

From Poverty to Inequality: Evaluation of the Implementation of the Family Hope Program (PKH) and Its Impact on Social Inequality in North Sumatra

Sri Ayu Ulandari

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara
Sriayu0103202041@uinsu.ac.id

Ahmad Sampurna

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara
ahmadsampurna@uinsu.ac.id

Suggested Citation:

Ulandari, Sri Ayu; Sampurna, Ahmad. (2025). From Poverty to Inequality: Evaluation of the Implementation of the Family Hope Program (PKH) and Its Impact on Social Inequality in North Sumatra. *Temali: Jurnal Pembangunan Sosial*, Volume 8, Nomor 1: 65–76. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15575/jt.v8i1.43770>.

Article's History:

Received December 2024; Revised January 2025; Accepted February 2025.
2025. journal.uinsgd.ac.id ©. All rights reserved.

Abstract:

This study aims to evaluate the implementation of the *Family Hope Program* (PKH) in Sei Lumut Village, North Sumatra Province, focusing on its impact on community welfare, the obstacles faced during program implementation, and the social inequality that emerges among the community. The study also seeks to identify strategies that the government and relevant stakeholders can employ to optimize the effectiveness of the PKH program in reducing social inequality in the village. The research uses a qualitative approach with data collection techniques such as in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document studies. The findings indicate that the social inequality created is not only caused by miscommunication but also by the lack of mechanisms that allow for the adjustment of the socio-economic status of PKH beneficiaries. Irregular data updates exacerbate this gap, while unclear communication confuses the recipients. This study contributes to understanding how better data management and communication can improve the effectiveness of PKH and reduce social inequality within the community. Therefore, managing aid should focus on improving the data management system, strengthening coordination among stakeholders, and enhancing outreach to beneficiaries for more effective implementation.

Keywords: *Family Hope Program, social inequality, data management, effective communication, outreach.*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi pelaksanaan Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH) di Desa Sei Lumut, Provinsi Sumatera Utara, dengan fokus pada dampaknya terhadap kesejahteraan masyarakat, hambatan yang dihadapi dalam implementasi program, serta ketimpangan sosial yang muncul di kalangan masyarakat. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi strategi yang dapat digunakan untuk mengoptimalkan efektivitas program PKH dalam mengurangi ketimpangan sosial di desa tersebut. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ketimpangan sosial yang tercipta bukan hanya disebabkan oleh miskomunikasi, tetapi juga oleh kurangnya mekanisme yang memungkinkan penyesuaian status sosial-ekonomi penerima bantuan Program Keluarga Harapan. Pembaruan data yang tidak teratur memperburuk kesenjangan ini, sementara komunikasi yang tidak jelas menyebabkan kebingungan di kalangan penerima manfaat. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi dalam memahami bagaimana pengelolaan data dan komunikasi yang lebih baik dapat meningkatkan efektivitas PKH dan mengurangi ketimpangan sosial di masyarakat. Oleh

karena itu, pengelolaan bantuan harus memperbaiki sistem manajemen data dan memperkuat koordinasi antara pemangku kepentingan, serta memperbaiki sosialisasi kepada penerima bantuan agar lebih efektif.

Kata Kunci: Program Keluarga Harapan, ketimpangan sosial, pengelolaan data, komunikasi efektif, sosialisasi.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty remains a significant challenge faced by the Indonesian government, particularly in rural areas (Faharuddin et al., 2022; Sugiharti, Purwono, et al., 2022). The *Family Hope Program* (PKH) is one of the strategic initiatives launched by the Indonesian government in 2007 to address poverty through conditional social assistance. The program aims to improve low-income families' access to healthcare, education, and social welfare services (Gibson et al., 2023; Purwono et al., 2021). However, the implementation of this program often encounters obstacles, especially in rural areas such as Sei Lumut Village, Panai Hilir District, Labuhan Batu Regency, and North Sumatra. According to the report by the *Central Statistics Agency of North Sumatra* (2023), the poverty rate in rural areas, including Sei Lumut Village, increased from 525,740 in September 2022 to 529,730 in March 2023. This fact indicates a mismatch between the ideal goals of *PKH* and the reality on the ground.

In Sei Lumut Village, the government and relevant stakeholders have faced various challenges in implementing *PKH*, including the lack of updated beneficiary data, inaccurate distribution of aid, and poor coordination between village officials and program assistants. These conditions hinder the primary goal of *PKH*, which is to reduce social inequality. Moreover, community members experience social jealousy when they perceive the aid as unevenly distributed or not aligned with the actual conditions on the ground (Sadjad, 2023). Not all members of the community are entitled to receive assistance from the *PKH* program. The poverty reduction program must register beneficiaries in its integrated data, requiring them to engage in activities related to healthcare, education, and social welfare (Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020). In practice, authorities list beneficiaries in a special poverty database, which they manage centrally alongside the Beneficiary Families (KPM) category (Luthfi, 2019). However, in Sei Lumut Village, there are families more deserving of assistance, which ultimately leads to social inequality.

