

Effectiveness of Social Assistance Distribution in Reducing Poverty in Gunung Seteleng Village, North Penajam Paser Regency

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Abstract. *This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of social assistance distribution in reducing poverty, identify factors that influence the effectiveness of distribution, and evaluate the implementation of social assistance programs so that they are more targeted and have a long-term impact on the poor in Gunung Seteleng Village. The method used is a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Informants in this study consisted of the Village Head, RT Head, and the community receiving social assistance. Data were analyzed inductively by emphasizing the meaning and deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The results of the study indicate that the distribution of social assistance in Gunung Seteleng Village has not been effective in significantly reducing poverty. The assistance received is temporary and does not touch the root of the poverty problem. The main inhibiting factors include inaccurate targeting, weak coordination between institutions, lack of data accuracy, and minimal empowerment and supervision programs. Integration between social assistance and economic empowerment programs is needed so that poverty reduction goals can be achieved sustainably.*

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's population growth shows a continuing upward trend, although the rate of growth tends to slow (Liu, Y., & Yamauchi, 2014; McDonald, 2014; Van, 2002). According to 2024 data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), Indonesia's population was recorded at 270,203.9 in 2020, then increased to 272,682.5 in 2021. This growth trend continues, with the population reaching 275,773.8 in 2022, 278,696.2 in 2023, and projected to reach 281,603.8 in 2024. This data indicates that Indonesia's population is increasing by approximately 2 to 3 million people annually. While this figure is substantial, the annual population growth rate has slowed slightly compared to the previous decade, in line with various population control policies implemented by the government (Robinson, 1969).

As population growth continues to increase, poverty in Indonesia remains a crucial issue that requires serious attention. Poverty is a complex and multidimensional social problem (Zulkifli, F., & Abidin, 2023; Firdausy & Budisetyowati, 2022; Hill, 2021). Poverty is not only related to low income, but also reflects limited access to basic needs such as education, healthcare, and decent work. Poverty can create a lifelong cycle that is difficult to break, with subsequent

generations likely to experience the same conditions without effective intervention from various parties, including the government and the community (Moore, 2005; Harper et al., 2003). Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2024 shows that the number of poor people in Indonesia has fluctuated in recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the poverty rate from 26.42 million people (9.78%) in March 2020 to 27.54 million people (10.14%) in March 2021. However, with economic recovery and various social assistance programs, the poverty rate began to decline to 26.16 million people (9.54%) in March 2022 and 25.90 million people (9.36%) in March 2023. Despite this decline, social and economic inequality remains a barrier to poverty alleviation efforts. McCally et al. (1998) said that, Unequal access to education, employment, and healthcare exacerbates the plight of the poor, limiting employment opportunities and increasing disease rates and lower life expectancy. In addition to economic factors, limited skills, a lack of information, and uneven development policies also hamper efforts to improve welfare.

Globally, poverty alleviation is a key target of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In Indonesia, the government has implemented various programs, such as social assistance and economic empowerment, to improve the lives of the poor (Septian & Wulandari, 2024; Djulius et al., 2022). These social assistance programs include the Family Hope Program (PKH) for poor families with school children, pregnant women, and people with disabilities, Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT) to meet food needs, and Direct Cash Assistance (BLT) provided under certain economic circumstances. The implementation of these social assistance programs is regulated by various regulations, such as Law Number 13 of 2011 and Presidential Regulation Number 63 of 2017. However, challenges remain in data collection and aid distribution that must be addressed for these programs to be truly effective in reducing poverty.

One of the areas targeted by the social assistance program is Gunung Seteleng Village in North Penajam Paser Regency, which continues to face poverty issues. As part of a developing region, this village faces challenges in improving the welfare of its residents, especially those categorized as poor and vulnerable. Social assistance programs in this region are a crucial instrument in supporting the community's basic needs and boosting the economic well-being of beneficiary families (Gassman-Pines & Hill, 2013; Shahidi et al., 2019; Braun et al., 2002). However, the program's effectiveness depends heavily on accurate targeting, transparent distribution mechanisms, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Poverty in Gunung Seteleng Village is influenced by low incomes, limited access to education and healthcare, and a lack of employment opportunities. Many residents rely on the informal sector, which offers uncertain incomes. Population data recorded 531 unemployed individuals, 1,291 housewives, and 248 casual laborers. High unemployment and precarious employment rates are key factors maintaining poverty levels. Furthermore, economic dependence within households is increasing, especially for housewives without their own income, who are even more vulnerable if their husbands also have jobs with unstable incomes (Greenstein, 2000).

