
REVITALIZATION OF LOCAL WISDOM 'MAPALUS' IN PUBLIC SERVICE GOVERNANCE AND HANDLING SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN LANGOWAN TIMUR DISTRICT, MINAHASA REGENCY

Steven V. Tarore, Jeane Mantiri, Margareth I. R. Rantung.

Universitas Negeri Manado, Indonesia

Corresponding email : steven_taroreh@unima.ac.id

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Abstract

Public service governance at the sub-district and village levels in Indonesia often faces obstacles in the form of a rigid, top-down bureaucratic approach and minimal community participation. In Minahasa Regency, the local wisdom of Mapalus has historically proven effective in managing agrarian resources, but its use in public administration governance and handling modern social problems is still very limited. This study aims to formulate a Mapalus revitalization model in public service governance and handling social problems in East Langowan District. Using descriptive qualitative methods with secondary data analysis and literature review, this study found that Mapalus must transform from mere physical mutual cooperation to Collaborative Governance. The revitalization models offered include: (1) Administrative Mapalus to accelerate population services, (2) Social Mapalus to address stunting and poverty, and (3) Environmental Mapalus to mitigate natural disasters. The main challenges include the degradation of Mapalus values among the younger generation and the absence of a formal legal umbrella at the village level. This study recommends the integration of Mapalus into Village Regulations (Perdes) as a non-bureaucratic standard operating procedure (SOP) in public services.

Keywords: Mapalus, Public Governance, Public Services, Local Wisdom, East Langowan.

Introduction

The demand for bureaucratic reform in Indonesia is increasingly pressing in line with the development of the modern governance paradigm. The Republic of Indonesia (2009), through Law Number 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services, explicitly mandates that the implementation of public services must involve active community participation, not just as passive recipients. Furthermore, the Republic of Indonesia (2014), in Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, grants villages broader authority to regulate and manage local government affairs, including public service innovation. However, in its implementation at the sub-district and village levels, the approach used is often still conventional, rigid, and top-down. The community is often positioned as an object of service, rather than a subject or partner in governance.

According to Nugroho (2020), good public governance requires not only administrative efficiency but also the state's ability to manage diverse public interests through a participatory and inclusive approach. This is where local wisdom becomes relevant as a strategic instrument in modern governance.

Minahasa Regency, one of the regions in North Sulawesi with a rich cultural heritage, possesses a local wisdom called Mapalus. Traditionally, Mapalus is a system of mutual cooperation or reciprocal cooperation that initially focused on the agricultural and plantation sectors. However, over time, the core values of Mapalus—namely, togetherness, equality, shared responsibility, and social concern—have become highly relevant for adaptation to the governance of modern public organizations (Ngangi, 2021). The transformation of Mapalus values from the agrarian realm to the social bureaucratic realm is inevitable, especially in the context of regional autonomy, which provides space for innovation based on local wisdom (Salam, 2023).

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Langowan Timur District, located in the central part of Minahasa Regency, is a region with strong agricultural characteristics. Based on real-world data from the Minahasa Regency Central Statistics Agency (BPS) (2024), Langowan Timur District's area is dominated by agricultural and plantation land, with a population spread across various villages. This data is further supported by the Minahasa Regency BPS (2025), which shows that this region still faces classic regional development challenges, such as economic fluctuations in agrarian communities, stunting issues, and the demand for fast and equitable population administration services, even in remote villages.

The governance paradigm has undergone a significant shift in recent decades. Osborne (2010), in his classic work, *The New Public Governance*, asserted that modern public governance no longer focuses on New Public Management-style efficiency, but rather on networking, collaboration, and multi-stakeholder participation. Peters (2017) added that the New Public Management (NPM) model, which emphasizes competition and the marketization of public services, is beginning to be deemed inadequate to address the complexity of contemporary social problems, necessitating a more collaborative approach.