Previous studies have extensively discussed the benefits of *PKH* in improving access to education and healthcare for people experiencing poverty on a national level (Aldiansyah et al., 2024; Pangestu & Fedryansyah, 2023). Additionally, some studies discuss social welfare policies in Indonesia more broadly, such as inter-regional cooperation to combat poverty (Primanto et al., 2021) and challenges in building a welfare regime in Indonesia (Yuda & Kühner, 2023). Other studies highlight legal approaches and prophetic values in welfare policies (Dimiyati et al., 2021), as well as a comparison of Indonesia's social policies with those of developed countries like South Korea (Yuda et al., 2023). Research related to zakat also demonstrates the potential of social funds to reduce inequality and enhance economic welfare (Riyadi et al., 2021; Sulaeman et al., 2021). However, most of these studies focus on macro or national-level analyses, while in-depth explorations of local *PKH* implementation dynamics remain limited. This gap presents an opportunity to further explore the evaluation of *PKH* implementation at the local level.

This study aims to evaluate the implementation of the *Family Hope Program* (*PKH*) with a focus on its impact on community welfare, the obstacles faced, social inequality within the community, and the strategies used to optimize the program in Sei Lumut Village, North Sumatra Province.

This study argues that the success of the *Family Hope Program* (*PKH*) does not solely depend on the accurate distribution of aid but also the effectiveness of its implementation strategy, communication among stakeholders, and the program's ability to adapt to local needs. By improving data management, coordination, transparency, and outreach, *PKH* can be more effective in holistically enhancing the welfare of poor communities at the village level.

METHOD

Researchers conducted this research with *PKH* beneficiaries and program administrators in Sei Lumut Village, Panai Hilir District, Labuhan Batu Regency, North Sumatra Province. Sei Lumut Village was selected as the research location because the implementation of the *PKH* program in this village was misdirected, and there was

a prevailing belief that research on aid recipients was unnecessary. Therefore, local opinions are crucial to provide a more comprehensive overview of the program's implementation.

The participants in this study consist of two main groups: PKH beneficiaries and program administrators. Six PKH beneficiaries with a primary school education level were involved in the research. The criteria for their inclusion were that they had children who were still attending school. Additionally, the participants also included village officials and PKH program assistants. The profiles of the research participants are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Research Participants

No.	Name	Status	Age	Education	Number of Children
1	Suamarni	Aid Recipient	33	Primary	3
2	Mira	Aid Recipient	25	Primary	2
3	Onah	Aid Recipient	37	Primary	6
4	Anah	Aid Recipient	40	Primary	6
5	Arbaiyah	Aid Recipient	29	Primary	2
6	Atik	Aid Recipient	35	Primary	3
7	Pian	Village Official	33	High School	2
8	Musdalifah	Village Assistant	35	Bachelor	3

Source: Processed from Research, 2024.

This research uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to understand the experiences (Cresswell, 2014; Setia & Rosele, 2024), perceptions, and realities experienced by participants regarding the implementation of the PKH program in the village. The data collected consists of primary and secondary data (Mulyani et al., 2024; Sulastri et al., 2024). Primary data comes from direct observations made by the researcher during the implementation of the PKH program, as well as in-depth interviews with beneficiaries, village officials, and program assistants. Researchers obtained secondary data from official documents, such as the list of names and addresses of beneficiaries, data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) Labuhan Batu, and village administrative documents.

The researcher collected data using three main techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The researchers conducted direct observation to assess the extent to which the PKH program meets its established goals, focusing on the impacts felt by the beneficiaries and program administrators. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews using open-ended questions tailored to answer the research objectives. The data collection process was carried out in June 2024. Additionally, supporting documents such as statistical data and relevant photos were collected to provide a more detailed overview.

The collected data was then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman (2013) approach, which involves three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The researchers performed data reduction to filter relevant information, presented the data in the form of tables and descriptive narratives, and drew conclusions based on patterns in the findings. This research employed the triangulation of sources by comparing the views of three participant groups—the aid recipients, village officials, and program assistants—to ensure the validity of the data. The researchers used this triangulation method to validate the findings and enhance the credibility of the research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Positive Impact of PKH on Education and the Economy in Sei Lumut Village

This research was conducted in Sei Lumut Village, Panai Hilir District, Labuhan Batu Regency, North Sumatra Province, a village with an area of 65.78 km² and a population of approximately 3,557 people (*Badan Pusat Statistik Labuhan Batu*, 2024). The researchers selected the village because it has implemented the Family Hope Program (PKH).

Family Hope Program (PKH) is one of the government's efforts to reduce poverty by distributing cash transfers to low-income families registered in the system (Faridav et al., 2021; Misnawati & Tahir, 2021). In Sei Lumut Village, the program administrators distributed cash assistance of IDR 700,000 to families that met the poverty criteria. As part of the policy, beneficiaries are required to fulfill several conditions, such as health checks for pregnant women, infants, and toddlers, and ensuring that their children attend school with a minimum attendance rate of 85% per semester (Irmayani et al., 2019). This program aims not only to improve health and education quality but also to encourage the economic empowerment of low-income families.

According to Suamarni, a 33-year-old *PKH* beneficiary, "My child almost couldn't continue school because of the cost. But now, with the *PKH* assistance, I can buy the books and school supplies they need, and I'm no longer worried about school fees" (Interview, June 16, 2024). This statement shows that the cash assistance from *PKH* has provided low-income families with easier access to their children's education.

Figure 1. The Process of *PKH* Assistance Distribution in Sei Lumut Village



Source: Research Results, 2024.

