
EFFECTIVENESS OF INTEGRATED SOCIAL WELFARE DATA CONTROL (DTKS) IN REALIZED TARGETED FOOD ASSISTANCE IN SOUTH LIKUPANG DISTRICT, NORTH MINAHASA REGENCY

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Received: 02/04/2026 | Revised: 11/05/2026 | Accepted: 30/05/2026 | Published: 16/06/2026

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS) control in realizing targeted food assistance in South Likupang District, North Minahasa Regency. The study used a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies of key informants, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The results of the study indicate that: (1) in the data updating and recipient suitability indicators, DTKS control has not been running effectively because the updating process is static, incidental, and dependent on a central database, so that field verification tends to be subjective and minimal community participation; (2) in the inhibiting factor indicator, technical obstacles were found in the form of the lack of integration of the village information system with the SIKS-NG application, minimal operator training, and limited digital infrastructure, as well as managerial obstacles that include weak cross-agency coordination, non-standardized distribution procedures, informal intervention by local figures, and the absence of a verified backup data mechanism. Based on these findings, it is recommended that data updates be conducted routinely and in a participatory manner, that digital capacity and human resources of civil servants be improved, that distribution procedures be standardized, and that a coordination forum and transparency of backup data be instituted to ensure accuracy of targeting.

Keywords: Control Effectiveness, DTKS, Targeted Food Assistance, Technical and Managerial Factors, Social Protection Governance.

INTRODUCTION

The provision of social welfare is a constitutional mandate of the state as stated in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution, specifically in the fifth principle of Pancasila and Article 34, which emphasizes the state's responsibility to protect, advance, and guarantee the welfare of its citizens, especially vulnerable and poor groups. In the context of national development, social assistance programs have become a strategic instrument for the government to reduce economic burdens, prevent food insecurity, and strengthen the social safety net. However, the effectiveness of these programs is not solely determined by the size of the budget or distribution volume, but also by the accuracy of beneficiary data. As emphasized in this thesis, "Without valid, up-to-date, and comprehensive data, social assistance programs risk experiencing mistargeting that not only harms the state fiscally, but also erodes social justice and public trust in government institutions" (page 7). In response to the data fragmentation that has occurred in the past, the Indonesian government initiated the Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS) as a single national database. The DTKS (Disaster Mitigation and Social Welfare Index) was designed using *the Proxy Means Test (PMT) approach*, managed by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) and coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs. It aims to objectively identify poor and vulnerable households based on multidimensional indicators such as asset ownership, access to basic services, education level, and employment structure. Since its enactment through Presidential Regulation Number 166 of 2014 concerning the National Team for the Acceleration of Poverty Reduction (TNP2K), the DTKS has become the primary

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technical reference for all social assistance programs, including national food assistance. The basic principle is clear: “assistance is only provided to those truly in need, without neglecting eligible groups who are not registered (*exclusion error*), nor providing assistance to groups who are economically capable (*inclusion error*)” (page 8). Normatively, the DTKS (Disaster Data Collection) is not merely an administrative archive, but rather an instrument of social justice that must be updated dynamically, participatively, and responsive to changing socio-economic conditions at the local level. However, the reality of implementation on the ground often shows a sharp gap between the ideal policy design and the socio-bureaucratic dynamics at the sub-district and village levels. The decentralization of authority through Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government has provided greater space for local governments to manage social affairs according to the local context. However, “the authority granted is not always balanced by strengthened managerial capacity, digital infrastructure, and institutionalized coordination mechanisms” (page 8). As a result, many regions experience stagnation in data updating, weak oversight functions, and excessive dependence on static central databases. This phenomenon not only reduces targeting accuracy but also creates space for informal intervention, subjective considerations, and the politicization of social data at the grassroots level. South Likupang District, North Minahasa Regency, is one area that clearly represents these dynamics. Since the establishment of the Likupang Tourism Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in 2019, the region has experienced rapid economic transformation, marked by increased investment, infrastructure development, and population mobility. However, “this accelerated development has not been matched by equitable access to basic services and social protection” (page 8). Data from the Central Statistics Agency (2023) notes that the level of economic vulnerability in this sub-district remains significant, with the majority of the population relying on the informal sector, fisheries, and subsistence agriculture, which are vulnerable to seasonal shocks, market prices, and natural disasters. In this context, food aid based on the DTKS should function as a social stabilizer, but initial findings in the field indicate that the DTKS control mechanism has not been effective.

