SOCIAL MAPPING AND IDENTIFICATION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC VULNERABILITIES OF VULNERABLE GROUPS IN URBAN AREAS (STUDY IN MEDAN CITY)

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to map and identify the socio-economic vulnerability of vulnerable groups in urban areas, especially in the city of Medan. With a descriptive qualitative approach, the study focuses on the collection of primary data through surveys, in-depth interviews, and FGDs. The background of this research departs from the phenomenon of social inequality that is increasingly real in the midst of rapid urbanization and the limitations of accurate micro data as the basis for the formulation of social intervention policies. The research also highlights the need for a participatory and community-based approach to development in response to the failure of elitist and *top-down* development models. This research is based on the need to build a data foundation that can be used by policymakers, development practitioners, and local communities in designing more effective and equitable social interventions. The city of Medan was chosen as the location because of the complexity of its social problems that represent major cities in Indonesia, including high urbanization, inequality between regions, and weak access for marginalized groups to development programs. This study will be the starting point of a ten-year long-term research series aimed at designing evidence-based and contextual models of social intervention, this research is based on the theoretical frameworks of social vulnerability, community participation and empowerment, and social intervention theory.

INTRODUCTIONS

Rapid urbanization in Indonesia has a dualistic impact on society, on the one hand creating a center of economic growth, on the other hand enlarging the social inequality gap. Vulnerable groups such as women heads of households, informal sector workers, school dropouts, street children and the urban poor are often marginalized in the social service and development systems. Handling socio-economic vulnerabilities in urban areas cannot be carried out homogeneously, but needs to be based on accurate micro data and based on local contexts.

The city of Medan, as the capital of North Sumatra Province and one of the centers of economic growth in the western region of Indonesia, reflects this phenomenon. Although the Gross Regional Domestic Product (GDP) of Medan City in 2023 reached IDR 303.31 trillion with economic growth of 5.04%, there are still significant challenges related to the social welfare of the community. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS, 2023) shows that in 2024, the percentage of poor people in Medan City will be 7.94%, or around 187,040 people. Despite the decline compared to the previous year, spending inequality among the poor increased from 0.19 in 2023 to 0.26 in 2024, indicating that socio-economic inequality is still a crucial issue.

Theoretically, vulnerability is measured not only by income levels, but also by access to basic services, social protection, participation in decision-making, and capacity to survive and adapt to socio-economic changes and crises. This is reinforced by the *asset vulnerability framework* approach [1] which emphasizes the importance of household asset analysis as a determinant of adaptive capacity. Therefore, understanding vulnerability must be multidimensional and contextual.

This situation is further exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has shown how social and economic shocks drastically expand the spectrum of vulnerability in major cities. Many families who were once in the "vulnerable" zone are now pushed to become permanently vulnerable due to job loss, declining access to education, and increasing domestic burdens, especially for women.

Social mapping and participatory identification of socio-economic vulnerabilities are key to understanding the complex landscape of urban communities. This process not only generates data, but also serves as a means of building collective awareness, strengthening community solidarity, and becoming the basis for the formulation of more relevant, measurable, and equitable social intervention strategies.

This research will focus on mapping and collecting primary data from vulnerable communities, and governments in the Medan city area, with the aim of producing a comprehensive and spatial picture of vulnerability. The results of this study are expected to be the foundation for the design of a community-based social intervention model in the framework of long-term research over the next five years.

Robert Chambers [2] explains that vulnerability is a condition in which individuals or groups have a low capacity to anticipate, cope with, and recover from risks and pressures that come from outside. Vulnerability is not solely measured by poverty, but the accumulation of risks to important assets such as human, social, physical, and economic capital. In this context, urban people living in slums and working in the informal sector tend to be more vulnerable due to limited access to basic services, lack of legal protection, and unstable sources of income. This theory is important as a foundation in understanding the risk dimension and the limitations of adaptive capacity faced by the target group.

Social vulnerability theory has developed into a multidisciplinary foundation in the study of development, disaster, and poverty. For example, Adger [3] expands the definition of vulnerability by emphasizing the relationship between institutions, social systems, and environmental change. He showed that vulnerability is dynamic and is formed from the interaction between structural factors and the adaptive capacity of the community. In addition, Cutter et al. [4] through the Social Vulnerability Index (SoVI), developed a quantitative approach that allows spatially mapping of vulnerability based on socio-economic indicators. The integration of this approach strengthens the understanding of the need for contextual and microdata-based policy responses.