In the Indonesian context, Anshari and Azis (2023) found that collaborative governance in Eastern Indonesia, including North Sulawesi, faces unique challenges due to cultural and geographic diversity. However, amidst these challenges, local wisdom serves as a strategic asset for building authentic collaboration between government and society. According to Ansell and Gash (2008), collaborative governance is a governance model in which public institutions directly involve citizens (non-state actors) in collective decision-making processes through formal structures. This model emphasizes five key elements: starting conditions, catalytic leadership, institutional design, collaborative process, and outcomes.

Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh (2012) refined this framework by introducing the Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance, which emphasizes dynamic collaboration systems, where context, shared values, and incentive structures interplay. Meanwhile, Bryson, Crosby, and Stone (2015) in their study of cross-sector collaboration emphasized that the design and implementation of effective collaboration require strong leadership, trust, and clear accountability mechanisms.

Furthermore, Torfing and Ansell (2017) emphasize the importance of political leadership in strengthening collaborative innovation, especially when faced with stakeholder incongruence. In the context of public services in Indonesia, Rahayu, Pratiwi, and Santoso (2022) state that collaboration based on local wisdom is crucial for reaching areas that are geographically and administratively difficult for formal bureaucracy to reach.

In this case, Mapalus comes from the word "palus," meaning a tool for clearing agricultural land, which then implies cooperation. Warokka (2020), in his study of Minahasa sociology, emphasized that Mapalus is not simply community service, but rather an institutional system with rules, leadership (*tuo' mapalus*), and social sanctions. According to Ticoalu (2021), Mapalus' philosophical values include *Siyouw* (togetherness/unity), *Toulu* (reciprocity), and nurturing leadership, all of which are highly relevant to modern governance principles.

In the context of public administration, Thaha (2023) stated that local wisdom can function as social capital, reducing transaction costs in public services. When communities possess high levels of social capital (such as Mapalus values), trust in village governments increases, allowing government programs to run more smoothly without bureaucratic coercion. This aligns with the findings of Tondra and Mamesah (2022), who demonstrated that Mapalus, as social capital, has proven effective in accelerating village development in Minahasa.

This research's conceptual framework combines Ansell and Gash's (2008) theory of collaborative governance with the core values of Mapalus outlined by Ticoalu (2021) and Tondra and Mamesah (2022). Mapalus revitalization is positioned as an independent variable moderating the effectiveness of public services and the handling of social problems (dependent variables) at the village/sub-district level, with regulatory support from the Ministry of Home Affairs (2021) regarding Village Fund management and the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (2022) regarding public service evaluation.

Based on this background, the main problems raised in this research are: (1) What is the existing condition of public service governance and handling of social problems in Langowan Timur District which still faces obstacles to community participation? (2) How can the Mapalus local wisdom revitalization model be integrated into public service governance and handling of social problems in Langowan Timur District to make it more effective and participatory?

This research aims to: (1) Analyze the gap between the conventional bureaucratic approach and the potential of local wisdom in East Langowan; and (2) Formulate the concept of revitalizing Mapalus as a Collaborative Governance model in public services and handling social problems.

Research methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a literature study approach and secondary data analysis. Demographic and geographic data for East Langowan District from the BPS of Minahasa Regency (2024; 2025), as well as regional development planning documents and related regulations (Law No. 25/2009, Law No. 6/2014, Permendagri No. 18/2021, Permenpan RB No. 15/2022). Literature Review: Accredited scientific journals (Sinta) related to public governance, Minahasa local wisdom, and collaborative governance published between 2008 and 2025, including works by Ngangi (2021), Ngangi and Runtu (2022), Lubis and Nasution (2023), and Salam (2023). Contextual Observation: Analysis of the socio-bureaucratic realities that generally occur in the Minahasa agrarian region. Data were analyzed using data reduction techniques, data presentation, and interactive model conclusion drawing, with a focus on formulating a conceptual model of revitalization.