To empirically map this gap, researchers conducted an initial identification of food aid distribution in seven villages in South Likupang District. Based on the 2024 Food Aid Beneficiary Family Data recapitulation, a total of 307 Beneficiary Families (KPM) were registered in the food aid distribution scheme. However, when this data was cross-verified with real economic conditions, field observations, and input from village officials and community leaders, a systemic pattern of inaccurate targeting was discovered. In Wangurer Village, of the target of 37 KPM, field verification showed that 4 families who actually had permanent jobs and productive assets were still registered as recipients (*inclusion error*), while 6 families who had recently experienced layoffs due to the closure of micro-businesses were not included in the list (*exclusion error*). In Kaweruan Village, 5 families were identified as economically stable but still received aid, while 8 vulnerable families (elderly without dependents, single housewives) were not registered. Kokoleh Satu Village recorded 7 recipients whose domiciles had moved outside the sub-district but were still receiving assistance, while 5 eligible families had their proposals pending. In aggregate, of the 307 registered KPM, “32 cases of inclusion errors were identified (wealthy/ineligible families still received assistance) and 40 cases of exclusion errors (vulnerable/eligible families did not receive assistance)” (page 11). This figure is not merely a statistical deviation, but a clear indicator of the weak control function of the DTKS at the local level. The gap between central data, real-world conditions, and unstandardized distribution mechanisms creates a recurring cycle of inefficiency that is difficult to break without structural intervention.

This research focuses not only on these quantitative findings but also on the resulting social impacts. First, inaccurate targeting causes aid to be withheld or distributed to ineligible parties, which directly reduces the program's effectiveness as a social safety net. Second, “informal intervention by local figures in aid distribution, such as delaying distribution while awaiting the presence of the village head or redirecting aid based on considerations of social proximity, shifts the principle of *targeting accuracy* to *political targeting*” (page 11). This practice not only violates public accountability but also reinforces patronage patterns that erode public trust in state institutions. Third, the lack of a verified backup data mechanism and rigid distribution procedures make the system non-adaptive. These impacts demonstrate that the problem of inaccurate targeting of food aid in South Likupang District “is not merely a technical administrative issue, but rather a reflection of weak social protection governance at the local level” (page 12). Furthermore, these initial findings also confirm the gap in local bureaucratic capacity in managing social welfare information systems. The SIKS-NG application, which should serve as the backbone for *real-time data updates*, has not been optimally accessible due to limited internet connections, computer equipment, and stable electricity. The lack of technical training means that “field officers often rely on subjective assumptions or personal experience in determining recipient eligibility, rather than standardized scoring instruments” (page 12). In addition to technical factors, managerial

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dimensions such as weak cross-agency coordination, non-standardized distribution procedures, informal intervention by local figures, and the absence of a verified backup data mechanism also exacerbate inaccurate targeting. From a public service ethics perspective, the experiences of several families who suspected their names were not proposed due to differences in political preferences or social proximity to village officials suggest the risk of politicizing social data. This research was conducted for three fundamental reasons: empirically, there is a measurable gap between the central DTKS data and the real conditions of the community; conceptually, inaccurate targeting requires a transformation of the apparatus' mindset and strengthening of participatory verification capacity; and socio-politically, informal intervention and quota-based approaches have created inequitable distribution. That is why the author decided to conduct research with the title: **Effectiveness of DTKS Control in Realizing Targeted Food Assistance in South Likupang District, North Minahasa Regency.**

