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PUBLIC SERVICE EFFECTIVENESS IN SOCIAL ASSISTANCE DISTRIBUTION FOR MARITIME COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the effectiveness of social assistance delivery at the Ambon Rumatiga Sub-Branch Post Office (Kantor Cabang Pembantu/KCP Ambon Rumatiga) by shifting the analytical focus from a normative-religious basis to a public administration perspective that is more relevant to international journal publication. The study aims to explain how the effectiveness of social assistance delivery is shaped by the interaction among targeting accuracy, frontline responsiveness, service accessibility, cross-actor coordination, and transparency and accountability. The study employs a qualitative case-study design, using in-depth interviews, participant observation, and an examination of administrative documents collected from September 2023 to March 2024. The case focuses on the distribution of social assistance to 587 beneficiaries across three service areas—Poka, Tihu, and Rumatiga—which was completed in less than one week. The findings show that service effectiveness is not determined solely by the speed of distribution, but also by frontline organizations' capacity to connect the strategic targets of public policy with citizens' lived service experiences. Accurate data verification, flexible queue management, direct support for vulnerable groups, coordination with local officials, and openness regarding procedures and beneficiaries' rights are the key factors strengthening service quality. In an archipelagic city such as Ambon, geographic accessibility, citizens' mobility costs, and local administrative capacity are inseparable determinants of effectiveness. This article argues that the delivery of social assistance in maritime communities should be understood as a public service governance issue that requires integrating administrative justice, implementation coordination, inclusive access, and public trust-building. The study's main contribution is to offer a more operational analytical framework for social assistance delivery in island regions, while showing that the quality of frontline service experience is a critical determinant of welfare policy success.

KEYWORDS: Public Service Delivery, Social Assistance, Maritime Communities, Service Effectiveness, Accessibility, Accountability.

1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary debates in public administration increasingly emphasise that the effectiveness of public service delivery cannot be measured solely by whether a program has been implemented or a budget has been absorbed. A more relevant measure is the capacity of public organisations to connect the strategic objectives of policy with citizens' concrete experiences at the point of service. This shift is particularly evident in studies of local government service delivery, which treat service outcomes, user experiences, and the quality of the relationship between organisations and citizens as an integrated analytical whole (Liddle & Parker, 2024). Within this framework, social assistance delivery is not merely an instrument of redistribution; it is an arena in which the state is tested through targeting accuracy, procedural simplicity, responsiveness, administrative justice, and accountable implementation.

Social assistance becomes even more important in societies facing layered vulnerabilities: poverty, informal employment, high mobility costs, unequal access to information, and limited household capacity to absorb economic shocks. Recent literature suggests that national-level welfare schemes often encounter implementation problems at the local level because organisational capacity, inter-unit coordination, and the ability to accommodate highly contextual citizen needs vary considerably across settings (Bennett & Meers, 2025; Norton, 2024). In many places, the central problem is not the absence of programs but the administrative frictions that arise when citizens must prove eligibility, adapt to procedures, or bear access costs to receive benefits that should be their entitlement.

In this context, examining the effectiveness of social assistance in island regions and maritime communities is particularly significant. Fragmented geography, relatively high transport costs, dependence on physical and social connectivity, and uneven local institutional capacities make public service processes in such regions different from those in more consolidated mainland urban settings. Research on island governance shows that service challenges in island areas involve not only distance, but also issues of service scale, governance flexibility, and the need for place-based solutions sensitive to territorial particularities (Walsh et al., 2025). This means that assessing the quality of social assistance in maritime regions cannot rely solely on generic indicators; it must also examine how public organisations adapt to local constraints and opportunities.

Ambon provides a relevant context for this debate. As an archipelagic city that concentrates governmental, educational, commercial, and interregional mobility functions in Maluku, Ambon also represents the complexity of service provision for a heterogeneous population. On the one hand, there is a demand for public services that are fast, orderly, and accountable. On the other hand, citizens differ substantially in administrative capability, transport access, and digital literacy. These conditions make frontline actors crucial intermediaries who must bridge standardised program design and non-standard citizen realities. Literature on public sector readiness and value co-creation shows that the capacity of public organisations to create value for citizens is strongly shaped by their readiness to coordinate, adapt, and involve the surrounding social environment in the implementation process (Nordberg & Aflaki, 2025).

