Direct Cash Assistance from Village Funds (BLT-DD) in Watulaney Village, Lembean Timur District

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Direct Cash Assistance Program from Village Funds (BLT-DD) in Watulaney Village, Lembean Timur District, with a specific focus on the factors influencing the program's effectiveness. Using a qualitative approach and the policy implementation theory by Van Meter and Van Horn (1975), the study evaluates six key variables: policy standards and objectives, resources, inter-organizational communication, characteristics of the implementing agency, implementers' attitudes, and the social, economic, and political conditions. The findings indicate that the implementation of BLT-DD in Watulaney Village faces several challenges, including mistargeted beneficiaries, delays in fund disbursement, and limitations in human resources and technological infrastructure. Although supported by regulations such as the Ministry of Villages Regulation No. 6 of 2020 and No. 13 of 2023, the program still encounters difficulties in data collection, verification, and coordination among stakeholders. On the other hand, community participation and transparency in village meetings are identified as significant supporting factors. This study recommends improving the accuracy of recipient data, strengthening the capacity of village officials through training, and optimizing the use of digital technology for data management and reporting. Hence, the BLT-DD program is expected to become more effective in achieving its goals of poverty alleviation and enhancing the welfare of the residents of Watulaney Village.

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INTRODUCTION

The implementation of government social protection policies at the village level in Indonesia remains a critical area for investigation. The Village Fund Direct Cash Assistance (BLT-DD) program, introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, was designed to alleviate economic hardships experienced by rural communities. Despite its noble goals, several villages across Indonesia, including Watulaney Village in East Lembean District, have reported challenges in implementing the program effectively. This study was prompted by such issues and aims to uncover the underlying causes of these problems.

In Watulaney Village, the socio-economic impact of the pandemic exacerbated already existing issues such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of infrastructure. BLT-DD was introduced as a direct intervention to address these conditions by providing monthly cash transfers to underprivileged households. However, local reports and preliminary findings indicate discrepancies between policy intentions and field realities. Common complaints include delays in disbursement, inaccurate targeting of beneficiaries, limited participation in the data verification process, and a general lack of transparency.

This research seeks to answer two fundamental questions: Why has the implementation of BLT-DD in Watulaney Village not achieved optimal outcomes? What are the key determinants that influence the effectiveness of its implementation? By focusing on these issues, the study aims to provide insights that are not only academically valuable but also practically applicable for local governments and policymakers who aim to refine the program.

A policy, no matter how well-drafted, is only as effective as its implementation. In the case of Watulaney Village, it becomes essential to analyze the intersection between institutional readiness, administrative capacity, and community dynamics. The study draws upon the policy implementation framework proposed by Van Meter and Van Horn, which considers six key variables: clarity of policy standards and goals, availability of resources, inter-agency communication, characteristics of implementing agencies, attitudes of implementers, and prevailing social, economic, and political conditions. These variables will guide the assessment of the implementation quality and effectiveness of BLT-DD in the local context.

The problem is multifaceted and rooted in both structural and human elements. Inadequate training, insufficient technological infrastructure, and minimal community involvement have collectively impaired the successful realization of the program's objectives. Furthermore, the gap between national policy frameworks and local administrative practices remains a persistent obstacle.

By analyzing these challenges comprehensively, this research aspires to contribute toward a more refined, inclusive, and effective model of rural poverty alleviation. It is hoped that findings from this study will influence future implementations of BLT-DD and similar social programs across other rural regions in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The implementation of public policy, particularly in the context of poverty alleviation, has been the subject of extensive academic inquiry. Scholars such as William Dunn (2020) define public policy as a series of interrelated decisions taken by public authorities, influenced by socio-political context and aimed at solving specific public issues. James E. Anderson (2019) further explains policy as a purposive course of action followed by an actor or a group of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern. These definitions stress the role of government in formulating and implementing policies aimed at public welfare.