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach, chosen because its primary objective is to deeply understand the processes, meanings, and socio-institutional dynamics behind the control of the Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS) in realizing targeted food assistance in South Likupang District, North Minahasa Regency. As emphasized by Sugiyono (2023, p. 14), "qualitative research aims to understand social phenomena in their natural context, by exploring the meaning from the experiences, actions, and interactions of actors in the field." This approach allows researchers to capture the complexity of implementing management functions—planning, organizing, implementing, and monitoring—in unique local contexts, including challenges in coordination, apparatus capacity, and community participation. This study focuses on two main indicators that are easily observed but reflect the core problem of the accuracy of social assistance targeting. The first indicator is the DTKS data updating process as seen from five stages of the mechanism: independent proposals, village deliberations, verification and validation (VerVal) in SIKS-NG, approval at the sub-district/district level, and data submission to the Ministry of Social Affairs. The second indicator is the factors that influence target accuracy, both technical and managerial factors which are the main obstacles.

The research location was chosen in South Likupang District, North Minahasa Regency, North Sulawesi Province, because this area represents the typical dynamics of developing regions that have experienced rapid economic transformation since the establishment of the Likupang Tourism Special Economic Zone (KEK) in 2019, but still face challenges of social inequality and inaccurate targeting of social assistance. The research was conducted for three months, namely January to March 2026, a period chosen to ensure access to updated DTKS data after the distribution of food assistance at the end of 2025. Research informants were selected purposively based on considerations of the relevance of their roles and knowledge to DTKS control, including sub-district officials (Sub-district Secretary and social welfare section staff), village officials and social facilitators from Kaweruan Village and Batu Village which were chosen because they have varying levels of poverty and access to infrastructure, food assistance recipients both those who meet the criteria and those suspected of being ineligible, as well as community leaders and representatives of non-governmental organizations involved in social supervision. The selection of informants refers to the principle of *information richness* (Moleong, 2021), namely selecting individuals who are able to provide in-depth and relevant information related to the phenomenon being studied.

The data sources in this study are divided into two types: primary data and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from the field through in-depth interviews with semi-structured guidelines, a structured questionnaire to measure respondents' economic status against the DTKS criteria (including indicators of asset ownership, access to basic services, and sources of income), and participant observation during the data verification process, village deliberations, and food aid distribution. As suggested by Moleong (2021), "participatory observation helps researchers understand the social context that is not always expressed through words." Secondary data were obtained from official documents such as the 2024 DTKS data from the North Minahasa Regency Regional Food Service, poverty statistics reports from the North Minahasa Regency Statistics Agency (2023), Presidential Regulation Number 166 of 2014 concerning the National Team for the Protection and Protection of Children (TNP2K), the Ministry of Social Affairs' DTKS Management Guidelines (2023), and academic literature from public management experts. Data collection techniques were carried out through face-to-face or online interviews, documentation in the form of collecting official documents such as decrees on recipient determination, DTKS lists, data update reports, and photos of field verification activities, as well as observations of the VerVal process and studies of SIKS-NG data documentation along with minutes of handover.

Data analysis refers to the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of three stages: data reduction (filtering relevant information, coding key themes, and grouping data based on analytical categories), data presentation (in the form of descriptive narratives, comparison tables between DTKS and BPS data, and graphical visualizations for questionnaire results), and inductive conclusion drawing by continuously comparing field findings to theoretical frameworks and existing literature. To ensure data validity, this study applies four validity criteria according to Lincoln and Guba: *credibility* is guaranteed through repeated observations, discussions with colleagues, and *member checking* (reconfirming interview results with informants); *transferability* through the presentation of sufficiently detailed context; *dependability* through *an audit trail* (systematic recording of the entire data collection and analysis process); and *confirmability* by ensuring that findings are truly derived from field data, not from researcher bias. Thus, this research method is designed holistically to generate an in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of DTKS control, while ensuring that the findings are credible, transparent, and useful for improving food aid governance at the local level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.4.1 Effectiveness of the DTKS Data Updating Mechanism from the Perspective of Five Operational Stages and Management Functions

The effectiveness of Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS) control cannot be measured solely by the volume of aid distributed or the accuracy of physical distribution schedules. Within the framework of public service management, effectiveness is *outcome-oriented*, focusing on the extent to which the data management process is able to capture the dynamics of social vulnerability accurately, responsively, and inclusively. As emphasized by Purwanto, "the effectiveness of public services is measured not by the volume of services provided, but by the relevance and real benefits felt by service recipients." Normatively, the DTKS updating mechanism at the local level follows five operational stages that have been standardized by the Ministry of Social Affairs: (1) initial proposal/independent proposal, (2) village deliberation, (3) verification and validation (VerVal) in the SIKS-NG application, (4) approval at the sub-district/district level, and (5) sending data to the Ministry of Social Affairs. Based on field findings in South Likupang District, these five stages have not been running synergistically, resulting in systemic inaccuracy in targeting.