The case of Kantor Cabang Pembantu (KCP) Ambon Rumatiga is particularly interesting because it shows a notable operational achievement: the distribution of social assistance to 587 beneficiaries from Poka, Tihu, and Rumatiga was completed in less than one week. This achievement is important, but it should not be read narrowly as a mere logistical success. Speed can conceal other problems if it is not accompanied by fair verification, adequate accessibility, high-quality staff interaction, and openness in information. Conversely, a fast and orderly service may indicate sound administrative capacity when positive citizen experiences, minimal barriers, and high trust in service providers accompany it. This study, therefore, seeks to understand KCP Ambon Rumatiga not merely as a distribution site, but as a model of frontline public service delivery in a maritime community context.

This article deliberately shifts the focus from the Islamic educational values in the initial manuscript to a public administration perspective more compatible with the discourse of reputable international journals. This shift is not simply a change in conceptual language, but a restructuring of the argument. Principles such as justice, care, cooperation, and trustworthiness are translated into more operational categories in public administration: administrative justice, responsiveness, quality of coordination, accessibility, transparency, and public trust. In this way, the empirical substance of the case remains intact. Still, it is articulated through a theoretical language that enables broader dialogue with the global literature on social services, local governance, and frontline public administration.

More specifically, this article addresses three

questions. First, what public administration factors shape the effectiveness of social assistance delivery at KCP Ambon Rumatiga? Second, how does the character of a maritime community affect the design and experience of social assistance delivery? Third, what implications can be drawn from this case for strengthening social assistance delivery models in island regions? To answer these questions, the article develops the argument that service effectiveness in social assistance delivery in maritime areas is shaped by five interrelated dimensions: targeting accuracy and administrative justice; frontline responsiveness; service accessibility; cross-actor coordination; and transparency and accountability as the basis for public trust.

This article makes contributions at two levels. Empirically, it enriches research on social assistance by presenting a case from an underrepresented island region in the international public administration literature. Theoretically, it shows that the effectiveness of social assistance delivery in frontline organizations must be understood as the intersection of strategic policy outcomes and micro-level service experience (Liddle & Parker, 2024). In other words, the success of social assistance is not only about whether benefits arrive, but also about how they arrive, to whom, through what mechanisms, and with what quality of service relationship. In this respect, the case of KCP Ambon Rumatiga can be read as a lens through which to understand how the state works concretely in front of citizens in a geographical context that demands high flexibility, intensive coordination, and sensitivity to access barriers.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. *Public service effectiveness as a layered achievement*

Recent public administration literature conceptualises service effectiveness not as a single indicator, but as a layered achievement that combines outcomes, processes, and user experience. Liddle and Parker (2024) show that one of the greatest challenges in local government service delivery is linking strategic outcomes at the policy level to relational outcomes at the frontline (Liddle & Parker, 2024). In the context of social assistance, strategic outcomes may include accurate distribution, reduced errors in exclusion, and timely disbursements. At the frontline level, however, the outcomes that matter to citizens often involve seemingly simple but decisive issues: whether they are treated with respect, whether procedures are understandable, whether assistance is available

when difficulties arise, and whether they trust that staff acts fairly.

This view is reinforced by studies on local government performance management systems, which emphasise that good public service requires a combination of efficiency, accountability, service quality, and citizen orientation (Pudjono et al., 2025). Effectiveness should therefore not be reduced to administrative speed alone. A very fast service that creates confusion, excludes vulnerable groups, or triggers public suspicion cannot be regarded as substantively effective. By contrast, a service that may not appear spectacular in numerical terms but succeeds in minimising access barriers, ensuring targeting accuracy, and building public trust may display a higher quality of effectiveness.

For this study, the effectiveness of social assistance delivery is defined as the capacity of a frontline service organisation to deliver benefits to eligible citizens accurately, promptly, accessibly, fairly, coordinately, and accountably. This definition intentionally combines process and outcome dimensions. The outcome is that assistance reaches appropriate beneficiaries. The process is that service is delivered in accordance with standards that respect citizens' dignity, reduce transaction costs, and sustain trust in public institutions.