Furthermore, the large number of casual laborers indicates that a large portion of the population still relies on jobs that lack guaranteed income. This uncertainty makes them more vulnerable to economic risks, such as rising prices of staple foods and limited access to basic services.

Based on data from the poverty rate report in Gunung Seteleng Village, the number of poor people has increased. In 2024, 741 people were classified as poor, while number increased to 1,185. This increase indicates that poverty remains a serious challenge, despite the regular distribution of social assistance. Of the total population of 6,853, 444 people are categorized as vulnerable to poverty, while 526 people received social assistance.

However, there are discrepancies in the data collection of aid recipients. The Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS) only covers 400 people, while the number of social assistance recipients is much higher, at 526. This is partly due to the rice aid distribution scheme, which

provided assistance to 313 people without requiring DTKS data. Thus, 187 people are registered in the DTKS but have not yet received social assistance benefits. This situation indicates that there are still poor people who should receive assistance but have not been properly accommodated.

Furthermore, there are vulnerable groups requiring special attention, such as 331 elderly people, 30 orphans, 16 toddlers with malnutrition, and 43 children with stunting (Data on poverty risk in Gunung Seteleng Village). This situation indicates that poverty is not only related to economic limitations but also impacts health and social welfare. Therefore, the effectiveness of social assistance in reducing poverty and improving the quality of life of the community needs to be continuously evaluated and improved to ensure it reaches all vulnerable groups in need.

To reduce poverty, the government has distributed various social assistance programs in Gunung Seteleng Village. According to the latest data, 110 people received the Family Hope Program (PKH), 313 people received Rice Assistance, 50 people received assistance from Baznas, 27 people received Direct Cash Assistance (BLT), and 26 people received assistance through the P3KE Program. Overall, the number of social assistance recipients in Gunung Seteleng Village has reached 526.

This social assistance aims to provide social protection while improving community welfare (Valkov, 2021; Yi, 2010). The PKH program focuses on supporting poor families with vulnerable members, such as school children, pregnant women, and people with disabilities. Rice Assistance and BLT aim to help meet the food needs of the poor by providing assistance in the form of food and cash. Meanwhile, assistance from Baznas and P3KE supports the social and economic aspects of the poor.

Although this social assistance has reached hundreds of communities, its effectiveness still needs to be evaluated to ensure that the assistance truly reaches those in need and is able to sustainably improve the lives of beneficiaries. Furthermore, it is necessary to update data on social assistance recipients to align with the actual conditions of those in need, considering that the number of people at risk of poverty is greater than the available DTKS data. However, in practice, the distribution of social assistance in Gunung Seteleng Village still faces challenges in terms of targeting accuracy. Some people who should receive assistance are not registered, while there are also cases where recipients are not truly classified as poor. These discrepancies indicate that the data collection and verification system still need improvement to ensure that assistance is truly provided to those in need and on target. In addition to challenges in targeting accuracy and technical obstacles in social assistance distribution, the application process is also a critical aspect that determines community access to this program.

In Gunung Seteleng Village, the social assistance application process begins with residents submitting an application to the neighborhood head (RT) for a cover letter stating their economic situation. After receiving the letter, applicants must submit supporting documents, such as photocopies of their ID card (KTP), family card (KK), and DTKS (Citizen Identification Number), to the village office. The village office then verifies the data before issuing a Certificate of Inability (SKTM), which is signed by the village head. This SKTM serves as an official document indicating that the applicant meets the requirements for social assistance.

This process ensures that assistance is provided to those truly in need, based on the available data. However, in practice, this process often encounters obstacles, such as limited access to information for residents who are unfamiliar with the procedure, potential errors in DTKS recording, and limited resources at the village level to handle the large number of applications. Therefore, improvements to the administrative system and broader outreach are needed to make the social assistance application process more effective and transparent.

Although a social assistance application mechanism has been established, its effectiveness in alleviating poverty remains a concern due to various challenges in the verification and distribution processes. According to Boyne & Gould-Williams (2003) and Wang & Tai (2003),

effectiveness is a measure used within an organization to assess the extent to which planned objectives are achieved. This aligns with Pekei's (2016) opinion, which states that effectiveness relates to the relationship between plans and objectives, which can be measured by the extent to which implemented policies align with established plans. In the context of social assistance, effectiveness can be measured by targeting accuracy, beneficiary accessibility, and the extent to which assistance sustainably improves community welfare. If the verification and distribution processes are not optimal, achieving the goal of significantly reducing poverty will be difficult.