Furthermore, social vulnerability theory helps formulate approaches that are not only reactive but also preventive in responding to social problems. By identifying systemic hotspots of vulnerability, social interventions can be directed to increase the resilience of vulnerable groups to a variety of structural and situational risks. The theory also emphasizes that vulnerability management strategies should involve institutional change and improvements to inclusive social protection systems.

Social mapping, also known as *social profiling*, is an effort to describe a society in a structured way by collecting data and information about the conditions and social problems that exist in it. According to Netting, Kettner, and McMurtry (1993), the systematic process of profiling a community gathers information about social, economic, cultural, and social problems that occur in the community. This process is influenced by social research and geography, and usually produces a map of the area that depicts the concentration of certain characteristics of a society or social problem, such as the number of poor people or the condition of slums, marked with a color according to its level.

Here are three main reasons according to Netting, Kettner, and McMurtry (1993:68) why social work practitioners need a systematic approach to social mapping:

1. The concept of "the person-in-environment" is very important in social work, especially in the practice of community development at the macro level. The social environment in which a person lives affects their identity, the problems they face, as well as the resources available to overcome those problems. Therefore, community development will not be effective without a deep understanding of the influence of the social environment.
2. To be able to develop society effectively, there needs to be a good understanding of the history and development of the society as well as an analysis of the current conditions. Without this understanding, social work practitioners will find it difficult to implement social work values, attitudes, and traditions and face challenges in maintaining sustainability and driving desired change.

Society is always undergoing dynamic changes, including changes in power structures, the economy, funding sources, and the role of community members. Social mapping is an important tool for monitoring and understanding these changes so that they can be interpreted appropriately in the context of community development. This explains the importance of a systematic approach in social mapping so that social workers can understand the social environment, history, development, and dynamics of societal change as a basis for effective decision-making and social intervention planning.

There is no single method that is the most efficient in social mapping, but the main principle for social work practitioners is to gather as much information as possible in a given area so that it can be used as the best decision-making material in helping communities.

Chambers and Freire The principle of active citizen participation is the foundation of a community-based development approach. [5] Paulo Freire, through his critical education approach, emphasizes the importance of collective consciousness as the beginning of the process of social transformation. [6] Chambers added that citizen participation in decision-making increases the sustainability of the program because the community becomes the owner of the solution. In this study, community participation is not only a method of data collection, but also a strategy to build trust and mutual commitment in designing social interventions.

Participation-based empowerment cannot be understood only as formal involvement in activities, but as a process of changing power relations. With this approach, the community becomes not only the object of the intervention, but the main actor in creating change. This is important in the context of the city of Medan which has high social diversity, where authentic participation is the main cornerstone of the success of long-term social interventions.

Social intervention in the perspective of modern social work is understood as a structured and systematic process to change social conditions through approaches based on social justice, empowerment, and inclusion. Midgley states that social intervention is part of social development that combines social policies with empowerment strategies to address structural inequality. This theory emphasizes that social change cannot be achieved by providing charitable assistance alone, but by creating a new social structure that allows for the transformation of power relations and the redistribution of resources. [7]

Payne added that social interventions include actions designed to modify the behavior, social structure, or living conditions of a person or community through direct social work, policy advocacy, or community organizing. [8] Alinsky's classical approach emphasizes on grassroots community mobilization and the use of advocacy strategies to challenge oppressive power systems. [9] In the context of this research, social intervention theory plays an important role in designing community-based strategic responses to socio-economic vulnerability, as well as in framing forms of citizen participation that are not only symbolic but also transformative.

METHOD

The strategy for designing and conducting research will depend on the type of research used. In accordance with the research objectives described earlier, this study uses a qualitative type of research. Qualitative research was chosen because it aims to understand the problems of socio-economic vulnerability of vulnerable groups in urban areas, especially in the city of Medan, including the dynamics between actors, interaction patterns, and factors that affect these socio-economic vulnerabilities. In addition, qualitative research allows researchers to describe phenomena in a complex and holistic way, capturing the subjective meanings constructed by actors in the field. [10]

The research approach used in this study is narrative. The narrative approach is often used in social research because it is able to narrate the description of an event as a whole, by paying attention to the context, characters, plots, and experiences that make up a social phenomenon. In the context of this study, the narrative approach is used to explore the experiences of actors involved in the process of implementing social interventions, both from local governments, vulnerable groups, and other interested parties. [11]

Data collection is an important stage that will greatly affect the outcome of a study. The quality of data collection has to do with the precision of the techniques used to obtain relevant and accurate data. [12] Therefore, in this study, data collection techniques were carefully designed to support the achievement of the research objective, which is to identify the socio-economic vulnerability of vulnerable groups in urban areas (Medan City).