2.2. *Administrative justice and responsiveness are the core of citizens' experience*

In social assistance schemes, administrative justice involves two main aspects: procedural justice and distributive justice. Procedural justice concerns the consistency of verification processes, the clarity of information, citizens' opportunity to understand requirements, and non-discriminatory treatment. Distributive justice concerns whether benefits reach those who are actually entitled to and in need of them. Research on the design of local welfare assistance shows that many schemes fail not because redistributive intent is absent, but because their administrative design creates barriers for the most vulnerable groups (Norton, 2024). When procedures are too complicated, information is unclear, or the burden of proof is excessive, social assistance can paradoxically deepen inequality.

Responsiveness complements administrative justice because welfare policies rarely operate in socially homogeneous conditions. Responsiveness refers to the capacity of staff and organisations to respond to citizens' specific needs without undermining accountability. In frontline practice, responsiveness often takes the form of queue adjustments, additional explanations, assistance with

requirements, or reassuring communication when citizens are anxious. The literature on local service delivery emphasises that the relationship between staff and citizens is a crucial arena in which service quality is shaped, as it is at this level that abstract policy is translated into concrete experience (Liddle & Parker, 2024). Responsiveness is therefore a substantive dimension rather than a cosmetic addition.

2.3. Accessibility in island contexts and among vulnerable citizens

Public accessibility is commonly discussed in three domains: physical, informational, and digital. In social assistance delivery, all three overlap. Citizens must be able to reach the service location, understand information about schedules and requirements, and increasingly engage with digital elements such as notifications, identity data, or verification platforms. Research on e-government use among vulnerable citizens shows that although the gap in digital public service use may be narrowing, it remains serious among groups with layered vulnerabilities, such as low-income citizens and older adult (Sung & Lee, 2024). At the local government level, accessibility is also shaped by the design of communication channels, which is often still insufficiently inclusive for vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities (Frاندell & Allgood, 2026; Inal & Torkildsby, 2025).

In maritime regions, accessibility has an added dimension. Access is not simply about whether a service counter exists, but about the total cost of reaching the service: time, transport costs, travel certainty, and citizens' ability to align with service schedules. Research on island governance shows that reduced accessibility and higher service provision costs are structural problems in island regions (Walsh et al., 2025). In the context of social assistance, this means that the location of service delivery, service schedules, and procedural flexibility are all part of policy design rather than merely technical issues. When citizens must incur substantial transport costs, lose working time, or face long queues, the real value of the assistance is diminished. Accessibility should therefore be assessed in terms of the total burden imposed on citizens to obtain service.

Social assistance is a policy area that can rarely be implemented by a single organisation acting entirely on its own. Beneficiary data verification, information dissemination, scheduling, queue management, and the resolution of field-level problems require working relationships among distributing agencies,

local officials, and communities. In public administration literature, coordination quality directly affects service coherence and an organisation's ability to address cross-unit implementation problems (Kårtvedt, 2024). Poor coordination tends to create overlapping information, disorganised queues, role ambiguity, and limited capacity to handle special cases.

At the same time, co-creation literature suggests that public organisations are increasingly expected to work with non-state actors, especially in services addressing complex local needs. Nordberg and Narbutaitė Aflaki (2025) argue that public sector readiness for value co-creation depends on organisational learning capacity, boundary-spanning communication, and the administrative willingness to move beyond excessively closed procedural logic (Nordberg & Aflaki, 2025). In the context of social assistance, this does not mean abandoning rules; rather, it means recognising that implementation quality improves when distributing organisations can build functional working relationships with local authorities and citizens.

2.4. Transparency, accountability, and public trust

The final dimension is transparency and accountability. Recent literature consistently shows that public information openness is positively associated with trust, satisfaction, and perceptions of public service quality, although its effects may be mediated by citizens' perceptions and institutional context (Deod & Kiettikunwong, 2026; Li et al., 2026; Ripamonti, 2024). In social assistance, transparency means that citizens know the procedures, disbursement basis, schedule, verification process, and complaint mechanisms. Accountability means clear responsibility for how decisions are made, who implements them, and how errors or complaints are handled.