The contribution of social assistance to poverty reduction in Gunung Seteleng Village still requires further study, particularly in assessing its effectiveness in creating long-term change for beneficiaries. Although this program provides assistance to the poor, its success in helping them escape the cycle of poverty remains questionable. According to the Center for Social Counseling (Tristanto, 2020), social assistance is a cash or in-kind transfer program aimed at reducing poverty by distributing welfare and protecting households from income fluctuations. This assistance is not only intended to meet a minimum decent standard of living, but also to ensure adequate nutrition and help households anticipate various economic risks.

Therefore, a thorough evaluation is necessary to ensure that social assistance is not merely temporary but also contributes to the sustainable economic independence of beneficiaries. Various previous studies have examined the effectiveness of social assistance in reducing poverty, including the distribution of Direct Cash Assistance (BLT). Research conducted by Kumala et al. (2024) in Bandar Lampung found that BLT distribution was not fully effective due to the use of outdated and irrelevant data, resulting in many poor people who should have received assistance being left unaccompanied.

This suggests that an inaccurate data collection system is a major factor hampering the effectiveness of the BLT program in reducing poverty. Furthermore, a study by Salsabila et al. (2024) revealed that although various social assistance programs have been provided by the government, mistargeted distribution, political interests, and a lack of comprehensive evaluation have resulted in their less-than-optimal effectiveness in eradicating poverty in Indonesia. Therefore, improvements in the distribution system and increased coordination between agencies are needed to ensure that social assistance programs truly reach those who deserve them.

The findings from these studies are relevant to the situation in Gunung Seteleng Village, where challenges in data collection and distribution of social assistance remain major obstacles. Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation and system improvements are essential to ensure that social assistance, particularly the Direct Cash Assistance (BLT), can significantly contribute to poverty reduction in the region. To assess the success of social assistance in reducing poverty, an analysis of the program's effectiveness is necessary.

This evaluation will help identify areas for improvement and provide an overview of the extent to which social assistance is truly contributing to improving community well-being. This research is expected to provide useful recommendations for the government and other stakeholders in improving the effectiveness of social assistance in Gunung Seteleng Village. With a better and more transparent system, it is hoped that social assistance will be more targeted and have a tangible impact on reducing poverty in the region.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research design using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) to examine the hypothesized causal relationships among hedonic motivation, price value, habit, and adoption behavior of Generation Z in Manado. SEM-PLS was selected because it is particularly suited for exploratory models, accommodates complex relationships with relatively small samples, and imposes fewer distributional assumptions compared to covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM). While the model comprises only three main

constructs, SEM-PLS was preferred over CB-SEM due to its predictive orientation and robustness with non-normal data, which was evident in the pilot testing phase. This choice enhances the study's ability to capture predictive validity rather than merely confirmatory fit, which is consistent with the study's objective.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The target population consisted of Generation Z individuals (aged 18–26) residing in Manado who had experience transacting on digital platforms. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure respondents possessed relevant experiential knowledge. To enhance representativeness, inclusion criteria required that respondents had conducted at least one online transaction within the last three months, thereby accommodating both frequent and occasional users and reducing bias toward only habitual users. Out of 125 responses collected online, 100 valid responses were retained after quality checks that included IP address screening, attention-check questions, and removal of incomplete questionnaires. The sample size aligns with the “10-times rule”, which requires at least ten cases per maximum number of structural paths pointing to a construct in this study, the highest being three paths, yielding a minimum requirement of 30. Furthermore, Kock & Hadaya (2018) recommend a minimum of 100–150 for PLS-SEM to ensure statistical power in models with medium effect sizes. Thus, the final sample of 100 respondents is methodologically defensible, while still reflecting the demographic distribution of Generation Z in Manado based on BPS statistics.

Instrument Development and Validation

The questionnaire was developed by adapting validated items from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2; Venkatesh et al., 2012). Constructs measured included hedonic motivation (3 items), price value (3 items), habit (4 items), and behavioral intention/adoption (4 items). All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). To ensure content validity, the instrument underwent expert review by two academics specializing in digital consumer behavior and one practitioner in e-commerce. A pilot test with 30 respondents confirmed item clarity and initial reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.70$). Minor wording adjustments were made to align with local linguistic usage.