Referring to Lofland's opinion [13], the main sources of data in qualitative research are words and actions. This source was obtained through interviews, observations, and written documents related to the phenomenon being studied. For this reason, this study uses three main data collection techniques:

a. In-depth Interview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, both from government elements, vulnerable groups, and civil society organizations. Interviews are designed to explore the informant's personal experiences, views, and narratives. This technique allows for flexibility for informants to tell their stories freely, while maintaining a focus on the research theme.

b. Observations

Observations were made to see firsthand the phenomenon of socio-economic vulnerability in urban areas. The researcher observed relevant activities, either directly or through the documentation of available activities. This observation serves as complementary data to validate the interview results.

c. Documentation Studies

The documentation study was carried out by collecting and analyzing various documents related to the theme of the problem, such as laws, regional regulations, books, journals, meeting minutes, media reports, and documents from civil society organizations. This documentation helps to provide the historical and administrative context being researched.

Data analysis is defined as the process of compiling, integrating, and investigating patterns and relationships in a phenomenon by connecting various data obtained. In qualitative research, data analysis is generally inductive, moving from phenomena in the field to a deeper level of abstraction, through the process of synthesis and even to the development of theories. Qualitative research is also *open-ended*, so the analysis process must be flexible and adjusted to the empirical findings that develop in the field. [14]

The data analysis technique used in this study is *narrative analysis*. The *narrative analysis approach* was chosen because it is consistent with the research objective, which is to build a deep understanding of the characteristics of the city of Medan. *Narrative analysis* focuses on compiling, integrating, and interpreting interview data and observation results into a meaningful narrative. Through this technique, researchers not only describe the data, but also capture the structure of the story, the social context, and the relational dynamics between the actors, thus enabling the development of theoretical understandings based on real experiences found in the field.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Overview of Vulnerable Groups in Urban Areas

The phenomenon of rapid urbanization in Indonesia's metropolitan cities, including the city of Medan, presents a complex development paradox. On the one hand, cities offer the promise of economic progress and access to

modernity; But on the other hand, it becomes a tough arena of space contestation for those who do not have adequate competitiveness. This research is specifically directed at mapping and identifying the socio-economic vulnerability of vulnerable groups in these urban areas, as a critical response to the increasingly gaping social inequality. In a dense urban landscape, poverty is no longer simply understood as a lack of income, but rather as an accumulation of helplessness in the face of life's pressures. This study fundamentally supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Goal 1 (Eradicate Poverty) by creating an accurate micro database that is crucial for the formulation of effective and equitable intervention policies. Without micro data that captures the nuances of daily life, poverty alleviation policies often mistarget (exclusion error) or fail to touch the root of the problem.

The complexity of urban life exacerbates this condition of vulnerability through various social and economic *shocks*, ranging from fluctuations in food prices, uncertainty of informal employment, to sudden health costs. Therefore, this situation demands a multidimensional understanding. It's not enough to just look at the statistics; There is a need to dig up the narrative behind these numbers. Using a narrative qualitative approach, this study aims to holistically understand the complexity of such socio-economic vulnerabilities. This approach allows researchers to dive into the subjective experiences of vulnerable individuals of how they survive, what strategies they use when crises occur, and how urban social structures often marginalize them.

The main theoretical foundation that dissects this phenomenon is the *Social Vulnerability Framework*. This framework is particularly relevant because it emphasizes the importance of risk analysis and household asset capacity as the main determinants of *resilience*. In this perspective, a household's ability to survive is not only determined by the cash they have, but also by the asset portfolio that includes *human capital*, *physical capital*, financial capital, and social *capital*.