Recent studies also suggest that transparency's effect on public service satisfaction often operates through trust. When citizens perceive government or service providers as sufficiently open, satisfaction with services increases, especially when such openness relates directly to policy content and implementation outcomes (Ling et al., 2026; Xia & Zhang, 2026). In this study, transparency is therefore understood not as mere formal disclosure, but as a condition that reduces citizens' uncertainty, clarifies rights and obligations, and strengthens confidence that service is delivered without irregularities.

Based on the framework above, this article analyzes the effectiveness of social assistance

delivery at KCP Ambon Rumatiga through five dimensions: (1) targeting accuracy and administrative justice, (2) frontline responsiveness, (3) service accessibility, (4) cross-actor coordination, and (5) transparency, accountability, and public trust. These five dimensions do not stand alone; together they form an implementation chain that determines overall service quality.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach. This choice is based on the objective of understanding in depth how the effectiveness of social assistance delivery is constructed in a specific context, rather than statistically testing causal relationships among variables. A case study is appropriate when the researcher aims to capture the interactions among institutional processes, frontline practices, and specific social conditions that shape a policy phenomenon (Råbu & Binder, 2025; Younas & Inayat, 2025). In this study, the phenomenon under examination is the delivery of social assistance at KCP Ambon Rumatiga, a distributing organisation that interacts directly with citizens in a maritime community.

The case was selected purposively for two reasons. First, the unit demonstrated a clear operational achievement, namely the disbursement of assistance to 587 beneficiaries in three service areas in less than one week. Second, the research setting is situated in an island context, enabling a richer analysis of the relationship among service governance, territorial accessibility, and citizen experience. KCP Ambon Rumatiga was therefore chosen not as an ordinary case but as an informative case to explain how service effectiveness can be achieved in an implementation context that demands high flexibility.

The study draws on three types of data. First, in-depth interviews were conducted with service staff, aid recipients, and local community figures. These interviews were used to explore perceptions of service procedures, field experiences, access barriers, staff communication patterns, and citizens' trust in the disbursement process. Second, participant observation was undertaken to examine service processes, particularly queue management, identity verification, staff-recipient interaction, and the handling of periods of heavy service demand. Third, administrative documents related to disbursement schedules, beneficiary coverage, and distribution flow during the period from September 2023 to March 2024 were reviewed.

Data collection was conducted in stages. The first

stage involved mapping the service process, namely identifying the main service points: beneficiary arrival, identity verification, confirmation of recipient status, and cash disbursement. The second stage involved observing how formal procedures were translated into field practice, especially during crowded periods, when repeated questions occurred, or when elderly citizens and other recipients requiring assistance needed support. The third stage involved deepening interpretive understanding through interviews to assess whether procedures that appeared administratively orderly were also perceived as fair and helpful by citizens.

Data were analysed using a thematic approach. This approach is appropriate for organising qualitative data into analytical themes that explain patterns, differences, and relationships among elements within the case (DeJonckheere et al., 2024). The analysis was conducted in three stages. First, open coding was applied to all observation notes, interview transcripts, and relevant documents. Initial codes included service speed, data verification, staff assistance, queues, information, access barriers, local coordination, and citizen trust. Second, axial coding was used to group these codes into more conceptual themes: targeting accuracy, responsiveness, accessibility, coordination, and transparency and accountability. Third, selective coding was employed to construct an analytical narrative linking these themes to the public administration framework used in this article.

To ensure analytical rigor, this study treated source and method triangulation as a core principle. Findings from interviews were compared with field observations and administrative documents to mitigate bias arising from single-source perceptions. In addition, the study was not oriented solely toward a "success story," but also toward identifying possible tensions between formal rules and field practice. This step is important so that interpretations of effectiveness do not collapse into administrative glorification. The case study methodology literature emphasises that the strength of this approach lies precisely in its capacity to reveal process dynamics, inconsistencies, and contextual learning (South et al., 2024).