The *PKH* program in Sei Lumut Village has had a significant positive impact on the education of the children of beneficiaries. One of the main changes has been increased access to education for children from low-income families. Previously, the cost of education was a major barrier for many low-income families, causing many children to drop out of school or not continue their education to higher levels. With cash assistance, parents feel supported in covering their children's educational costs, ranging from school supplies to other fees. This is reflected in the statement by Mira, a *PKH* recipient, who said, "My child, who is in middle school, struggles with online learning because we don't have a good enough phone. We hope there's assistance for technology devices so they can learn more effectively" (Interview, June 16, 2024). She pointed out that although *PKH* assistance has reduced the financial burden of education, access to technology remains a challenge that needs attention.

Before this program, many families had to choose between meeting basic needs or continuing their children's education. However, with *PKH* funds, beneficiary families feel more supported in terms of education. This has positively impacted the school participation rate, with many children who were at risk of dropping out now able to continue their education. As Anah, a *PKH* recipient with six children, said, "*PKH* has helped a lot. I can buy basic needs and focus more on finding extra income for the family. I use some of the assistance to sell fried snacks in front of my house" (Interview, June 19, 2024).

Additionally, *PKH* assistance has also had a significant impact on the economic well-being of families. Many families that previously struggled to meet basic needs, such as food, clothing, and medicine, now feel more supported with the assistance. This assistance provides them with financial security and reduces worries about meeting basic needs. Onah, a mother with six children, explained, "*PKH* helps, but sometimes it's still not enough. I have to work part-time at the market to meet the school needs of my children and other household expenses" (Interview, June 16, 2024).

Some beneficiaries have also used part of the assistance as capital for small businesses, helping them increase their family income. This shows that, in addition to being consumptive assistance, *PKH* has the potential to become a means of sustainable economic empowerment if used wisely. However, even though these positive impacts are clearly visible, there are still families who feel that *PKH* assistance is not sufficient to meet their economic needs fully. "There are many residents who are unaware of the aid disbursement schedule or the amount they will receive. Sometimes, they feel confused because of unclear information. This makes many beneficiaries unable to utilize the assistance fully" (Pian, Village Official, Interview, June 13, 2024).

Although *PKH* has had a positive impact on education and the economy, the implementation of this program faces significant challenges related to data management and communication. One of the main issues

is the inaccuracy of the information conveyed to beneficiaries. Many people do not understand their obligations, the amount they will receive, and when the assistance will be disbursed. Furthermore, the management of outdated data is another major factor hindering the effectiveness of the government's social welfare program. In Sei Lumut Village, the list of *PKH* beneficiaries has not been updated since 2022, which means that some families who should no longer receive assistance are still registered, while families that need assistance are not yet listed.

The Mis-targeting of the *PKH* Program in Sei Lumut Village

Sei Lumut Village consists of five hamlets, and most of its population relies on livelihoods as farmers, fishermen, and traders. Targeting accuracy in the implementation of *PKH* is crucial to ensure that assistance reaches those who truly need it. However, slow and irregular data updates have caused issues within this program.

Based on the research, the study found that the inaccuracy of beneficiary data is a major obstacle hindering the effectiveness of *PKH* in Sei Lumut Village. The outdated data, which has not been updated since 2022, causes inaccuracies in the distribution of aid. These inaccuracies result in dissatisfaction among the community, especially among those who feel that the program has not assisted families in true need. Some residents expressed their disappointment because there are beneficiaries whose economic conditions have improved but still receive assistance, while other families in greater need are not registered.

"The main issue lies in the distribution of aid, which is only based on administrative data that has not been updated. Although this data records beneficiaries as low-income families, there is no mechanism to update it to ensure that the economic conditions of the beneficiaries are still relevant to current circumstances. The lack of regular data updates causes unfairness in aid distribution, which ultimately worsens social tensions in the community" (Pian, Village Official, Interview, June 13, 2024).

One of the main reasons the data of *PKH* beneficiaries in Sei Lumut Village has not been updated is the lack of an integrated and consistent data updating mechanism. In an interview with the village official, we found that the data updating process often faces disruption due to insufficient human resources, both in terms of quantity and quality. "We in this village have very few staff handling aid administration, and not all of them understand how to verify beneficiary data. Training from the government is also rare, so we often don't know where to start in updating this data" (Pian, Village Official, Interview, June 13, 2024). Additionally, Sei Lumut Village, being in a remote area, faces significant challenges in managing administration due to the lack of training and technical assistance for the village officials responsible for verifying and updating the data. As a result, this process is often seen as a formality without ensuring the validity and accuracy of the data produced.

Furthermore, relying on a manual system that is not fully connected to modern information technology creates a major obstacle. The recording system for beneficiaries still relies on physical documents or verbal reports that are prone to human error. This situation is exacerbated by the absence of synergy between the village government and higher authorities, such as the Social Services Office, which should provide technical guidance and conduct regular supervision. The absence of supervision has made data updates often neglected, especially when the village experiences staff turnover or lacks routine performance evaluations.