In the context of human capital, vulnerable groups in Medan are often trapped in a vicious cycle of low education and skills that are not relevant to the formal job market. As a result, they are forced to enter the informal sector with zero job protection. Meanwhile, in terms of physical capital, limited access to decent housing and basic sanitation makes them vulnerable to health problems, which in turn erodes their already minimal financial capital. The inability to accumulate productive assets makes them economically unstable when shocks occur, so a single event of misfortune can plunge them into the abyss of extreme poverty.

However, what is most worrying in the urban context is the erosion of social capital. Structural weaknesses are often reinforced by the failure of social networks at the micro level. In rural areas, the mechanism of mutual cooperation or kinship bonds may still be a strong social safety net. In contrast, in urban areas that tend to be individualistic, these bonds are loosened or even broken altogether. The problem of family neglect (*broken home*) that causes the elderly to live alone and children to be abandoned, for example, shows a severe weakness in the social *capital* of the community.

This phenomenon is the main trigger for the increase in cases of Social Welfare Service Workers (PPKS). When the nuclear family fails to perform its function as the first protection unit, and the surrounding community becomes apathetic, these vulnerable individuals lose their place of dependence. The elderly who should have enjoyed their old age in peace are forced to return to work on the streets, while children lose their right to grow and develop because they have to earn a living or run away from family dysfunction. This condition confirms that vulnerability in urban areas is not only an economic problem, but also a social crisis and collective morality.

This mapping is crucial because the characteristics of vulnerability in the city of Medan have a unique typology due to ethnic and cultural diversity. The pattern of adaptation of each community to economic pressures can vary, depending on their cultural values and social networks. This study attempts to unravel these tangled threads to see how external factors (such as city policies, inflation, and spatial planning) interact with internal factors (such as family demographic conditions, disability, and mental health).

Thus, the general picture of this vulnerable group cannot be simplified to mere data on social assistance recipients. The vulnerable group is a dynamic portrait of human struggle in the midst of the often inhospitable urban structure. Through precise identification of lost or weakened livelihood assets, government intervention is no longer purely charitative, but empowering that restores their social functioning. Only by understanding vulnerability as a systemic and multidimensional process can poverty eradication efforts move from mere discourse to the realization of substantive social justice for urban citizens.

The Role of the Government in the Implementation of Vulnerable Groups Policies in Urban Areas

In a public policy view, the role of the government in dealing with vulnerable groups can no longer be narrowly defined as a mere provider of charitable assistance. More than that, the government holds a strategic function as a regulator, facilitator, and dynamizer that ensures the survival of citizens who are marginalized by the flow of urbanization. Based on the results of interviews with the Medan City Social Service, the classification of Social Welfare Service Providers (PPKS) that are priority interventions include the abandoned elderly, abandoned children, people with disabilities (including People with Mental Disorders/ODGJ), as well as homeless people and beggars (gepeng). The handling of this group has a high complexity because it requires the identification of the root of the problem that is dualistic, namely structural barriers and economic pressures.

The Medan City Social Service critically identified that the absence of population identity is the most fundamental structural barrier. Without a Population Identification Number (NIK) or Identity Card (KTP), PPKS' access to basic services such as National Health Insurance (KIS/BPJS) and food assistance is completely cut off, which ultimately worsens their vulnerability permanently. Realizing this urgency, in the 2021–2026 Strategic Plan of the Medan City Social Service, the Medan City Government places data updates as the main foundation of the policy. This strategy is realized through a policy of optimizing the implementation of verification and validation of Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS). This step is not just an administrative procedure, but a social inclusion effort to ensure that poor and vulnerable citizens are "seen" by the state and entitled to proper social protection.

In a broader framework, the role of the Medan City government in implementing this policy is based on the vision of "Medan for All", especially on the mission to increase economic equity and realize social justice. To translate this vision into real action, the Social Service sets strategic goals in the form of improving the welfare of PPKS with measurable success indicators, such as the percentage of MSMEs handling that receive social assistance and the fulfillment of basic needs for people with disabilities and abandoned children outside the orphanage. This confirms that the government is present not only when the crisis occurs, but also in the process of continuous rehabilitation and empowerment. However, the challenges on the ground often go beyond the capacity of a single bureaucracy.