Initial Proposal/Independent Proposal Stage. At this stage, data planning should be *bottom-up* and participatory, allowing communities to proactively propose changes to household status. However, the reality in South Likupang shows that proposals remain passive and heavily dependent on the initiative of village officials or "guard heads." The Kaweruan Village Secretary acknowledged that "beneficiary proposals from the guard heads are people who frequently receive government assistance, so we are reviewing this for communities who have never received government assistance." While this intention arose from social sensitivity, the proposal mechanism was unstructured, did not address *real-time changes in economic conditions*, and lacked a publicly accessible complaint channel. From a planning perspective, this reflects a reactive, rather than anticipatory, approach. Presidential Regulation No. 166 of 2014 concerning the National Agency for the Protection and Protection of Children (TNP2K) explicitly emphasizes that updating the DTKS must be carried out continuously and involve active community participation. When proposals rely solely on the initiative of officials without a documented independent registration mechanism, families who have recently fallen into poverty due to layoffs, chronic illness, or natural disasters are often overlooked (*exclusion error*), while old names whose economic conditions have improved are still re-proposed (*inclusion error*). As a result, the DTKS loses its primary function as a dynamic instrument and turns into a static list that lags behind social reality (*lagging data*).

Village Deliberation Stage. Organizing should create a transparent, inclusive, and accountable deliberative space. The Minister of Home Affairs regulation on village governance emphasizes that village deliberations should be participatory forums for collectively verifying, correcting, and determining beneficiary lists. However, field findings revealed that deliberations in South Likupang functioned more as administrative formalities or procedural legitimacy than as critical deliberative spaces. A community leader from Kaweruan Village stated that "it would be good if the beneficiary list were reviewed regularly, so that proposals for new eligible recipients could be made, and the village government would coordinate with officials from the Ministry of Social Affairs at the sub-district level." Community participation remains largely symbolic: residents attend and provide consent, but lack access to the initial list, scoring indicators, or data correction mechanisms. Eligibility decisions are often dominated by village officials without adequately involving representatives of vulnerable groups. Within the *New Public Service framework* (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003), effective public services emerge from a two-way dialogue between the state and citizens, where citizens are not merely passive objects but active partners in policy verification. When village deliberations lose their deliberative

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function, their organizing function weakens: there is no clear division of roles between independent validators, no *peer review mechanism* among citizens, and no responsive complaint protocol. This situation triggers data distortion from the beginning of the cycle, as proposals that proceed to the next stage do not undergo an objective collective screening process.

The Verification and Validation (VerVal) stage in SIKS-NG. Actuation should be the backbone of data accuracy through the application of a standardized *Proxy Means Test (PMT) scoring instrument*. The *SIKS-NG Management Guidelines (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2023)* explicitly stipulate that field verification must be based on measurable multidimensional indicators, not subjective assessments or visual observations alone. However, the reality on the ground shows that the VerVal process is hampered by the digital infrastructure gap and the limited technical capacity of operators. The Secretary of the South Likupang District explicitly stated that "the obstacles are due to the lack of online communication between the village and central governments, along with minimal training for periodically collecting data on eligible recipients." The SIKS-NG application has not been optimally integrated with the village registration system, computer equipment is limited, and technical training for operators is still incidental. As a result, field verification tends to rely on subjective assessments of officials, such as observations of home conditions, employment status, or attendance at village forums. The Kaweruan Village Aid Distribution Officer revealed the challenge of "ensuring that registered beneficiaries match the recipients, as some recipients' names differ from those of those who will receive aid in the field." From an implementation perspective, when officials lack technical competency and standardized instruments, policy execution becomes vulnerable to personal bias. Lack of training also results in officials not fully understanding how to calculate PMT scores, validate sensitive data, or handle cases of changes in domicile status. What should be objective verification becomes a process that relies heavily on the personal capacity of officials, rather than on transparent and accountable standard procedures.