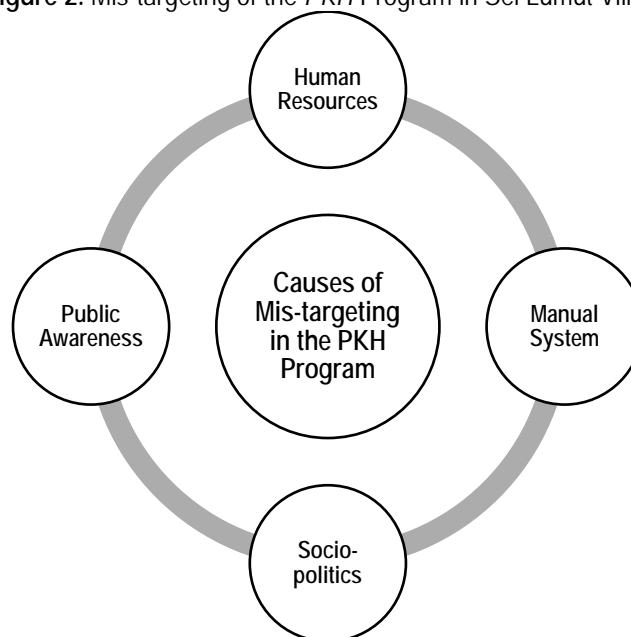
In addition to technical factors, there are also social-political dynamics that affect the data updating process. Some village officials admit that pressure from certain parties to retain certain beneficiaries' names on the aid list often occurs. This is due to political or social interests, where village officials are reluctant to remove names of beneficiaries who no longer meet the criteria because they fear causing conflict or losing support from the community. In some cases, this leads to nepotism or the provision of aid based on personal closeness rather than objective need.

"Sometimes it's difficult to remove the names of beneficiaries who no longer qualify because there's pressure from the community. Some families feel that this aid is their right, even though their economic conditions have improved. If we remove their names, they might get angry or even cause conflicts" (Pian, Village Official, Interview, June 13, 2024).

Another contributing factor is the lack of public awareness to report changes in their economic status voluntarily. Many families that have moved out of poverty choose to continue receiving aid because there is no

incentive system encouraging them to report these changes. This reflects weak education on the responsibilities of aid recipients and the lack of supervision from the relevant authorities.

Figure 2. Mis-targeting of the *PKH* Program in Sei Lumut Village



Source: Research Results, 2024.

The combination of a lack of human resources, dependence on manual systems, social-political pressures, and low public awareness creates a vicious cycle of problems that prevent *PKH* beneficiary data from being updated properly. The *PKH* program aims to reduce social inequality and improve the welfare of low-income families, but if the beneficiary data is not updated and accurate, the program cannot achieve its goals effectively (Tampubolon, 2023; Umayah et al., 2023). Data that is not updated regularly hinders the accurate distribution of aid, which in turn causes feelings of injustice within the community.

The implementation of *PKH* in Sei Lumut Village also faces obstacles related to the limited number of program facilitators, who consist of only one or two people. Additionally, the rare coordination between village officials and program facilitators hampers effective communication and monitoring of the program's implementation. Musdalifah, a program facilitator, stated that more intensive socialization and training are needed to ensure that the community clearly understands the program's mechanisms and requirements. "Although this program has a positive impact, many beneficiaries are still confused about the aid mechanisms and procedures. More socialization and training are needed so that the information provided is clearer" (Musdalifah, Interview, June 15, 2024).

Musdalifah also emphasized the importance of evaluation and good collaboration between program facilitators and village officials. According to her, increased socialization can help disseminate information about the program more evenly to the community. While aid recipients have felt positive impacts, especially in meeting their children's educational and health needs, clearer communication is still needed regarding the applicable terms and conditions.

Several beneficiaries made a similar statement. For example, Suamarni expressed that, "There's no longer any reason for children to drop out of school, despite the challenges faced, which is understandable given the number of beneficiaries" (Interview, June 16, 2024). Meanwhile, Mira hopes for improved communication about the terms and amount of assistance received. "I hope that in the future, communication about the terms and the amount of aid received will improve" (Interview, June 16, 2024). Onah also shared a similar opinion, emphasizing the importance of transparency in communication. "There should be improvements in transparency and communication between program administrators and the community so that all beneficiaries can clearly understand their rights and obligations" (Onah, Interview, June 16, 2024).

From the findings above, it can be concluded that the implementation of *PKH* in Sei Lumut Village still faces several main challenges, including inaccurate beneficiary data, a lack of coordination, and the limited resources

of facilitators. Uncertainty regarding the amount and terms of assistance, along with ineffective communication between administrators and the community, further worsens the situation. Therefore, to ensure that assistance is distributed accurately and according to needs, regular data updates, more transparent communication systems, and better collaboration between village officials and program facilitators are necessary. With these steps, the *PKH* program can achieve its goal of reducing poverty and social inequality and ensure that aid reaches those who truly need it.

Social Inequality Due to *PKH* in Sei Lumut Village

The *PKH* program, designed to assist low-income families through cash transfers, is often seen as a tool to reduce social and economic disparities. However, this study's findings reveal that despite its goal of alleviating poverty, the implementation of *PKH* in Sei Lumut Village has instead created significant new social inequalities. As a village with a population mostly living below the poverty line, *PKH* should ideally be a highly beneficial program. Yet, the findings of this study indicate that inaccuracies in updating the data of *PKH* beneficiaries, which have not been updated since 2022, have led to several problems.