The analytical framework in this study does not treat field findings as theory-neutral data; rather, it reads them as empirical material through the lens of public administration. In other words, categories such as administrative justice, responsiveness, accessibility, coordination, and accountability are not imposed mechanically but serve as interpretive devices for understanding how service quality is

built and experienced. This strategy enables the article to achieve two goals simultaneously: a rich contextual description of the Ambon Rumatiga case and a conceptual contribution that can be used to interpret social assistance delivery in other maritime regions.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. *Targeting accuracy and administrative justice*

The first finding shows that the effectiveness of social assistance delivery at KCP Ambon Rumatiga is strongly supported by the organization's ability to maintain targeting accuracy through orderly yet workable verification processes. In the field, identity verification is not merely an administrative procedure, but a mechanism that secures the legitimacy of service delivery. When staff ensure that assistance is provided to those entitled to it, according to available data, the distribution process gains a strong accountability basis. In social assistance programs, this is crucial because even a small error—such as unclear identity records, duplicate data, or outdated beneficiary information—can trigger widespread perceptions of unfairness.

The case of KCP Ambon Rumatiga shows that administrative justice is not simply present or absent; rather, it is produced through a series of consistent small actions: checking identity, ensuring that service order can be understood, explaining data discrepancies, and maintaining a process that does not appear discriminatory. This finding resonates with Norton's (2024) argument that the administrative design of social assistance strongly shapes whether programs operate as instruments of protection or become new sources of exclusion. In many welfare schemes, poor or vulnerable citizens face not only economic hardship but also administrative burdens when procedures are overly complicated, opaque, or rigidly applied.

In this case, staff appear to have minimised the perception of discrimination by relying primarily on data and identity verification rather than on social status, religious background, or personal proximity. This practice matters because social assistance in heterogeneous communities is always vulnerable to being perceived as an arena of favoritism when its administrative basis is weak. Liddle and Parker (2024) remind us that policy outcomes at the citizen level are often shaped by the quality of relationships during service encounters (Liddle & Parker, 2024). Even when a program is strategically designed for clearly defined target groups, a sense of unfairness at

the service counter can erode its overall legitimacy.

Administrative justice in the Ambon Rumatiga case is also evident in the organization's ability to balance standards and flexibility. Standards are necessary to ensure that every citizen is processed under the same rules. Flexibility is necessary because citizens' conditions vary. Some arrive with a clear understanding of procedures, while others require additional explanation, assistance, or more time. At this point, service effectiveness is generated not by rigidly uniform procedures, but by the consistent application of rules in a sufficiently flexible manner to avoid exclusion errors. In public administration terms, this is the core of administrative justice: procedures are maintained to ensure accountability, but their implementation is directed toward preventing citizens from being excluded simply because of informational or administrative limitations.

This finding is relevant to the broader debate on the relationship between strategic outcomes and frontline practice. Rapid distribution to 587 beneficiaries in less than one week would lose much of its meaning if the process behind it were marked by substantial ambiguity or unfairness. Precisely because this case demonstrates fast delivery supported by orderly verification, KCP Ambon Rumatiga can be read as an example showing that efficiency and administrative justice need not be in tension. The challenge is to ensure that speed does not undermine verification quality, and that verification does not enlarge citizens' administrative burdens.

4.2. *Frontline responsiveness and the quality-of-service experience*

The second salient dimension is frontline responsiveness. In the context of social assistance, responsiveness refers to frontline organizations' ability to translate procedures into interactions that genuinely help citizens. Field findings indicate that staff at KCP Ambon Rumatiga function not only as administrative verifiers, but also as mediators of service experience. They explain procedures, alleviate citizen confusion, assist beneficiaries requiring direction, and maintain service pace during periods of congestion. From a public administration perspective, this is the point at which citizens directly experience service quality.

Responsiveness matters because social assistance often serves citizens who are more vulnerable than average public service users. Some beneficiaries are older adults, people with limited mobility, or citizens unfamiliar with official documents and formal

procedures. If staff act rigidly, coldly, or without effective communication, the psychological and administrative costs of service rise. Conversely, when staff display operational empathy—offering simple explanations, directing queues, or expediting assistance for those who genuinely need it—the organization reduces implementation friction. The literature on local government service delivery suggests that frontline outcomes are often shaped by the quality of interpersonal relationships, not merely by procedural design on paper (Liddle & Parker, 2024).