The phenomenon of homeless people, beggars, and street children in Medan City, for example, is exacerbated by economic shocks and weak family resilience. The government's response to this issue is contained in a comprehensive social rehabilitation strategy. Given the limitations of infrastructure, such as the inadequate facilities of social shelters or shelters owned by the city government itself as shelters, while the government adopts a collaborative approach. The government is working with the Rapid Reaction Unit (URC) for outreach in the field, as well as building referral networks to provincial-owned rehabilitation homes, such as the Gepeng Social Rehabilitation Home in Binjai. This limitation of physical assets forces the government to be more creative and tactical in managing resources, including encouraging active participation of the community.

The role of the government shifted from a single actor to a major collaborator. Collaborative action with various Regional Apparatus (PD) and stakeholders is the foundation for policy success. In accordance with the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan, the Social Service actively involves Social Welfare Potentials and Resources (PSKS) which includes Community Social Workers (PSM), District Social Welfare Workers (TKSK), Youth Organizations, and the Business World through *the Corporate Social Responsibility* (CSR) program. This synergy is crucial, for example in handling abandoned ODGJ that requires medical intervention from the Health Office (Puskesmas) before social rehabilitation, or the control of flats that require support for the enforcement of local regulations by Satpol PP. Without good orchestration from the government, this cross-sectoral handling is often trapped in sectoral egos that harm vulnerable groups.

In addition to protection and rehabilitation aspects, the role of the government is also very vital in breaking the poverty chain through social empowerment. Realizing that economic factors are the main drivers of the emergence of PPKS, policies are directed at increasing the capacity of financial and human assets. Programs such as Joint Business Groups (KUBE) and skills training for poor families are designed to create economic independence, so that they are not constantly dependent on social assistance. The Medan City Government is also trying to synchronize national programs such as the Family Hope Program (PKH) and Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT) with local initiatives, to ensure that economic cushions are available to those who need it most.

Nevertheless, the implementation of this policy is not without obstacles. The internal analysis of the Social Service revealed that there are challenges in the form of low quality of human resources (HR) for social companions and limited operational mobility facilities for outreach in a large area. In response to this, the government is committed to continuing to improve the competence of social apparatus and volunteers through structured education and training. Strengthening this internal capacity is absolutely necessary so that the bureaucracy is able to respond to the dynamics of social problems that continue to develop quickly and humanely.

Through the measurable implementation of the Strategic Plan, improving population data governance, and strengthening cross-sector collaboration, the government seeks to be present as the last protector (*safety net*) for its citizens. The success of this policy is ultimately not only measured by how much assistance is distributed, but also by how effectively the system built is able to restore the social functioning of vulnerable groups, so that they can return to a decent and dignified life in the midst of the harshness of urban life.

Dynamics of Government Policy Implementation for Vulnerable Groups in Urban Areas

The implementation of policies for handling social problems in metropolitan areas such as Medan City is not a linear process that moves smoothly from the formulation of rules to the final result, but a complex dynamic full of friction in the field. Unstable social conditions, especially after the economic shocks that widened the poverty gap, put tremendous pressure on the bureaucracy, especially the Medan City Social Service. As the frontline in realizing the mission of "Medan For All" which is oriented towards equal distribution of welfare, the Social Service is faced with the reality of inequality between the volume of social problems and the availability of internal resources.

One of the most fundamental obstacles identified in organizational performance evaluation is significant personnel limitations. Based on an interview with the Medan City Social Service, the number of Rapid Reaction Unit (URC) personnel who spearheaded outreach in the field only amounted to around 15 people. This number is very disproportionate when juxtaposed with the area of the administrative area of Medan City and the massive distribution of vulnerable groups. This imbalance in the ratio of officers and service targets results in the scope of supervision being partial and unsustainable. As a result, interventions are often reactive and sporadic, rather than systematic preventive.

The dynamics in the field are further complicated by the behavioral adaptation of the target group itself. The massive use of operational cars with the official logo of the Medan City Social Service, which actually aims to be a symbol of the state's presence, actually triggers side effects in the form of avoidance tactics from PPKS. They have recognized the physical characteristics of the operational vehicles from a distance, so outreach by field officers is often hampered by this "chase". When routine patrols are carried out, vagrants, beggars, or street children quickly disperse or hide, only to return to their original location once the officers have passed. This phenomenon indicates that conventional approaches that rely solely on physical patrols have lost their effectiveness.