Approval Stage at the Sub-district/Regency Level. Supervision (*controlling*) should serve as a final filter, ensuring that validated data has undergone an objective verification process and is responsive to local dynamics. However, field findings indicate that data validation remains *top-down* and rigid, relying heavily on central quotas and outdated databases. Sub-districts and districts act more as 'recipients of instructions' than responsive validators. A community leader from Kaweruan Village emphasized that "sometimes aid arrives according to the central quota, and names are recorded at the center, while in the field there have been many changes that deserve assistance, but are not receiving assistance." There is no standard protocol for handling revision proposals outside the national cycle, so validated data often contains systemic targeting errors. From the perspective of decentralization and local bureaucratic capacity, Thoha cautioned that "decentralization without increased managerial capacity will only result in policy fragmentation and budget inefficiency." When validation is purely administrative and not complemented by field audit mechanisms or evidence-based reviews, the oversight function is weakened. Vertical coordination between the central government, districts, sub-districts, and villages still operates hierarchically and one-way, without structured feedback mechanisms. As a result, validated data no longer represents actual vulnerability at the village level, but rather merely reflects adherence to rigid central quotas and schedules.

Data Delivery Stage to the Ministry of Social Affairs. The management cycle should run continuously and be equipped with contingency mechanisms. However, practices in South Likupang show that data delivery is periodic, incidental, only carried out when new aid is about to be distributed. The delivery system is not equipped with a *real-time tracking mechanism* or a verified reserve list, so by the time the data is sent to the central office, it already lags behind changes in the community's socio-economic conditions. A religious leader from Batu Village proposed improvements: "This needs to be improved. If there are names already recorded but are missing or there are obstacles, it would be better to provide reserve names for recipients, so they cannot be replaced arbitrarily by the Law Elder or distribution officers." Within the framework of *Public Value Management* (Moore, 1995), the success of social policy is determined not only by technical efficiency, but by the extent to which the system is able to create collective value: restoring the dignity of vulnerable citizens, strengthening public trust, and ensuring that the state is present fairly amidst social vulnerability. When data delivery is not supported by a verified reserve list, operational flexibility turns into a vacuum for uncontrolled discretion. Families Who Didn't Receive Assistance Though Eligible stated that "the lack of coordination between the village government and the community regarding the distribution of assistance" was the main cause of the inequity. From a management perspective, the lack of a verified reserve list reflects a lack of contingency planning and the preparation of alternative procedures.

Overall, the discussion of the five stages of the data updating mechanism confirms that the effectiveness of DTKS control in South Likupang District remains at a low level. The gap between the participatory and dynamic design of the DTKS system and the reality of its static and *top-down* implementation indicates that the five stages have not been implemented holistically. Planning is not based on real needs, organization does not create deliberative space, implementation relies on subjectivity due to technical limitations, supervision is rigid and hierarchical, and data delivery lacks a contingency mechanism. As Sedarmayanti emphasized, "Effective public services are born from collaboration between the government and the community, not from bureaucratic monopoly." When management functions are not integrated at every stage, the DTKS risks transforming from an instrument of social justice into a rigid administrative list that is vulnerable to distortion.

4.4.2 Technical and Managerial Factors Inhibiting the Accuracy of Food Aid Targeting

The inaccuracy of food aid targeting in South Likupang District did not emerge suddenly, but rather resulted from the accumulation of various interrelated and mutually reinforcing technical and managerial factors. Within the framework of decentralization theory and local bureaucratic capacity, Thoha cautioned that "granting authority to regions without a corresponding strengthening of managerial capacity will only result in 'pseudo-autonomy.'" Field findings confirm that the obstacles to accurate targeting can be grouped into two main dimensions: technical factors related to infrastructure, information systems, and human resource competencies, and managerial factors related to coordination, local leadership, community participation, and public service ethics.