Data Collection

Data were collected via an online survey distributed through social media platforms and university mailing lists from May to June. To enhance data authenticity, screening questions were employed (e.g., “Have you made an online transaction in the past three months?”) and duplicate entries were prevented through IP checks. Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant institutional review board, and respondents provided informed consent before participation.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the two-step SEM-PLS procedure using SmartPLS 4. First, the measurement model was assessed for reliability and validity. Indicator reliability was examined through outer loadings (threshold > 0.70), internal consistency through composite reliability (> 0.70), and convergent validity through Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.50). Discriminant validity was evaluated using Fornell–Larcker criterion and Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT < 0.85). Items falling below thresholds were dropped, and only retained indicators were reported in the results section. Second, the structural model was assessed by examining path coefficients, effect sizes (f^2), coefficient of determination (R^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples was employed to test the significance of path coefficients. Multicollinearity was checked using VIF values (< 3.3). The preference for SEM-PLS over CB-SEM was justified by the study's predictive objective, sample size limitations, and the need for robustness under non-normal distribution conditions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The effectiveness of social assistance distribution in contributing to poverty reduction in Gunung Seteleng Village, North Penajam Paser Regency

The effectiveness of social assistance distribution in reducing poverty in Gunung Seteleng Village demonstrates complex dynamics, encompassing distribution mechanisms, targeting accuracy, and the economic impact on recipients. In an interview with a Gunung Seteleng Village staff member on April 16, she explained:

"The first mechanism is a data collection system through the community itself to receive assistance."

However, she also emphasized that aid is not yet fully targeted because some people are still unregistered. This results in inequities in distribution. This statement was reinforced by the Head of Gunung Seteleng Village, who explained that:

"The mechanism is that data is received from the neighborhood association (RT) and a proposal is made to the relevant agency that will provide assistance. After that, if the assistance is available, it will be distributed, either directly or through a bank."

However, he also acknowledged that targeting accuracy remains a problem, especially when data comes from the central government:

"Some social assistance provided is on target, some is not. The targeted data is obtained when the village itself requests the RT data from the RT. However, when we receive the data from the central government, sometimes some are not targeted because the names sent from the central government are random, so sometimes some are able-bodied and some are already working, so they are not targeted properly."

The RT head, in an interview on April 20, expressed the opposite view, stating that the assistance was well-targeted. According to him:

"Because with this program, neighborhood associations (RTs) can directly see on the ground who are eligible and who are not."

This view suggests that RT involvement in the data collection process has the potential to improve targeting accuracy, although consistency across data sources remains a challenge. In terms of economic impact, social assistance is considered to have a temporary but helpful impact. Hety Kusumawati stated that:

"Social assistance helps a little for those in need."

Head of Gunung Seteleng Village, stated that:

"They feel grateful for the addition to their daily living. However, it doesn't seem to have made a significant difference because the assistance provided, whether in the form of basic necessities or cash, is sometimes insufficient for them to live a month. But at least it helps meet their needs, but it hasn't significantly impacted the poverty level."

The interviews concluded that the effectiveness of social assistance distribution in Gunung Seteleng Village is still not optimal in significantly reducing poverty levels. Although social assistance has eased the economic burden on the poor and provided short-term solutions, targeting accuracy and continuity of distribution remain major obstacles. The involvement of neighborhood associations (RT) provides opportunities for improvement in the data collection process, but cross-agency coordination and the accuracy of central data still need to be improved for this program to truly impact sustainable poverty reduction.

Factors influencing the effectiveness of social assistance distribution in reducing poverty in Gunung Seteleng Village

Factors influencing the effectiveness of social assistance distribution in Gunung Seteleng Village include administrative constraints, data discrepancies, the level of coordination between agencies, technical policies, the role of government officials, and access to information. According to Hety Kusumawati, a village official, data discrepancies often complicate the aid distribution process. One common problem is a discrepancy between the address on identity documents and the actual residence:

"The obstacle could be that the residence we are looking for, for example, doesn't match the ID card or family card."

She also added that aid recipients are often absent during distribution:

"The usual factor is that the person is not there, or they may have moved elsewhere."

The Head of Gunung Seteleng Village, echoed this sentiment, stating that many aid recipients had moved or even died:

"If the names listed no longer live there, or if someone has died or moved."