These limitations implicitly point to the need for a fundamental transformation in operational strategy, namely a shift from a labor-intensive approach to investing in more competent Human Resources (HR) capital and technology adoption. Currently, the Social Service still faces obstacles due to the low qualifications of human resources with a specific background in social work education, as well as the lack of use of technology-based information systems for *real-time mapping of social problems*. Increasing the capacity of the apparatus and modernizing work tools are absolute prerequisites to improve the efficiency of outreach, so that early detection of social vulnerabilities can be carried out without having to rely entirely on the physical presence of patrol vehicles that are easy to avoid.

In addition to internal operational constraints, policy implementation is exacerbated by external spatial and jurisdictional challenges. The city of Medan does not stand as an isolated entity, but rather as part of an urban agglomeration whose boundaries are increasingly blurred socio-economically, but remain administratively rigid. The issue of jurisdiction on the border between Medan and Deli Serdang is a crucial obstacle that often paralyzes the effectiveness of control. In many cases, the escape of PPKS outside the boundaries of the administrative area of Medan City immediately hampered further control efforts because Medan City Social Service officers did not have the legal authority to act in neighboring areas. These administrative loopholes are often exploited by vulnerable groups or syndicates that organize them to avoid legal reach.

This cross-border challenge confirms that the problem of social vulnerability in urban areas cannot be solved through the lens of narrow regional autonomy. This phenomenon demands a stronger and institutionalized cross-regional coordination alternative to address the migration of vulnerabilities from buffer areas. Without a binding *inter-local cooperation* mechanism, for example in the form of joint operations or joint handling agreements in the border area of Medan City, it will continue to be a place that attracts PPKS migration, while its handling efforts hit the administrative wall.

Furthermore, the dynamics of this implementation are also influenced by the availability of rehabilitation infrastructure. Successful outreach efforts in the field often meet at a dead end at the follow-up stage because the Social Protection House owned by the Medan City Government is not fully into an Integrated Service Unit (UPT) where RPS is currently only a temporary *shelter*. Dependence on provincially or privately owned orphanages often creates bottlenecks in referral flows. This causes the handling cycle to be incomplete, PPKS that are caught in raids often have to be released again due to the absence of a coaching place, which ultimately creates a phenomenon where the same individuals are constantly going in and out of the handling system without experiencing a substantive change in fate.

Thus, the dynamics of the implementation of policies for vulnerable groups in the city of Medan reflect the constant battle between the limitations of bureaucratic capacity and the complexity of adaptive urban problems. To break this impasse, a policy reorientation is needed that focuses not only on increasing budgets or physical facilities, but also on innovating outreach strategies that are more humane and tactical, strengthening the competence of social workers, and diplomacy between regions that are able to break down sectoral ego barriers for the sake of humanity.

Direction of Implementation Dynamics Going Forward

The integration of data from the Medan City Social Service and the Medan City Central Statistics Agency (BPS) directs policies to the need for differential economic strategies. The presentation of social vulnerability from DTKS to DTSEN requires that every social problem be handled based on statistical scientific methods. The Social Service report shows a contrasting pattern of vulnerability: the southern part of Medan City is located in the WO (*Weakness-Opportunity*) quadrant, while the northern part is in the S-T (*Strength-Threat*) quadrant. This strategic contrast underscores the need for program differentiation based on structured local potential.

The sub-district apparatus, which as a representation of the Mayor, must be more active in paying attention to aspects of social capital, such as mapping socio-economic networks, mapping social-infrastructure capital, and mapping group actors, so that community profiles can be presented formally. Especially for areas with large populations and the highest poverty such as Medan Marelan, Medan Labuhan, and Medan Belawan Districts, a touch based on local wisdom and academic studies is needed which includes economic, health, educational, cultural, and religious aspects.

Overall, the direction of this dynamic reveals the need for the Medan City Social Service to switch to contextual and participatory micro-data-based solutions. This effort is crucial to ensure that the Medan City Government's intervention is integrated, comprehensive, and has a long-term impact, while harmonizing the commitment of educational institutions in producing sustainable solutions to urban social problems.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this detailed analysis confirms that the socio-economic vulnerability of vulnerable groups (PPKS) in Medan City is a multidimensional phenomenon rooted in structural and social failures, not solely economic problems. Through the lens of *the Social Vulnerability Framework*, this study concludes that poverty in urban areas can no longer be reduced simply as an income deficit, but must be understood as the accumulation of powerlessness due to the erosion of household asset portfolios including human, physical, financial, and most critical in the urban context, social capital. Findings on the ground suggest that urban individualist characteristics have weakened traditional social safety nets, thereby triggering an increase in cases of Social Welfare Service Workers (PPKS) due to family dysfunction and community failure to buffer economic shocks.