In this case, responsiveness cannot be separated from the organization's capacity to maintain interaction quality under busy conditions. Social assistance disbursement periods are typically crowded and potentially stressful for both staff and recipients. Field findings suggest that the effectiveness of KCP Ambon Rumatiga lies precisely in its ability to maintain service atmosphere control without losing its human dimension. This matters because successful social assistance delivery is often not the most technologically sophisticated, but the one most capable of making citizens feel they are treated with dignity. Within local government performance frameworks, this dimension forms part of service quality and should not be detached from efficiency and accountability (Pudjono et al., 2025).

Responsiveness is also related to the use of frontline discretion. Here, discretion should not be understood as rule-breaking, but as a practical space of judgment that enables staff to handle variations in citizens' situations. For example, when a beneficiary arrives confused or requires a more detailed explanation, staff must decide how to help without disrupting the overall queue. Such discretion is important in social service delivery because formal procedures can never fully anticipate the diversity of field conditions. The challenge is to ensure that discretion is used to reduce citizen barriers rather than to create unjustifiable preferential treatment.

The quality of responsiveness at KCP Ambon Rumatiga thus shows that service effectiveness results from a combination of procedural order and relational capacity. This reinforces the article's argument that social assistance delivery should be understood as an integrated administrative experience. If citizens receive assistance through a process that makes them feel obstructed or humiliated, service quality remains low. By contrast, when assistance is delivered through a clear, prompt, and communicative process, public organizations achieve two outcomes simultaneously: distribution goals are fulfilled, and service legitimacy is

strengthened.

4.3. Service accessibility in a maritime community context

The third dimension that stands out most strongly in the Ambon context is accessibility. In maritime communities, the issue of access does not end with whether a service exists. Still, it extends to whether citizens can realistically reach that service at a reasonable cost. Field findings show that the service organization at KCP Ambon Rumatiga helped reduce part of the citizens' access burden by distributing relatively close to the service areas of Poka, Tihu, and Rumatiga. This proximity may seem simple, but it is highly significant in a setting where geographical conditions, travel costs, and the quality of local connectivity shape daily mobility.

The literature on island particularity indicates that reduced accessibility and high service costs are structural problems in island regions, even when these regions are administratively connected to government centers (Walsh et al., 2025). In the context of social assistance, this means that the location of disbursement, service timing, and procedural flexibility form part of policy design rather than merely technical considerations. If citizens must spend substantial amounts on transport, lose working time, or endure long queues, the real benefit of the assistance decreases. Accessibility must therefore be measured in terms of the total burden borne by citizens in obtaining the service.

Field findings also show that accessibility has an informational dimension. Citizens need to know when services are available, which documents must be brought, and how the service flow operates. In societies where digital literacy is uneven, information dissemination cannot rely solely on digital channels. Studies on digital welfare and e-government use warn that a shift toward digital channels may accelerate service for some citizens while deepening exclusion for groups unfamiliar with such platforms (Bennett & Meers, 2025; Sung & Lee, 2024). The strength of KCP Ambon Rumatiga, therefore, lies not only in physical disbursement but also in maintaining communication patterns that remain close to citizens and are not wholly dependent on digital mediation.

Accessibility is also linked to support for vulnerable groups. Research on hard-to-reach groups indicates that access barriers are often layered: distance, queues, costs, limited transport, and information uncertainty reinforce one another (Surendran et al., 2024). In the Ambon Rumatiga case,

staff-assisted beneficiaries requiring additional direction served as an important mechanism to prevent vulnerable groups from falling further behind. This suggests that accessibility is not only about spatial design but also about how service interactions are organized.

When read in the context of the literature on digital accessibility in local government, this case also suggests that frontline organizations still require inclusive, multimodal service channels. Frandell and Allgood (2026) and Inal and Torkildsby (2025) show that accessibility in government services is deeply influenced by organizational design, oversight, and long-term commitment to inclusion (Frandell & Allgood, 2026; Inal & Torkildsby, 2025). In social assistance delivery, this means that face-to-face channels remain crucial, especially in regions with digital and information access gaps. Digitalization may improve efficiency, but it should not fully replace service mechanisms that reach the most vulnerable citizens.