Results and Discussion

East Langowan District is characterized by a fairly large area with varied topography, from lowlands to hills. Based on contextual data from the Minahasa Regency Statistics Agency (2024), the main challenges faced include: First, the governance of public services is still conventional. Population administration services (KTP, KK, Birth Certificate) at the village level are often hampered because residents must come to the village or sub-district office. The "jemput bola" program initiated by the Minahasa Population and Civil Registration Office is often suboptimal at the village level due to the lack of active participation of village officials and community leaders. The bureaucracy operates on a waiting-in-the-door basis, not an outreach approach. This contradicts the principles of public service evaluation mandated by the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (2022), which emphasizes community satisfaction and ease of access.

Second, the handling of social problems is fragmented. Issues such as stunting, extreme poverty, and household waste are often handled sectorally. For example, stunting management is solely the responsibility of Community Health Centers (Puskemas) and Integrated Health Posts (Posyandu), without involving community-based efforts. As a result, data on aid recipients is often inaccurate (mistargeted) due to the lack of social control mechanisms within the community itself. The Ministry of Home Affairs (2021) has actually provided space through Ministerial Regulation No. 18 of 2021 concerning Village Fund Management, which allows villages to allocate funds for community empowerment programs based on local wisdom. However, its implementation in East Langowan remains very minimal.

In these conditions, a rigid formal bureaucratic approach has proven ineffective. Lubis and Nasution (2023), in their study on the revitalization of local wisdom, emphasized that a cultural approach deeply ingrained in society is key to overcoming the failure of formal bureaucracy at the village level. This is where the urgency of revitalizing Mapalus lies.

Revitalizing Mapalus does not mean returning the community to traditional farming methods, but rather adopting its philosophy and management system into public governance. According to Warokka (2020), Mapalus has three main pillars: Siyouw (togetherness/unity), Tuo' Mapalus (nurturing leadership), and Toulu (reciprocity). These three pillars, according to Ngangi (2021), can be transformed into instruments of modern public governance. Ngangi and Runtu (2022) in their Mapalus culture-based community empowerment model in North Sulawesi showed that when Mapalus values were integrated into village development programs, community participation increased significantly, and bureaucratic transaction costs decreased. In the context of public services in East Langowan, this revitalization means shifting the paradigm from "the government serving a passive community" to "the government and community conducting Mapalus to solve problems together."

Based on context and literature analysis, the following are three concrete models of Mapalus revitalization that can be applied in East Langowan District:

"Mapalus Administration" Model for Public Services

In this model, Mapalus is used to expedite population administration services. Mechanism: A small team is formed in each village consisting of village staff, RT/RW heads, and youth leaders (as administrative Tuo' Mapalus). This team

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conducts "Mapalus Jemput Bola" periodically (e.g., once a month) to hamlets far from the village office to record ID cards, print family cards, and process birth certificates.

Mapalus Value: Communities assisted today will participate in other village activities in the future (Toulu/reciprocity value). This eliminates the geographical and bureaucratic barriers often complained about by the people of East Langowan. This model aligns with the findings of Rahayu, Pratiwi, and Santoso (2022) on community participation in public services based on local wisdom.

The "Social Mapalus" Model for Addressing Stunting and Poverty

Handling social problems cannot only rely on the limited Village Fund (DD) budget.

Mechanism: Reactivating the Pakarasaan or Pengumpulan system (a voluntary social gathering/donation system in Minahasan culture) specifically geared towards social issues. For example, every well-off family in the village sets aside a portion of their harvest or income once a month into the village's "Mapalus Sosial Fund." This fund is not managed rigidly by the village government, but rather by women's groups (PKK/Pagyuban) to purchase eggs, milk, or local food for stunted toddlers.

Mapalus Values: Shifting stunting management from a medical-bureaucratic approach to a communal-cultural one. Communities feel a shared responsibility (Siyouw) for the well-being of children in their village, making nutrition interventions more effective and sustainable. Thaha (2023) emphasized that this type of social capital is highly effective in village governance in North Sulawesi.

The "Environmental Mapalus" Model for Disaster Mitigation

East Langowan and its surroundings are prone to the impacts of extreme weather (strong winds, landslides in hilly areas).