The failure to regularly update the data has resulted in some families that should no longer be classified as poor remaining registered as beneficiaries, while other families in greater need are left out. This phenomenon creates social injustice, where families that are no longer in need of assistance continue to receive help while those who need it most are excluded. The researcher noted that, under normal circumstances, individuals who experience a change in their economic status – such as those who successfully escape poverty – should no longer receive assistance. However, due to the irregular data updates, families who no longer qualify for assistance are still registered and continue to receive funds.

This outdated data is not just an administrative issue but has direct implications for the distribution of social welfare, which is crucial for impoverished families. As a result, the community feels an unjust disparity, which worsens the social tensions between families who receive assistance and those who are eligible but are not listed. Furthermore, the *PKH* program, which operates with invalid data, exacerbates the existing economic inequality in the community because the aid provided is misdirected and does not align with the current economic conditions of the beneficiaries.

Interviews with village officials and recipients of the assistance revealed the inaccuracy of the data. One village official, Pian, explained, "The data of beneficiaries that has not been updated has caused many families that are no longer poor to continue receiving assistance. On the other hand, there are families whose economic situation has worsened, but they are not registered in the system. This clearly adds to the social inequality in our village" (Interview, June 13, 2024). This statement clarifies that data updates are crucial to ensure that assistance reaches those who are entitled to it, and when this is not done properly, the assistance reinforces social inequality.

Furthermore, this study shows that the issue is not just outdated data but also a lack of clarity in the evaluation mechanism for beneficiaries. This confusion leads to beneficiaries feeling uncertain about their status within the system and unappreciated for their efforts to escape poverty. In some cases, families who were initially eligible for assistance no longer need financial aid due to their improved economic status, but they remain registered as beneficiaries. This situation adds to the sense of injustice among those who are more in need.

This phenomenon also reflects a larger issue in *PKH* policy, where the failure to update data regularly leads to a mismatch between the administrative data and the actual conditions of the community. In Sei Lumut Village, the list of beneficiaries has not been updated since 2022, meaning the data used for distributing assistance no longer reflects the actual social and economic conditions. This worsens social inequality and causes some residents to feel disappointed because they are not receiving the social assistance they are entitled to.

Additional evidence supporting these findings comes from field observations and interviews with several *PKH* beneficiaries. Some recipients expressed feelings of injustice because the social assistance was not fully reaching those who truly needed it. One recipient, Mira, shared, "The assistance I receive is quite helpful, but I know that there are other families in worse conditions who are not registered. Meanwhile, my economic situation has improved, but I am still receiving aid" (Interview, June 16, 2024). This shows that while *PKH* benefits some individuals, its misdirected distribution increases social inequality.

The findings regarding the inaccuracy of the *PKH* beneficiaries' data are highly relevant to the research topic, which examines the social impacts of *PKH* implementation at the village level. The study aimed to assess how well *PKH* could reduce poverty and social inequality in the community. However, the results from Sei Lumut Village indicate the opposite, with social inequality becoming more pronounced due to administrative errors that

caused aid to be misdirected. This shows that a program intended to reduce social gaps is at risk of worsening existing social problems.

In this context, PKH in Sei Lumut Village has not fully achieved its goal of reducing social inequality. Instead, it has created feelings of injustice among the residents. This injustice arises because some families that no longer meet the criteria for poverty continue to receive aid while families in greater need are excluded. The community strongly feels the impact of this inequality, especially in terms of the relationships between residents, which have become strained due to social jealousy. Therefore, timely data updates are essential to ensure that PKH can truly achieve its goals of reducing poverty and social inequality.

Additionally, the issue of inaccurate data also highlights weaknesses in the administrative and evaluation systems of the PKH program. As noted by PKH field assistants and village officials, the slow and irregular data verification process significantly affects the effectiveness of aid distribution. Without a system for regular data updates, PKH exacerbates the existing inequalities in the community, rather than reducing the social gap.

Interviews with several parties involved in the implementation of PKH in Sei Lumut Village support these findings. Musdalifah, a program assistant, explained, "Many beneficiaries are confused about whether they are still entitled to assistance. The data system, which is not updated regularly, makes many people feel unfair, while other families who are more in need are not registered" (Interview, June 15, 2024). This shows that data updates are not only crucial for effective aid distribution but also to prevent broader social inequalities.

Furthermore, an interview with Onah, a recipient, reinforces the finding that social inequality is becoming more apparent. She shared, "We know that there are many other families who need assistance more, but they are not receiving their rights because our data has not been updated" (Interview, June 16, 2024). This statement illustrates the inequality occurring within the community, where the neglect of data updates is exacerbating the already existing social conditions.

Evaluation of the Implementation of the *Family Hope Program* (PKH): Discussion

This study found that social inequality still exists due to the suboptimal implementation of the *Family Hope Program* (PKH) in Sei Lumut Village, particularly due to irregular data management and ineffective communication. The findings show that while PKH aims to solve poverty and welfare issues, it still creates inequality. Although not in all cases, the ineffective execution of the program becomes a significant cause of this inequality.