These findings indicate that the success of KCP Ambon Rumatiga cannot be separated from its ability to reduce citizens' access costs. Service that is proximate, clear, and supportive constitutes substantive accessibility. In maritime communities, this is one of the principal prerequisites for effective social assistance delivery.

4.4. Cross-actor coordination and implementation capacity

The fourth dimension is cross-actor coordination. In practice, social assistance delivery always involves more than one organization, or at least more than one source of capacity. Although the postal sub-branch handles disbursements, smooth implementation depends on working relationships with local officials, information flows from the government, and community support to ensure beneficiaries are aware of schedules and procedures. Field findings indicate that distributing to hundreds of recipients in a short time would have been possible only if coordination at the operational level functioned relatively well.

Effective coordination is visible in several forms. First, role clarity: distribution staff understand their core tasks, while local actors contribute to information dissemination, crowd organization, or data clarification when necessary. Second, time alignment: social assistance distribution requires synchronization to prevent citizens from arriving at the wrong time or from gathering in uncontrolled concentrations. Third, problem-solving mechanisms: every distribution process carries the possibility of

mismatched data, incomplete identity documents, or citizen questions. Effective coordination enables such problems to be addressed without bringing the whole process to a halt.

These findings are consistent with Kårtvedt's (2024) argument that coordination quality shapes governments' or service organizations' capacity to address cross-unit problems coherently (Kårtvedt, 2024). Coordination quality is not simply a matter of the number of meetings or the number of actors involved; it concerns the extent to which existing working relationships genuinely help solve implementation problems. The Ambon Rumatiga case shows that successful coordination tends to be operational, closely connected to field needs, and focused on reducing real barriers for recipients.

The case also highlights the importance of collaborative capacity. Nordberg and Narbutaitė Aflaki (2025) emphasize that public organizations capable of creating value for citizens are usually ready to learn across organizational boundaries, build communication, and adapt their practices to local needs (Nordberg & Aflaki, 2025). In social assistance delivery, such readiness is evident in staff and local actors' ability to work together without working in isolation. Coordination is no longer merely a hierarchical formality, but a precondition for maintaining service rhythm, reducing citizen confusion, and increasing trust that services are being managed seriously.

This case further suggests that good coordination can compensate for some structural limitations. In island regions, not all access problems can be resolved simply by adding more resources. However, effective coordination can reduce implementation costs, improve service predictability, and accelerate problem resolution in the field. This is important because social service provision in maritime communities often faces limitations in scalability and non-trivial operational costs (Walsh et al., 2025). Coordinative capacity thus becomes a highly strategic institutional asset.

From this perspective, the effectiveness of KCP Ambon Rumatiga can be understood as an achievement of implementation capacity rather than merely internal procedural success. Service works well because the distributing organization does not operate alone; sufficiently functional cross-actor relationships support it. This offers an important lesson: improving social assistance in maritime regions should focus not only on procedural standards, but also on strengthening coordination networks that allow those procedures to work in practice.

4.5. *Transparency, accountability, and the formation of public trust*

The final dimension that binds the entire service process together is transparency and accountability. Field findings indicate that openness about who is eligible to receive assistance, which documents must be brought, the order of service procedures, and the verification reasons strongly affect the atmosphere of service delivery. When citizens understand why their identity is being checked, why queues exist, or why data confirmation is necessary, the possibility of suspicion declines. Conversely, even minor ambiguities can trigger perceptions that assistance is being distributed in a closed or unfair manner.

Recent studies suggest that transparency is positively associated with citizens' satisfaction and trust in public services, although its effects often depend on the form of openness and citizens' perceptions of information quality (Li et al., 2026; Ripamonti, 2024). In the context of social assistance, the most meaningful form of openness is not merely the publication of data, but procedural clarity that recipients directly experience. If citizens receive adequate explanations, observe an orderly process, and do not witness irregular treatment, operational transparency is formed. It is precisely this operational transparency that sustains everyday trust in service institutions.