The neighborhood association (RT) head, also acknowledged that data issues often arise in the form of inconsistencies:

"Sometimes their names appear and sometimes they don't."

She emphasized that the data verification process was suboptimal:

"The data verification process wasn't optimal."

Based on interviews, the main factors influencing the effectiveness of social assistance distribution in Gunung Seteleng Village include data inconsistencies, population mobility, limited information, and administrative challenges. Furthermore, the active role of neighborhood associations (RT) and sub-districts, along with strong inter-agency coordination, are key factors contributing to the smooth distribution of aid. Policies and regulations also play a crucial role in regulating the technical process of distributing aid to the community.

Evaluate the implementation of existing social assistance programs to increase their effectiveness in optimally reducing poverty

The implementation of social assistance programs in Gunung Seteleng Village shows that various challenges remain. These challenges primarily relate to data collection accuracy, low community participation, limitations in the form and amount of assistance, minimal use of technology, and the lack of follow-up empowerment programs. One of the main issues highlighted is the inaccuracy of data collection and the failure to reach those truly in need. A rice aid recipient, stated:

"This aid is good, but sometimes those who receive it aren't those who truly need it."

He proposed improvements to the data collection process to ensure more targeted coverage:

"What needs to be improved is the initial data collection, so that those who are truly poor aren't missed."

Similar criticism came from Yusran, a recipient of P3KE assistance, who noted inaccurate recipient identification and a lack of publicity regarding the program:

"The P3KE program is good, but many people still don't know about it. Sometimes there are people who need it more but aren't on the list."

Leo, a recipient of BLT (Direct Cash Assistance), also expressed concerns about limited distribution:

"BLT is very useful, but the amount is still limited. I hope it can be more evenly distributed, because there are still people who haven't received it, and it's also difficult."

Furthermore, the program's implementation remains short-term, with assistance such as rice or cash not being enough to eradicate poverty completely. Emphasized:

"If the assistance is just rice, it won't be enough to lift people out of poverty. Perhaps job training or small business capital could be added."

The effectiveness of social assistance distribution in contributing to poverty reduction in Gunung Seteleng Village, North Penajam Paser Regency

Social assistance is one of the government's policy instruments aimed at reducing the economic burden on the community, particularly those living below the poverty line. The main objective of this program is to guarantee social protection while encouraging improvements in community welfare through direct cash assistance, basic food packages, and other forms of assistance. However, the effectiveness of this program is often questioned, particularly regarding targeting accuracy, sustainability of assistance, and its impact on poverty reduction. In various regions in Indonesia, including Gunung Seteleng Village, social assistance programs have been implemented, but the results have not yet had a significant impact on the economic empowerment of the poor.

Based on interviews with several parties in Gunung Seteleng Village, including the village head, village staff, neighborhood association (RT) heads, and aid recipients, it was discovered that the effective distribution of social assistance still faces various obstacles. Gunung Seteleng Village Head, Andi Sutriani Mulyadi, explained that the social assistance received by the community comes from the central government through predetermined data. However, the process of updating recipient data at the central level often does not directly involve village officials, resulting in inaccurate targeting of aid recipients. As the interviewee explained:

"We don't know who receives the data from the central government; sometimes our residents who are well-off receive assistance." (W1)

This situation was echoed by the local neighborhood association (RT) head, Ida Hura, who stated that much of the aid received by her residents did not reflect their actual needs. Some residents with steady incomes still received assistance, while those truly in need were overlooked. According to him, if neighborhood unit (RT) officials were directly involved in the data collection process, targeting accuracy could be more assured because they would have direct knowledge of the residents' socioeconomic conditions.

"Delayed Distribution" is also a significant issue. Many residents reported that social assistance often arrives late and unscheduled. As one recipient put it: "Sometimes the assistance arrives every two months, sometimes longer, even though we really hope for it".

Furthermore, the village government, through Hety Kusumawati, acknowledged that the social assistance distribution system is not yet effective enough to reduce poverty overall. She believes that social assistance can indeed reduce the burden on the poor in the short term, but it does not significantly impact long-term economic change. This is due to the nature of the assistance being consumptive and not being accompanied by economic empowerment programs. From the recipient perspective, social assistance is considered very helpful, but not enough to improve the overall economic situation of families. Several residents, such as Jurani, Yusran, and Leo, stated that assistance in the form of basic necessities and cash assistance does help meet basic needs, but the amount and frequency of distribution are inconsistent. In fact, sometimes assistance doesn't arrive for more than two months, making it impossible for residents to rely on it as their primary source of income.