Technical Factors. Limited digital infrastructure and gaps in access to technology are major obstacles to *real-time updating of the DTKS* (Village List of Villages). The Secretary of the South Likupang District explicitly stated that "the obstacle is the lack of online communication between the village government and the central government, along with minimal training for periodically collecting eligible recipient data." The SIKS-NG application, which should be the backbone of digital DTKS management, in practice has not been optimally accessed at the village level due to limited internet access, adequate computer equipment, or stable electricity. This situation creates a digital divide that exacerbates data fragmentation: villages with access to infrastructure can update more quickly, while villages with technical limitations continue to rely on manual recording, which is prone to errors, data loss, or reporting delays. In addition to infrastructure, the lack of capacity and technical training for village data operators, social workers, and sub-district staff also weakens the quality of DTKS control. Data updating requires a thorough understanding of the *Proxy Means Test* (PMT) method, multidimensional poverty indicators, field verification procedures, and ethical management of sensitive data. However, field findings indicate that technical training remains incidental, non-institutionalized, and does not include regulatory updates or real-life case simulations. As a result, field officers often rely on subjective assumptions or personal experience to determine recipient eligibility. As Purwanto noted, "the quality of public services is largely determined by the technical competence of officials who are able to translate general policies into accurate and empathetic operational actions."

Managerial Factors – Coordination. Weak vertical and horizontal coordination is at the root of data asynchronous and unclear responsibilities. Vertical coordination between the central government, the District Food Agency, sub-districts, and villages still operates hierarchically and one-way, without a structured feedback mechanism. Sub-districts and villages often function only as 'instruction recipients' and 'technical implementers', with no room to propose data revisions outside the national update cycle. Families Who Did Not Receive Assistance Though Eligible stated that "the lack of coordination between the village government and the community regarding the distribution of assistance" was a major complaint. On the other hand, horizontal coordination between agencies at the sub-district level, for example between the Social Welfare Section, village officials, and social workers, remains informal and not institutionalized in productive routine forums. This leads to overlapping efforts, data duplication, or verification gaps that are not identified early. From a *collaborative public management perspective*, Siagian emphasized that "effective coordination requires not only a clear organizational structure, but also a culture of information sharing, trust between units, and transparent conflict resolution mechanisms." Field findings also revealed that aid distribution procedures were not standardized and often depended on village authority figures. Aid distribution was often delayed pending the arrival of the Hukum Tua (Old Law), creating inconsistent schedules and weakening accountability in the distribution process at the village level.

Managerial Factors – Community Participation. Weak community participation in data monitoring and verification is another important factor. Village deliberations or data verification forums should provide a space where

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residents can transparently propose additions, deletions, or corrections to data. However, field findings indicate that community participation remains limited to formal attendance and administrative approval, without full access to complaint mechanisms, reserve lists, or verification reports. Community leaders from Kaweruan Village suggested that "beneficiaries should be reviewed regularly to generate proposals for new, eligible recipients." According to Denhardt and Denhardt, "effective public services must position citizens as active partners, not passive customers." When communities are not given the space to oversee the verification process or propose structured data changes, *social accountability mechanisms* fail to function optimally. As a result, targeting errors are not detected early, and public trust in aid-disbursing institutions is further eroded. Strengthening community participation is not just about attendance at forums, but also about providing access to information, responsive complaint mechanisms, and protection for whistleblowers who uncover data discrepancies.

Managerial Factors – Informal Intervention and Data Politicization. One of the most crucial findings in this study is the informal intervention of local figures, particularly the Hukum Tua (Village Head), in the distribution and verification of food aid data. A religious figure from Batu Village revealed that "beneficiaries were not available, and were replaced by their closest relatives, but in the BAST (handover report) the recipients had to be the ones receiving it. That was the problem. So distribution was delayed." A community leader from Kaweruan Village also confirmed that informal intervention often occurs: "Sometimes aid arrives according to the quota from the central government, and the names are recorded at the central government, while in the field there have been many changes that are eligible for assistance, but they do not receive assistance." While the intention may be good, this practice systematically violates the principles of *targeting accuracy* and public accountability. In good governance, the discretion of officials must be limited by standard procedures and objective verification. This phenomenon can be understood through the lens of public service ethics and *Public Value Management theory*. In public administration theory, poverty data is an instrument of justice, not a tool for political legitimacy or electoral patronage. When officials or local figures use their authority to propose proposals for short-term gain, the integrity of the DTKS is compromised. Public ethics demands that every managerial action, from proposals to verification to distribution, be guided by the principles of public interest, neutrality, and procedural fairness.