The results of this study indicate that social inequality arises not only from poor communication or program mismanagement but also from the lack of mechanisms that allow for the adjustment of the socioeconomic status of aid recipients (Sugiharti, Esquivias, et al., 2022). This phenomenon reflects the inability of the administrative system to adapt to real-world changes (Suryahadi et al., 2023), thereby exacerbating the social inequality that PKH should have been able to reduce.

In the framework of social inequality theory, as explained by Pierre Bourdieu (2018) in his *social capital* theory, inequality does not only stem from economic factors but also access to information and social resources (Stahl & Mu, 2024). Communities that are better informed and have greater access to social support systems tend to change their social position more quickly (Ramsey, 2023). Therefore, irregular data updates worsen this gap, as some individuals or families who already have higher social capital continue to receive aid they no longer need, while others struggle to get help despite needing it more.

The implications of these findings are significant both from the government policy perspective and from the perspective of the social community of aid recipients. These findings show that irregular data updates can lead to greater social inequality and create a sense of injustice in the community. This impacts the public's perception of the effectiveness of the PKH program and may even decrease public trust in the government (Sofyani et al., 2022). Therefore, it is important for the government and relevant institutions to immediately improve the data management system and enhance coordination between stakeholders to ensure aid reaches those who truly need it.

Additionally, this study also shows that clearer communication regarding the rights and responsibilities of aid recipients is essential. Improving the socialization process and ensuring that the information provided is easily understood by all parties, especially those with lower educational backgrounds, can address the confusion among recipients (Ngangi et al., 2021). Without improvements in this area, the effectiveness of PKH as a poverty alleviation program will be highly limited.

Based on the existing findings, the implementation of the *Family Hope Program* (PKH) in Sei Lumut Village still faces several challenges affecting its effectiveness. Therefore, several concrete steps need to be taken by

the government and relevant institutions to improve the implementation of this program and ensure that social aid reaches those who genuinely need it. These steps not only address the current issues but also help build a stronger and more responsive system in facing future socioeconomic changes.

First, improvements in the validation and updating process of aid recipient data are necessary. The study's findings show that the outdated and poorly coordinated data management system results in inaccuracies in targeting aid recipients. This creates social inequality, where some relatively capable families still receive assistance while those in genuine need are not registered. To solve this issue, the government must enhance the data management system by utilizing information technology to facilitate real-time verification and updates. A technology-based system can help accelerate data updates and ensure that aid recipient data remains relevant and accurate (Budiarto *et al.*, 2024). Thus, aid recipients' data can be adjusted to reflect their current socioeconomic status, ensuring that social aid truly reaches those who are entitled.

For example, using a cloud-based application or platform that allows direct access by accompanying officers, village officials, and other related parties can be an effective solution. This system can be integrated with a central database to expedite the verification process and enable automatic updates if a recipient's status changes.

Second, coordination between village officials, program facilitators, and the community is a key factor in ensuring the effective implementation of PKH. The study's findings reveal that the lack of coordination led to inaccuracies in aid distribution, causing confusion and dissatisfaction among the community. Improving this coordination can be achieved by strengthening the role of program facilitators, who have a major responsibility in linking the government with aid recipients. Facilitators need to receive intensive training to enhance their communication capacity and understanding of the social dynamics at the village level (Hodgson & Gittlin, 2021). Additionally, village officials should be more actively involved in the aid distribution process, not only as supervisors but also as mediators between program facilitators and the community.

Third, more intensive socialization, based on the community's understanding, is needed to address the confusion among aid recipients. Based on the study's findings, the community in Sei Lumut Village faces difficulties in understanding their rights and responsibilities as aid recipients, leading to dissatisfaction and social jealousy. This is mainly caused by the inaccuracy of information delivery, particularly given the low educational backgrounds of many aid recipients (Danapriatna *et al.*, 2023). The government and relevant institutions need to conduct simpler and more understandable socialization. Information delivery should be adjusted to the community's comprehension level, using simpler and more digestible language. Direct outreach through village meetings, *Posyandu*, or group gatherings can be an effective channel. Information about the rights and responsibilities of aid recipients, as well as applicable regulations, needs to be clearly communicated to avoid confusion or feelings of injustice.

Fourth, socialization should also include an understanding of the importance of transparency and accountability in this program so the community feels more trustful and open to the PKH program. Issues of social jealousy and community dissatisfaction regarding uneven aid distribution require solutions through good conflict management and mediation. In this study, concerns emerged within the community that the aid received did not reflect actual needs. This often causes feelings of injustice, which can lead to social tensions. The government needs to develop mediation mechanisms that can be used to resolve these social conflicts (Abidin, 2024). One approach could involve involving community leaders or village heads in the mediation process so that communication between recipients who feel disadvantaged and those who believe they are entitled to assistance can be facilitated fairly (Abenir *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, creating open discussion forums between the community and program facilitators will also help clarify existing issues, leading to more efficient resolutions and reducing the potential for social unrest (Sembiring *et al.*, 2023).

