation sits on the rungs of informing and consultation, that is, tokenism(Arnstein, 1969). Following Cornwall (2008), older people participate in activities that have already been designed, while the agenda is set by institutional standards. This pattern is close to Moody's (1976) social services model, which positions education as a way to fill time and sustain morale rather than as a means of changing older people's social position(Moody, 1976). This article calls this condition *deferred conscientization*. The results of the analysis of the factors that hold back and open up conscientization are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Analytical Matrix of Deferred Conscientization

Dimension	Key Findings	Theoretical Reading	Effect on Conscientization
Participation	Participants grew from 15 to 85; older people are informed and consulted on technical matters.	Tokenism (Arnstein, 1969); who sets the agenda (Cornwall, 2008); social services model (Moody, 1976).	Participation rises but does not touch program content and direction
Charitable institutional logic	Older people positioned as "poor elderly" (*asnaf*); curriculum from central SOP; poverty-line target; funding limits choices.	Banking education and false generosity (Freire, 2005b); mixed charity & empowerment (Abidin, 2012); citizens or clients (Latief, 2016).	**Holds back:** older people become recipients, not agenda-setters
***Manut* culture**	Older people defer decisions ("*mboh mbak, manut*"); silence taken as consent.	*Culture of silence* (Freire, 2005b); respect and harmony (C. Geertz, 1973); Magnis-Suseno, (1984); *ewuh pakewuh* (Bangun et al., 2025); silence as structural response (H. Hachem & Westberg, 2023).	**Holds back:** older people's voices do not become material for dialogue
Religious meaning-making	Participation understood as worship and preparation for the hereafter; time divided into worldly and otherworldly affairs.	Religious meaning supports late-life well-being (Krause, 2003; Sulandari et al., 2017).	**Holds back:** gives meaning without a language for questioning structures
Productive-ageing discourse	Cloth painting is piece-rate wage work; layoffs answered with individual solutions.	Critique of active ageing (Boudiny, 2013; Fuchs, 2012).	**Holds back:** busyness and productivity replace reflection
Openings for dialogue and agency	Problem-based duck-farming mentoring; older people request capital; open cash reporting; facilitator as "referee".	Education starting from material conditions (Findsen, 2002); risk of dependence on the educator (H.-H. Hachem et al., 2025; H. Hachem & Westberg, 2023)	**Opens up:** a basis for problem-posing education

Source: Authors' analysis (2026)

The logic of institutional charity: the *asnaf* categories, a curriculum set by central standards, the poverty-line target, and funding constraints position older people as recipients rather than agenda-setters. This finding supports Abidin, (2012)Abidin's (2012) observation that charitable approaches remain mixed into Rumah Zakat's empowerment work, as well as Latief's (2016) question of whether Muslim philanthropy forms citizens or clients. In Freire, (2005b) terms, assistance that does not open space for recipients to name their own world risks becoming false generosity, however sincere the giver's intentions. The facilitator in Cangkol works with empathy; the problem lies in institutional design, not in individuals. Success measures that emphasize productivity also reflect the active ageing discourse, which, as Katz (2000) and Boudiny (2013) caution, can keep older people busy and useful without touching structural barriers, as seen in piece-rate cloth painting.

The logic of *manut* culture: the easy interpretation of the answer manut suggests naive in consciousness. This article rejects that reading. Following H. Hachem and Westberg (2023), older

people's silence is better understood as a reasonable response to their social position. In Javanese ethics, maintaining harmony and showing respect are core rules (H. Geertz, 1973; Magnis-Suseno, 1984). The culture of *Ewuh Pakewuh* discourages the expression of criticism (Bangun et al., 2025). In case the requester comes from an aid-providing institution, the hierarchy gets further complicated by the patron-client dynamics of philanthropy (Latief, 2016). *Manut* is therefore a local version of the *culture of silence* described by Freire, meaning not an incapacity to think but a form of adapting oneself to inequality. The process of legitimizing consent through silence reinforces such a state of silence.

The logic of religious meaning-making: religious education provides elderly people with meaning, tranquility, and fellowship in accordance with the research conducted by Krause (2003) and Sulandari et al., (2017). Religiosity is not considered to be an impediment in this particular article. The problem lies in the way religious meaning is constructed in the context of the program, where life is compartmentalized into this-worldly activities, that is, being productive and beyond-life activities, that is, preparing for death. SD's response to being laid off with an individual solution displays the pattern Freire calls naive consciousness, yet this pattern is shaped by structural constraints and by the program's framing, not by any deficit among older people.

These three logics converge at one point, so that each provides older people with a reasonable rationale for accepting the program as it is. Charity makes them feel helped, *manut* makes them reluctant to ask, and religious meaning makes them feel content. Even so, the term deferred is chosen because openings for dialogue already exist. Duck-farming mentoring that starts from real problems is in line with Findsen (2002) principle that elderly education should start from older people's material conditions. The way forward does not lie in a more enlightened facilitator, because emancipation that depends on the educator reproduces the very hierarchy it seeks to dismantle (H.-H. Hachem et al., 2025). Conscientization is more likely to grow if the institution opens space for older people to choose the topics to be discussed, such as experiences of being laid off or the wages for cloth painting, and to examine them as shared concerns.

These findings make three contributions. First, this article extends Freire's critical pedagogy to older people and to religious philanthropic actors in rural settings, beyond the European and third-age university contexts that dominate *critical educational gerontology*. Second, it proposes the concept of *deferred conscientization*, a condition in which participation in nonformal education programs increases without the growth of critical consciousness, because institutional design and the cultural-religious context provide reasonable grounds for accepting things as they are. Third, by reading *manut* as a response to social position rather than naive consciousness, the article responds to H. Hachem & Westberg (2023)critique of the assumption of naive consciousness in the Freirean tradition.

4. Conclusion

Rumah Zakat's elderly empowerment program in Cangkol Village has succeeded as a participation program but not yet as a process of conscientization. The program functions as a nonformal education space that expands older people's skills, religious literacy, health, and social networks, but its educational practice still follows a banking pattern. The concept of *deferred conscientization* explains this condition: older people's participation increases without the growth of critical consciousness because of the convergence of the charitable logic of philanthropic

institutions, which positions older people as recipients; the culture of *manut*, which turns silence into a form of respect; and religious meaning-making, which gives meaning to life without challenging structures. *Deferred's* term has been applied in this case to mean that the elements of dialogue and agency are already present in the form of mentoring on problems, initiatives by the elderly, and facilitator's understanding of dependency issues.

It is ensured that within the practice, philanthropic organizations could move away from being providers of activities and become facilitators of conversation through creating spaces where the elderly articulate their issues and programming concerns, thereby moving from tacit agreement to open conversation and discussing themes that have to do with the structure of old people, like security for the elderly and wage work. Indeed, these findings extend the ideas of Freire's critical pedagogy to elderly people and religious philanthropists.

There are certain limitations in this research. First of all, the data was collected through re-analysis of the interviews, which were initially aimed at investigation of the institutional roles; thus, the questions concerning how older people interpret their living conditions have not been discussed in this study in detail. Also, there is only a small number of elderly participants who were interviewed – only four persons from one village.

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