Residents also stated that social assistance should be tailored to pressing needs and actual conditions on the ground. Uniform assistance that doesn't take into account the diversity of household circumstances actually leads to some assistance not being utilized optimally. For example, some residents receive large amounts of rice when they are more in need of cash to purchase other necessities such as medicine or children's school supplies.

Based on documentation attached to the research, such as the recapitulation of social assistance recipients from Gunung Seteleng Village, it is known that the types of assistance received by the community include the Family Hope Program (PKH), the Non-Cash Food Assistance Program (BPNT), and the Direct Cash Assistance Program (BLT). However, in practice, not all residents recorded actually receive this assistance regularly. For example, the 2023 aid data recorded 98 recipients of the Family Hope Program (PKH), but interviews revealed that there were still eligible residents who were not registered.

This comparison demonstrates a gap between administrative data and field conditions. All aid has been distributed according to the quota, but from the recipient perspective, its effectiveness is questionable due to data inconsistencies and uneven distribution. This reinforces the argument that effectiveness is not only about distribution, but also about achieving poverty reduction goals. These findings align with research by Salsabila et al. (2024), which states that social assistance in Indonesia is often ineffective due to weak data verification systems and the dominance of decision-making at the central level without considering local conditions. Inaccurate targeting is one of the main reasons why social assistance has failed to significantly reduce poverty.

Mufidah's (2021) research in Purwosari Village also showed that the implementation of cash social assistance has been ineffective because not all recipients are truly affected by crises such as the pandemic. This underscores the importance of rigorous data validation and monitoring to ensure that assistance reaches those in need. In the context of Mount Seteleng, this is evident from the continued complaints from the community regarding the fairness of aid distribution. From a procedural perspective, the aid distribution mechanism also needs to be evaluated. Irregularities in aid distribution, such as delays in disbursement, are a frequent issue. This impacts public trust in government aid programs. Some residents stated that they often did not know when aid would arrive, and the information they received from officials was very limited.

Furthermore, the role of coordination between the central and regional governments is crucial. As noted in Surtiari et al. (2024) research, the implementation of social assistance programs in Palu was hampered by a lack of integration and adaptation between relevant parties. A similar situation was evident in Gunung Seteleng, where the lack of strong coordination between the central government, as data providers, and the sub-districts, as implementers on the ground, resulted in ineffective aid distribution. Social assistance programs should not rely solely on providing material assistance but should also be complemented by training programs, business mentoring, or access to business capital. This aligns with the view of Lubis et al. (2020), who assessed that the effectiveness of the Family Hope Program (PKH) is more pronounced when the program is complemented by an empowerment approach. However, in Gunung Seteleng, there has been no initiative from the local government to integrate social assistance with economic empowerment programs.

Therefore, a more holistic approach is needed to make social assistance an effective tool in poverty alleviation. Simply providing consumer assistance is not sufficient; efforts must also be made to increase the community's economic capacity so that they do not become dependent on assistance. Some residents even expressed that they needed skills training or business capital more than basic food assistance. Regular evaluation of the implementation of assistance programs is also crucial. Currently, oversight of the implementation of social assistance programs

in Gunung Seteleng remains minimal. The lack of a clear complaints mechanism also makes it difficult for residents to voice complaints or provide input on the aid distribution process.

Considering the various factors above, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of social assistance distribution in Gunung Seteleng Village is still far from optimal. There are still numerous gaps in the data collection system and distribution mechanisms, as well as a lack of involvement of local actors in decision-making. If this situation continues, social assistance will continue to be a short-term solution that does not address the root causes of poverty. To increase the effectiveness of aid, fundamental improvements are needed, starting with data integration, involving neighborhood units (RT) and sub-districts (kelurahan) in the verification process, and strengthening inter-agency coordination. Aid programs must also be directed at promoting economic independence, not simply alleviating temporary hardship. With a more structured and participatory approach, social assistance will be more capable of having a real impact on poverty reduction. Furthermore, local governments need to take an active role, not only as technical implementers but also as planners and supervisors at the local level. By understanding the characteristics of their communities, sub-district governments can help develop assistance schemes that better align with their actual needs.