By implementing these steps, it is expected that PKH will be more effective in alleviating poverty and reducing social inequality in Sei Lumut Village. More accurate and relevant data updates will ensure that social aid truly reaches those in need. Better coordination between village officials, program facilitators, and the community will increase targeting accuracy, while enhanced socialization and education will reduce confusion and strengthen the community's trust in this program.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the implementation of the *Family Hope Program* (PKH) in Sei Lumut Village, North Sumatra, faces several challenges related to social inequality. One of the key findings is the inability of the existing

data management system to update aid recipient information in real time. This creates inaccuracies in targeting recipients, where some relatively capable families receive aid while those who truly need it get overlooked. This study also revealed that ineffective communication worsens social inequality in the community, both in conveying information about the rights and responsibilities of aid recipients and in coordinating between stakeholders. These findings enhance our understanding of how administrative and communication factors contribute to greater social inequality, an aspect that previous PKH-related research has not extensively discussed.

This study contributes to the development of a broader theory of social inequality, not limited to economic factors but also encompassing social dimensions, information, and coordination in the implementation of public policies. By integrating Pierre Bourdieu's *social capital* concept, this study provides new insights into how access to information and social resources affects the success of social programs. Furthermore, this research contributes to the development of more responsive and accurate data- and communication-based evaluation methods for the implementation of social programs.

However, this study has limitations in terms of the scope, as it is focused on only one village in North Sumatra, so the findings may not be generalizable to other regions with different conditions. Future research could expand the study area to determine whether these findings apply to other regions and further investigate the influence of local culture on the success of the PKH program. Future studies could also focus on evaluating the implementation of information technology in systematically and efficiently updating aid recipient data.

REFERENCES

- Abenir, M. A. D., Manzanero, L. I. O., & Bollettino, V. (2022). Community-based leadership in disaster resilience: The case of the small island community in Hagonoy, Bulacan, Philippines. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, *71*, 102797.
- Abidin, Z. (2024). Innovative Community Service Programs with Local Participation to Build Independent Villages. *Zabags International Journal of Engagement*, *2*(1), 29–38.
- Aldiansyah, C., Hailuddin, H., & Astuti, E. (2024). Efektivitas Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH) Dalam Upaya Penanggulangan Kemiskinan Di Desa Berare Kecamatan Moyo Hilir Kabupaten Sumbawa. *Jurnal Oportunitas : Ekonomi Pembangunan*, *3*(1), 25–34. <https://doi.org/10.29303/oportunitas.v3i1.578>
- Badan Pusat Statistik Labuhan Batu. (2024). *Kecamatan Panai Hilir Dalam Angka: Panai Hilir District In Figures 2024* (R. D. Agni (ed.); Vol. 41). Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Labuhan Batu.
- Badan Pusat Statistik Sumatera Utara. (2023). *Profil Kemiskinan Maret 2023*. Badan Pusat Statistik Sumatera Utara.
- Bourdieu, P. (2018). The forms of capital. In *The Sociology of Economic Life* (pp. 78–92). Routledge.
- Budiarto, M., Asmawati, A., & Kurniawan, M. (2024). Digital Transformation of Local Government: Design and Development of the Pakuhaji District Community Service Information System Website. *International Journal of Cyber and IT Service Management*, *4*(1), 11–18.
- Cresswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method Approaches*. Sage.
- Danapriatna, N., Ramadhan, M. F., Putra, P., & Zhafiraah, N. R. (2023). Stunting and Quality of Life: The nexus between Malnutrition, Community Empowerment and Economic Development. *Entrepreneurship and Community Development*, *1*(2), 76–81.
- Dimiyati, K., Nashir, H., Elviandri, E., Absori, A., Wardiono, K., & Budiono, A. (2021). Indonesia as a legal welfare state: A prophetic-transcendental basis. *Heliyon*, *7*(8).
- Faharuddin, F., Yamin, M., Mulyana, A., & Yunita, Y. (2022). Impact of food price increases on poverty in Indonesia: empirical evidence from cross-sectional data. *Journal of Asian Business and Economic Studies*, *30*(2), 126–142.
- Faridav, U., Yusriadi, Y., & Saniv, A. (2021). The Family Hope Program (PKH) Collective Partnership among Beneficiary Families (KPM) For Healthy Living through the Clean Friday Campaign. *Indian Journal of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology*, *15*(2), 4623–4627.
- Gibson, J., Jiang, Y., & Susantono, B. (2023). Revisiting the role of secondary towns: How different types of