Mechanism: Reviving the environmental Mapalus tradition, but with modern management. The village government no longer simply issues cleanliness circulars but directly leads "Village Clean Mapalus," which focuses on cleaning drainage systems, pruning trees prone to falling, and creating biopores.

Mapalus Values: The leadership of the sub-district head or Hukum Tua, who directly leads Mapalus, will set an exemplary example, significantly increasing community compliance with environmental hygiene regulations. Torfing and Ansell (2017) emphasize that strong political leadership is key to the success of collaborative innovation, particularly in the context of disaster mitigation.

Challenges and Obstacles to Revitalization

Although conceptually very ideal, the revitalization of Mapalus in East Langowan faces several real challenges: First, the degradation of values among the younger generation. Today's young generation in Minahasa is more individualistic and exposed to global pop culture. They often view Mapalus as an "old-fashioned" activity performed only by older people. Adaptation of language and methods is necessary, for example, using social media to coordinate digital Mapalus or youth Mapalus. Salam (2023) emphasized that public service innovations based on local wisdom must be able to adapt to the characteristics of the younger generation to prevent extinction.

Second, there is no formal legal framework. Currently, Mapalus still operates informally. In modern public governance, everything related to community finances and obligations must have a legal basis. Without a Village Regulation (Perdes) or Regent Regulation (Perbup) that integrates Mapalus into service Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Mapalus will remain a casual activity (like regular community service) and will not be sustainable. Bryson, Crosby, and Stone (2015) emphasize that a strong institutional design is a prerequisite for successful cross-sector collaboration.

Third, bureaucratic resistance. Some village or sub-district officials may feel threatened or burdened by the Mapalus model, as it requires them to work extra hard, go into the field, and interact directly with the community, leaving behind the comfort of desk jobs. Peters (2017) cautions that the transition from the NPM model to New Public Governance often faces resistance from within the bureaucracy, accustomed to the old ways of working.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Public service governance and social problem management in East Langowan District, Minahasa Regency, still face obstacles due to a rigid bureaucratic approach and minimal participation. Revitalizing the local wisdom of Mapalus offers a strategic solution to address this gap. Mapalus is no longer viewed merely as an agrarian tradition of mutual

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cooperation, but must be revitalized as an instrument of Collaborative Governance, as proposed by Ansell and Gash (2008) and developed by Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh (2012). Through the Administrative Mapalus, Social Mapalus, and Environmental Mapalus models, the government and community can collaborate equally, expedite public services, and address social issues such as stunting communally. However, the success of this revitalization depends heavily on the ability to adapt Mapalus values into formal regulations and involve the younger generation.

Based on the above conclusions, this study recommends several strategic steps for the East Langowan District Government and the Minahasa Regency Government: (1) Issuance of a Regent Regulation (Perbup) on Mapalus in Public Services: The Minahasa Regency Government needs to issue a Perbup that explicitly integrates Mapalus values and mechanisms into the Minimum Service Standards (SPM) at the sub-district and village levels. This will provide legal and budgetary legitimacy for village officials to implement Mapalus-based programs, in line with the mandate of the Republic of Indonesia (2009) on Public Services. (2) Preparation of Village Regulations (Perdes) in East Langowan: Each village in East Langowan District is advised to prepare a special Perdes on "Mapalus Institutionalization". This Perdes will regulate the rights and obligations of residents, leadership mechanisms (Tuo' Mapalus), and the integration of Mapalus with the use of Village Funds as regulated in the Ministry of Home Affairs (2021). (3) Establishment of a "Millennial Mapalus Forum": To address the degradation of values among youth, East Langowan District needs to facilitate a youth forum that packages Mapalus activities with a modern approach, such as digital crowdfunding for social assistance, or the use of applications for neighborhood Mapalus coordination. Ngangi and Runtu (2022) showed that youth involvement in a Mapalus-based empowerment model significantly increases program sustainability.

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