Factors influencing the effectiveness of social assistance distribution in reducing poverty in Gunung Seteleng Village

The effectiveness of social assistance distribution is largely determined by various interrelated factors, including policy, technical implementation, and community involvement. In the context of Gunung Seteleng Village, this effectiveness is a key determinant of the assistance program's success in reducing poverty, which remains a chronic problem in the region. Although social assistance has been distributed regularly, not all poor residents have fully benefited. Therefore, it is important to identify factors influencing the effectiveness of this distribution. Based on interviews with informants in the field, one of the most dominant factors influencing the effectiveness of social assistance is the accuracy and validity of beneficiary data. Many informants stated that some residents who should not be eligible for assistance are still listed as recipients, while poor residents who are more in need are overlooked. This is due to a data collection system that still relies on outdated data and a lack of regular updates by relevant parties.

Furthermore, the involvement of village officials and community leaders, such as neighborhood heads (RT/RW) in the data collection process, is also crucial. In some cases, the nomination of potential aid recipients is not conducted objectively, but rather based on personal ties or pressure from the surrounding community. This creates social jealousy and disrupts fairness in aid distribution. Another contributing factor is the lack of public awareness regarding the mechanisms and criteria for aid recipients. Many residents do not understand the distribution procedures, including how to correct data or file complaints if errors occur. This leads to dissatisfaction and misunderstandings regarding government programs, some of which have even led to horizontal conflict within the community.

Limited monitoring and evaluation systems also hinder the effective distribution of aid. Informants reported that there has been no forum or mechanism for routine evaluation to assess whether the aid provided has a genuine impact on poverty reduction. This lack of evaluation has resulted in many errors being repeated year after year without significant improvement. Furthermore, coordination between institutions such as sub-districts, social services, and other supporting agencies is also not optimal. Several informants stated that communication and information flow are often hampered, resulting in data discrepancies and delays in aid distribution. This clearly impacts the overall effectiveness of the social assistance program.

Furthermore, based on field observations, the lack of direct assistance and supervision of beneficiary families results in much aid not being used productively. Without additional education or training, aid tends to be spent on short-term consumption needs, rather than

strengthening the long-term economic resilience of poor families. These factors align with the findings of research by Fardi & Pratama (2023), which examined the transparency of social assistance data collection in Mataram City. The study emphasized that transparency is a key factor in the effectiveness of aid distribution. When the data collection process is conducted openly and involves community participation, it prevents data manipulation and increases public trust.

Research by Nala et al. (2021) in East Kutai also showed that the effectiveness of social assistance is determined by thorough planning, accurate data, and local community involvement. They emphasized that social assistance must be designed with local potential in mind and involve the community in oversight to ensure that allocated funds truly impact poverty reduction. Meanwhile, a study by Husain et al. (2021) in Gorontalo showed that the success of the Family Hope Program (PKH) was influenced by the availability of facilitators, consistent monitoring, and coordination between implementing parties. In their case, social assistance was more effective when accompanied by education, psychosocial support, and easy access to education and health services. This aligns with findings in Gunung Seteleng, where the lack of facilitators and minimal education were major obstacles to optimizing aid outcomes.

Thus, from the general discussion and interview results, reinforced by previous research, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of social assistance distribution in Gunung Seteleng Village is significantly influenced by several key factors. These include the quality of data collection, the objectivity of local officials, community outreach, evaluation and supervision, cross-agency coordination, and the availability of ongoing assistance. To improve the effectiveness of distribution going forward, an integrative approach must be taken. Village governments need to develop a transparent and dynamic data collection system, supported by information technology and involving active community participation. Furthermore, social literacy education is essential for beneficiaries to ensure that the assistance they receive can be used wisely and productively.

Support for a participatory monitoring system is also crucial to creating a social environment that fosters mutual control and maintains accountability in aid distribution. Communities can be involved in special deliberation forums and have easily accessible channels for complaints in the event of irregularities. Finally, an equally important factor is the political commitment and integrity of program organizers. Effective social assistance distribution will only be achieved if all elements of the government, down to the neighborhood unit (RT/RW) level, work honestly, transparently, and on the side of the poor and needy.

Implement existing social assistance programs to increase their effectiveness in optimally reducing poverty

The implementation of social assistance programs in Gunung Seteleng Village demonstrates a dynamic process. Based on interviews with village officials, the implementation of social assistance programs such as Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT), the Family Hope Program (PKH), and Direct Cash Assistance (BLT) has generally been carried out according to procedures. However, their effectiveness in reducing poverty still faces various obstacles. One of the main obstacles identified is inaccurate targeting of aid recipients. Several informants stated that some people who should be eligible for assistance have not been registered, while others who are no longer eligible still receive it. This imbalance impacts the effectiveness of aid in reaching the neediest groups.