Informal interventions reflect a paradigm shift from *targeting accuracy* to *political targeting*. From the *New Public Service perspective*, public services must pursue the public interest and value civic values over entrepreneurial or political interests. However, the reality in South Likupang shows that aid distribution is often linked to social proximity, political loyalty, or the subjective judgments of village leaders. Kaweruan Village Aid Distribution Officers acknowledged that they must "ensure that recipients are identified by their own names, not just representatives," but without the support of formal mechanisms, these efforts are insufficient. National regulations actually stipulate limits on discretion and data objectivity. The SIKS-NG guidelines explicitly state that field verification must be based on a standardized PMT scoring instrument. Presidential Regulation 166/2014 also emphasizes that recipient determination must be based on objective scores, not political preferences or personal relationships. However, implementation in the field demonstrates a sharp gap between normative standards and cultural practices. In many villages, the Hukum Tua (Old Law) figure is still viewed as a moral and administrative authority with prerogative in determining "who is worthy." This culture, while rooted in local wisdom, often conflicts with the principles of bureaucratic neutrality and procedural justice. Therefore, a transformation of *the mindset* of local officials and figures is needed: from a patronage approach to a rights-based and justice-based approach.

Gap between National Standards and Local Practices. To comprehensively assess why the DTKS updating mechanism in South Likupang District remains hampered, an explicit evaluation of the gap between national standards established in social protection regulations and operational practices at the local level is necessary. Three key regulatory instruments serve as analytical tools: Presidential Regulation No. 166 of 2014 concerning the National Agency for the Protection and Protection of Children (TNP2K), which establishes the DTKS as a single national database with a continuous and participatory updating mechanism; the Minister of Home Affairs Regulation concerning village governance, which emphasizes transparency, accountability, and community participation; and the SIKS-NG Management Guidelines, which regulate digital workflows, objective verification, a verified reserve list, and *an audit trail*. First, there are gaps in the frequency and mechanism of data updates: national standards require a continuous cycle, while practices in South Likupang are incidental. Second, there are gaps in the objectivity of verification: the guidelines require standardized PMT instruments, while the field relies on subjective observations. Third, there are gaps in infrastructure and technical capacity: SIKS-NG is designed for *real-time*, but access and training remain minimal. Fourth,

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the gap between participation and social oversight: regulations emphasize deliberative deliberation, while practices are formalistic.

These gaps did not arise by chance, but rather reflect structural, cultural, and institutional roots. Structurally, decentralization has granted broad authority but has not been matched by investment in managerial capacity and digital infrastructure. Culturally, patronage norms and informal intervention by local figures remain strong. Institutionally, weak vertical-horizontal coordination, the absence of standard operating procedures (SOPs), and the lack of preventive oversight mechanisms create room for data distortion. As Sedarmayanti emphasized, "the accuracy of social data is an absolute prerequisite for the realization of *good governance*, particularly the principles of transparency, accountability, and justice." The dialogue between empirical findings and theoretical frameworks consistently confirms that the effectiveness of DTKS control is not merely a technical issue, but rather a test of the quality of governance at the local level. When management functions are carried out professionally, when data is managed with integrity, when communities are meaningfully involved, and when local bureaucracies have adequate capacity, the DTKS can truly function as an instrument of social justice. Conversely, when coordination is weak, symbolic participation, informal interventions dominate, and technical infrastructure is inadequate, mistargeting will continue, and food aid risks losing its social significance as a safety net for those most in need. These findings are not only relevant for policy improvements in South Likupang District but also provide strategic lessons for strengthening DTKS governance in other areas facing similar dynamics.

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