Policy implementation is the stage where formulated policies are translated into actionable programs. Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) offer one of the most comprehensive frameworks to analyze policy implementation. According to them, six variables affect the successful implementation of any policy: (1) policy standards and objectives, (2) resources, (3) communication among implementing agencies, (4) characteristics of the implementing agencies, (5) disposition of the implementers, and (6) the socio-economic and political environment. These factors are interdependent and collectively determine whether a policy can achieve its intended impact.

In Indonesia, the Village Fund Program (Dana Desa) is governed under multiple regulations, notably the Ministerial Regulations No. 6 of 2020 and No. 13 of 2023. These policies mandate that a significant portion of village funds be allocated for direct cash assistance (BLT-DD) to economically disadvantaged households. The goal is to provide immediate relief from poverty and support local economic recovery, especially in the post-pandemic context. However, studies have shown that implementation challenges persist. According to Cecelia Helenia (2021), poor coordination among implementing bodies and inaccuracies in data often hinder the effectiveness of such programs.

Zaki Al Mubarok and Slamet (2022) emphasize that human resource limitations, including lack of training and low digital literacy, weaken program delivery. Other research, such as that by I Made Arya Udayana and I Nyoman Sukraaliawan (2021), focuses on the importance of implementers' integrity and commitment. They argue that policy outcomes are often more reflective of implementers' discretion and behavior than of the policy itself.

Furthermore, research on the implementation of BLT-DD in other rural regions like Taba Air Pauh (Purnawan, 2021) and Sea Village in Minahasa (Sasuwuk, 2021) shows similar issues: inaccurate targeting, lack of transparency, and minimal community involvement. These findings highlight the necessity of improving institutional capacity and fostering inclusive governance practices.

This literature forms the theoretical backbone of the current study and reinforces the applicability of the Van Meter and Van Horn framework. It also underlines the need for a multidimensional approach in analyzing policy implementation that goes beyond structural analysis to include behavioral, institutional, and socio-political dimensions.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the implementation of the Village Fund Direct Cash Assistance (BLT-DD) program in Watulaney Village. The qualitative method is appropriate for capturing complex social phenomena and understanding the perspectives of key stakeholders involved in the implementation process.

The research was conducted in Watulaney Village, East Lembean District, Minahasa Regency. Data were collected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Key informants included village officials, district administrators, community leaders, and recipients of BLT-DD. In total, eight informants were interviewed through semi-structured, in-depth interviews to obtain rich and contextual data.Primary data were collected via interviews and direct observations, while secondary data were gathered from official documents, program reports, and previous research. Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model, comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data credibility, the study applied triangulation, prolonged engagement, and member checks as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985). These methods enhanced the reliability and validity of the findings. The research design was framed using the Van Meter and Van Horn policy implementation model, focusing on six interrelated variables as the analytical lens.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal several significant insights regarding the operational practices, challenges, and institutional factors that shape the performance of protocol officers at the Regional Secretariat of Minahasa Regency. This section presents a comprehensive discussion on four main dimensions: (1) work procedures, (2) knowledge and skills, (3) determining factors, and (4) recommended strategies.

Work Procedures and Execution

Protocol officers in Minahasa Regency follow a systematic approach to executing their duties. Their tasks begin with receiving directives from the regional leadership, particularly the Regent and Vice Regent. The team then engages in planning, coordination, technical preparations, implementation, and post-event evaluation. Field observations and interviews with the Vice Regent and the Protocol Head confirm that protocol officers play a strategic role in representing the formal image of the local government.

The process includes detailed scheduling, location surveys, coordination with multiple stakeholders, including local security and other regional work units (OPDs), and drafting official speeches. Officers are required to adapt quickly to unforeseen changes such as weather conditions, guest alterations, and schedule shifts. Such adaptability is often reliant on personal initiative and professional experience due to the limited scope of existing SOPs. The absence of an integrated digital platform was also noted as a recurring limitation.