This inaccurate targeting problem is closely related to inaccurate data collection that has not been regularly updated. The Head of Gunung Seteleng Village revealed that updated recipient data still relies on outdated data that does not reflect the current conditions of the community. As a result, aid programs are unable to optimally alleviate poverty. Besides data issues, budget constraints are also a significant issue. The amount of assistance received by poor families is

considered insufficient to meet basic needs, let alone improve their standard of living. This makes the assistance temporary and fails to address long-term economic empowerment.

Nevertheless, some recipients feel that assistance is helpful, particularly for basic needs such as basic necessities and children's education. In this context, the Family Hope Program (PKH) is considered more effective because it targets families with school-age children and pregnant women. However, intensive monitoring is still needed to ensure that the assistance is utilized according to its intended purpose. The involvement of village governments in monitoring and evaluating the program remains minimal. Oversight tends to be administrative and does not address implementation aspects on the ground. This leads to irregularities, such as the practice of entrusting names or distributing assistance equally without considering the needs of each household.

According to one community leader, collaborative efforts between the village, neighborhood associations (RT/RW), and the community have not been effective. The involvement of all community elements should be maximized to validate and verify data more accurately and transparently. This way, assistance can be more targeted. This finding aligns with research by Deri et al. (2023) and Fakhri & Ma'ruf (2023), which states that the effectiveness of social assistance is greatly influenced by timeliness, recipient understanding of the program, and accurate targeting. In Pelem Village, active community involvement has been shown to increase program success. Meanwhile, transparency and accountability are also important issues. Interviews indicate that most people are unaware of the mechanism for determining aid recipients. This lack of transparency has the potential to fuel distrust and social conflict within the community.

In the implementation of the Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT) program, issues remain with the quality and variety of food received. Some beneficiary families (KPM) complained that the items often did not meet household needs. This aligns with findings from a journal by Pratiwi (2021), which stated that the objectives of BPNT have not been optimally achieved because they do not meet the principles of "right quality" and "right choice."

It is worth noting that some aid programs lack sustainable economic empowerment mechanisms. The programs are more consumptive than productive. Therefore, communities remain trapped in a cycle of poverty and dependence on aid. Yet, one indicator of the success of an aid program is the increased economic independence of recipients. Sambodo et al. (2023) research in Lobuk Village showed that improved community welfare can occur if aid is accompanied by changes in consumption patterns and household financial management.

In the context of Mount Seteleng, some residents suggested that aid be combined with skills training or micro-business capital. This is considered more effective in the long term because it can create job and business opportunities and reduce dependence on government assistance. Criticism of the implementation of social assistance has also come from young people. They feel that assistance focuses too much on the elderly and families with children, while unemployed youth are often overlooked. This creates a gap that can be filled through new programs targeting the productive generation.

In general, the implementation of social assistance in Gunung Seteleng has had a positive impact in alleviating the economic burden on poor households. However, to be truly effective in reducing poverty, these programs require comprehensive and ongoing evaluation. This evaluation must cover all aspects: input, process, and output, as described in the study by Siregar et al. (2022) in Payakumbuh. They concluded that the effectiveness of the Family Hope Program (PKH) was quite good, but still needed improvements in process aspects, such as mentoring and reporting.

To increase effectiveness, the Gunung Seteleng Village Government needs to strengthen coordination with relevant agencies, such as the Social Services Agency and the Regional

Development Planning Agency (Bappeda), to align data and ensure program sustainability. Strengthening the data-based monitoring and evaluation system is essential to address inaccurate targeting. Furthermore, it is crucial to involve community members in program planning and evaluation. A participatory approach will encourage the community to feel ownership and responsibility for the program's success. This also strengthens accountability and increases public trust in the government.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the effectiveness of social assistance distribution in Gunung Seteleng Village has not been fully optimal in reducing poverty levels. Program implementation still faces various obstacles, such as inaccurate targeting, weak coordination between the central government and the village, and minimal participation of local officials in the data collection process. Furthermore, the temporary and consumptive nature of the assistance has not been able to sustainably improve the community's economic conditions. Although the community feels the benefits of the assistance in the short term, program implementation needs to be directed towards economic empowerment to have a long-term impact on poverty alleviation.

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