In response to these dynamics, the Medan City Government through the Social Service has made efforts to shift the intervention paradigm from a charitable approach to substantive and systemic empowerment. However, the

effectiveness of the government's role as a regulator and facilitator is still hampered by fundamental structural constraints, namely the absence of population identity (NIK/KTP) in vulnerable groups. This creates *an exclusion error* that permanently cuts off their access to basic state services. Therefore, the validation of the Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS) that is now being promoted is not just an administrative procedure, but a strategic political step to ensure social inclusion and formalize the existence of citizens who have been "invisible" by the bureaucratic system.

Operationally, the implementation of policies for handling vulnerable groups in Medan City faces significant friction between bureaucratic capacity and adaptability of social problems. The limited ratio of Rapid Reaction Unit (URC) personnel to the area, coupled with the adaptive avoidance tactics of PPKS, makes conventional physical surveillance approaches less effective. This situation is exacerbated by jurisdictional challenges in border areas, particularly with Deli Serdang, which create loopholes for vulnerable migration and hinder full control. The absence of permanent and adequate rehabilitation infrastructure also triggers a phenomenon in which interventions are only temporary without a solution to the root of the problem, so that the same individuals keep repeating themselves into the cycle of vulnerability.

As a strategic implication going forward, this study recommends the urgency of precise micro data integration between the Social Service and the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) to accurately map vulnerability profiles. The findings regarding the polarization of regional characteristics where the Southern and Northern Medans are in different strategic quadrants demand policy differentiation based on local potential and spatial data. Intervention can no longer be carried out with the "one *size fits all*" method, but must be through a participatory approach that involves sub-district apparatus in mapping specific social capital. Thus, the transformation of poverty management in the city of Medan must move towards an *evidence-based policy* that prioritizes the sharpness of statistical analysis with sensitivity to humanitarian narratives in the field.

Departing from the empirical reality regarding the dynamics of the lives of vulnerable groups in Medan City, this study offers several constructive suggestions to encourage more inclusive and sustainable policy improvements for stakeholders. These suggestions are addressed to the Medan City Government, especially the Social Service, as well as related stakeholders, as an effort to improve more inclusive and sustainable social welfare governance.

First, strengthening integrated data infrastructure must be an urgent priority. The Medan City Social Service is advised not to just conduct routine verification of the Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS), but to initiate the integration of a single data system that is connected in *real-time* with the Population and Civil Registration Office and the Central Statistics Agency (BPS). This step is crucial to eliminate structural barriers in the form of the absence of population identity which has been the main cause of *exclusion error*. With accurate and dynamic microdatabases, relief interventions are no longer based on assumptions, but rather on empirical evidence that reflects the actual state of household vulnerability.

Second, it is necessary to transform operational strategies from conventional approaches to modernization of outreach systems. Given the limitations of the Rapid Reaction Unit (URC) personnel and the adaptation of avoidance behavior from the Social Welfare Service Authority (PPKS), the government needs to digitize the adoption of digital monitoring technology and improve the competence of Human Resources (HR). Training for field officers should focus on psychosocial assessment skills and humanist handling, not just physical control. This will allow for more efficient early detection of social problems without having to rely entirely on patrolling official vehicles that are easily identified by the target audience.

Third, responding to jurisdictional challenges in border areas, the Medan City Government needs to encourage the formalization of *inter-local cooperation* that is binding with the buffer district government, especially Deli Serdang. This collaboration must be outlined in the form of a technical agreement related to the handling and rehabilitation of PPKS at the border, so that there is no mutual transfer of administrative responsibilities. In addition, social community engagement through schemes involving academics, CSR, communities, and social media should be expanded to fill gaps in government budget constraints and rehabilitation facilities.

Finally, social intervention policies must implement a region-based differential strategy. Given the polarization of vulnerability characteristics between the Northern and Southern Medans, the "one size fits all" approach is no longer relevant. Sub-district and sub-district apparatus must be empowered to map and activate specific social capital in their respective environments. The government is also encouraged to immediately realize the development of adequate

permanent social rehabilitation infrastructure in the city, in order to break the cycle in which PPKS continues to return to the streets due to the absence of complete follow-up coaching.

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