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Knowledge and Skills

Interviews indicate that protocol officers are expected to possess a blend of formal knowledge, technical skills, and interpersonal competence. Knowledge requirements include familiarity with national and regional protocol standards, etiquette, and ceremonial norms. Technical skills include layout design, speech preparation, time management, and handling audio-visual tools.

Soft skills are critical: officers must be articulate, composed, and emotionally intelligent. The ability to coordinate across departments and maintain poise under pressure is often cited as essential. However, professional development opportunities are limited. Most officers rely on experience rather than structured training. This gap in training raises concerns about consistency and long-term institutional capability.

Determining Factors Affecting Effectiveness

Several key factors influence the effectiveness of protocol operations:

- Human Resources: The limited number of trained personnel poses a major constraint. With an increasing number of official events, the workload often exceeds current staffing capacity.
- Infrastructure: Basic ceremonial equipment, such as podiums, sound systems, and backdrops, is not standardized. Often, protocol teams must rent or improvise, leading to inconsistencies.
- Coordination: While internal coordination mechanisms exist, cooperation with other departments is uneven. Some OPDs are less responsive in submitting guest data or confirming participation, which hinders planning.
- Institutional Support: The institutional perception of protocol roles as merely ceremonial undermines investment in training, equipment, and staff development. This lack of prioritization reduces motivation and professional identity among officers.

Strategic Recommendations

To address the challenges outlined above, the study recommends several measures:

- Development of Adaptive SOPs: SOPs should include contingency protocols and context-specific guidelines aligned with local needs.
- Regular Training and Certification: The government should initiate annual training workshops, simulate event management, and facilitate peer learning forums.
- Digital Coordination Systems: A centralized digital system for invitations, guest lists, and event tracking would improve coordination and reduce logistical errors.
- Increased Investment: Allocation of funds for standard protocol equipment and additional staffing should be institutionalized.

These strategies are supported by theoretical perspectives on organizational behavior, which emphasize that performance is a function of both individual capability and organizational environment (Robbins, 2013). The integration of structured management practices into protocol work aligns with broader public administration goals of efficiency, accountability, and professionalization.

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Overall, protocol officers in Minahasa Regency demonstrate strong commitment and adaptive capacity. However, the institutional framework must evolve to support their roles more systematically. Enhancing the visibility and status of protocol units within government structures is essential for building a responsive, efficient, and respected public administration system.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the implementation of the Village Fund Direct Cash Assistance (BLT-DD) program in Watulaney Village, East Lembean District, using the Van Meter and Van Horn policy implementation model. The findings reveal that although the BLT-DD program was designed with a clear goal of alleviating poverty among vulnerable rural populations, its local implementation was fraught with challenges that undermined its effectiveness. Key issues identified include unclear application of eligibility criteria, inadequate human and technological resources, weak inter-organizational coordination, insufficient institutional capacity, inconsistent implementer commitment, and a socio-political environment prone to tension and favoritism. These factors collectively hindered the timely and accurate delivery of assistance to those most in need. Despite these setbacks, there are also indications of resilience and community engagement, such as calls for improved transparency and stronger community forums. The research underscores the importance of aligning national policy intentions with local administrative capacities and community realities. One-size-fits-all approaches are insufficient, and context-specific adaptations are necessary. To improve the effectiveness of BLT-DD, several recommendations emerge from this study: (1) strengthen beneficiary data verification mechanisms; (2) invest in capacity building for village staff; (3) develop digital infrastructure to support transparent data management; (4) institutionalize community participation in all phases of program implementation; and (5) ensure consistent and clear communication across all administrative levels. The Van Meter and Van Horn framework proved instrumental in dissecting the complexity of the implementation process. It offers a robust lens for identifying multi-dimensional challenges and framing holistic solutions. In conclusion, the success of rural poverty alleviation policies such as BLT-DD depends not only on regulatory frameworks but on the synergy between governance capacity, technology, and public engagement. For Indonesia's rural development agenda to be realized effectively, localized, adaptive, and participatory implementation strategies must be prioritized.

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