- urban growth relate to poverty in Indonesia. *World Development*, 169, 106281.
- Hodgson, N., & Gitlin, L. N. (2021). Implementing and sustaining family care programs in real-world settings: Barriers and facilitators. *Bridging the Family Care Gap*, 179–219.
- Irmayani, N. R., Susantyo, B., Mujiyadi, B., Suradi, S., Erwinsyah, R. G., Sugiyanto, S., Habibullah, H., Nainggolan, T., Adhanayadi, B. A., Soetjipto, W., Andriansyah, R., Setiadi, T., Irawan, H., Mufidah, A. D., Afina, R., & Azizah, L. N. (2019). *Kinerja Pendamping Program Keluarga Harapan Pasca Diklat Pertemuan Peningkatan Kemampuan Keluarga*. Pusat Penelitian dan Pengembangan Kesejahteraan Sosial.
- Kemensos RI. (2020). *Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH)*. Kemensos RI.
- Luthfi, M. (2019). Efektifitas Bantuan Sosial Program Keluarga Harapan Dalam Meningkatkan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (Studi Kasus di Desa Margajaya Kecamatan Ngamprah KBB). *Community Education Journal*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.22460/comm-edu.v2i1>
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (2013). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Misnawati, M., & Tahir, S. Z. Bin. (2021). Inhibiting Factors (Internal & External) Implementation of the Family Hope Program (PKH) in Bone Regency. *Proceedings of the 11th Annual International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Operations Management*.
- Mulyani, I., Wahyuni, H. I., & Prihatin, S. D. (2024). Implementation of Minister of Transportation Regulation No. 819 of 2018 by the Harbormaster Office and Port Authority: Challenges, Communication Strategies, and Fishermen's Reactions in Dumai City, Riau Province. *TEMALI: Jurnal Pembangunan Sosial*, 7(2), 265–278.
- Ngangi, C., Kaunang, R., & Lolowang, T. (2021). Social construction and types of participation in poverty alleviation. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 681(1), 12082.
- Pangestu, S. D., & Fedryansyah, M. (2023). Efektivitas PKH Bidang Pendidikan Dalam Partisipasi Pendidikan Anak KPM Di Era Industri 4.0 Dan Society 5.0. *Focus: Jurnal Pekerjaan Sosial*, 5(2), 137. <https://doi.org/10.24198/focus.v5i2.39232>
- Primanto, A., Tanjung, A. M., Situmorang, M., Karim, A. M., Puspitasari, L., Purba, N., & Pramono, R. (2021). Inter-regional Cooperation in Improving Welfare and Resolving Poverty in Indonesia. *Academy of Strategic Management Journal*, 20, 1–11.
- Purwono, R., Wardana, W. W., Haryanto, T., & Mubin, M. K. (2021). Poverty dynamics in Indonesia: empirical evidence from three main approaches. *World Development Perspectives*, 23, 100346.
- Ramsey, G. (2023). Cultural Capital Theory Of Pierre Bourdieu. *Simply Sociology. Päivitettyä Verkkojousto. Päivitetty*, 25, 2023.
- Riyadi, A. H., Abdukad, A. A. S., Saif, B. M., Takow, H. A., & Sharofiddin, A. (2021). The effect of utilizing zakat fund on financing production to achieving social welfare: in Indonesia as a case study. *Journal of Islamic Finance*, 10, 19–29.
- Sadjad, M. S. (2023). Open Access: Solidarity and 'social jealousy': emotions and affect in Indonesian host society's situated encounters with refugees.' In *Affect, Emotions and Power in Development Studies Theory and Practice* (pp. 31–48). Routledge.
- Sembiring, T. B., Boari, Y., Sadikin, A., Yasin, A., Sacipto, R., & Mumfangati, T. (2023). Political Dynamics of Women's Village Head Leadership. *Journal of Namibian Studies: History Politics Culture*, 34, 3061–3072.
- Setia, P., & Rosele, M. I. (2024). Digitizing Worship: Challenges of Religious Applications and Spiritual Decline in the Digital Era. *TEMALI: Jurnal Pembangunan Sosial*, 7(2), 279–288.
- Sofyani, H., Pratolo, S., & Saleh, Z. (2022). Do accountability and transparency promote community trust? Evidence from village government in Indonesia. *Journal of Accounting & Organizational Change*, 18(3), 397–418.
- Stahl, G., & Mu, G. M. (2024). Pierre Bourdieu: Revisiting reproduction, cultural capital, and symbolic violence in education. In *The Palgrave Handbook of educational thinkers* (pp. 1199–1214). Springer.

- Sugiharti, L., Esquivias, M. A., Shaari, M. S., Agustin, L., & Rohmawati, H. (2022). Criminology and income inequality in Indonesia. *Social Sciences*, 11(3), 142.
- Sugiharti, L., Purwono, R., Esquivias, M. A., & Jayanti, A. D. (2022). Poverty Dynamics in Indonesia: The Prevalence and Causes of Chronic Poverty. *Journal of Population & Social Studies*, 30.
- Sulaeman, S., Majid, R., & Widiastuti, T. (2021). Zakat and its impact on socio-economic welfare before COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. *International Journal of Zakat*, 6(2), 75–90.
- Sulastri, R., Walidah, M. Q., & Sidik, M. D. H. (2024). Utilizing Social Media to Combat Sexual Violence: A Study of the Speak Up Movement on Instagram. *TEMALI: Jurnal Pembangunan Sosial*, 7(2), 208–219.
- Suryahadi, A., Al Izzati, R., Suryadarma, D., & Dartanto, T. (2023). How inequality affects trust in institutions: Evidence from Indonesia. *Asian Economic Policy Review*, 18(1), 73–91.
- Tampubolon, J. (2023). The Significance of Family Hope Program (PKH) in Improving the Poor's Welfare as an Indicator of Community Empowerment. *Przestrzeń Społeczna (Social Space)*, 23(1), 621–648.
- Umayah, U. S., Trilestari, E. W., Putrianti, S. D., Afandi, M. N., & Rahman, A. (2023). Analysis of the Improvement of the Family Hope Program (PKH) in the New Normal Era. *Fourth International Conference on Administrative Science (ICAS 2022)*, 349–360.
- Yuda, T. K., Pratiyudha, P. P., & Kafaa, K. A. (2023). Managing social policy in the emerging welfare regime of governance: What Indonesia can learn from South Korea's experience. *International Social Work*, 66(2), 357–372.



© 2025 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY SA) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>).