The findings of this article are also consistent with Deed and Kiettikunwong's (2026) work, showing that information disclosure, public trust, and service satisfaction are interrelated indicators of good governance (Deed & Kiettikunwong, 2026). In the case of KCP Ambon Rumatiga, accountability is visible when staff rely primarily on documents, identity records, and beneficiary lists. Such mechanisms signal that decisions are not made arbitrarily. Accountability is also evident in the willingness to explain reasons when data problems or delays occur. For citizens, this is important because they evaluate not only the result, but also whether the service can be justified and accounted for.

Recent literature on government transparency suggests that trust tends to grow when citizens perceive government or service providers as moving beyond mere formal compliance and genuinely opening processes that matter to users (Ling et al., 2026; Xia & Zhang, 2026). In social assistance schemes, the implication is clear: openness about policy content, verification procedures, and channels for resolving problems matters more than abstract narratives about reform. Public trust emerges from the concrete experience that services are clear,

orderly, and explainable.

For KCP Ambon Rumatiga, this dimension explains why service effectiveness does not end with distribution figures. Fast service that citizens do not trust produces fragile legitimacy. By contrast, service that is orderly, communicative, and consistent with rules tends to generate more durable trust. In the context of social assistance, public trust has strategic implications because it shapes citizens' willingness to comply with procedures, arrive on schedule, update data, and resist misinformation. In other words, transparency and accountability are not merely ethical by-products of good service, but implementation resources that strengthen policy effectiveness over time.

4.6. *Theoretical and Policy Implications*

The findings of this study carry several important theoretical implications. First, the article confirms that the effectiveness of social assistance delivery at the frontline level should be understood as the outcome of a combination of outcome-based management logic and citizens' relational experiences. This strengthens the argument of Liddle and Parker (2024) that there is a gap between strategic outcomes and frontline outcomes, but that this gap can be narrowed through implementation design sensitive to service experience (Liddle & Parker, 2024). In the context of KCP Ambon Rumatiga, distribution speed becomes meaningful as an indicator of effectiveness only because it is accompanied by orderly verification, helpful interaction, and procedural transparency.

Second, the article shows that the social assistance literature needs to give greater analytical space to geography, particularly island regions and maritime communities. Much existing discussion of social assistance still centers on targeting, data, and budgets, while access barriers created by territorial fragmentation are treated as secondary issues. Yet this study shows that, in maritime contexts, accessibility is a key factor in whether citizens can benefit from the program. Effectiveness in island regions must therefore be read through a place-based governance lens, rather than through nationally uniform procedural standards alone (Walsh et al., 2025).

Third, this study enriches the discussion of administrative justice by showing that justice in social assistance cannot be reduced to procedural compliance on paper. Administrative justice concerns how citizens experience procedures: whether they are understandable, whether they provide equal opportunity, whether they avoid

humiliation, and whether they do not impose excessive burdens. This underscores the importance of integrating rule compliance with citizen experience. In other words, fair service must be both accountable and practically livable for citizens without imposing high administrative costs.

At the policy level, several lessons can be drawn. First, social assistance distribution organizations in maritime regions need to develop service designs aimed at reducing citizens' access burdens. This may include selecting distribution sites near population concentrations, scheduling that reflects local mobility patterns, and aiding mechanisms for older adults and other vulnerable groups. Second, public communication regarding schedules, requirements, and procedures should use a multimodal approach. Full dependence on digital channels risks producing new forms of exclusion for citizens with limited digital literacy or unstable connectivity (Bennett & Meers, 2025; Sung & Lee, 2024).

Third, governments and distributing organizations need to strengthen operational coordination with local actors. The quality of social assistance often depends on seemingly mundane factors: who communicates the schedule, who helps direct citizens, and who can assist with data clarification when problems arise. Coordination with local officials, community figures, and supporting units should therefore be considered part of the architecture of service delivery rather than a marginal addition. Fourth, transparency should be understood as an operational practice that remains close to citizens. Information that is simple, consistent, and easy to understand will do far more to build trust than information that is merely made available in formats that citizens do not actually use.

Fifth, greater attention should be given to strengthening frontline staff capacity. The performance management literature suggests that public organizations often focus excessively on outcome indicators, paying insufficient attention to staff capacity to use information and respond to citizen needs (Hong et al., 2025). Yet in social assistance delivery, the quality of citizens' experience is strongly shaped by staff's capacity to manage queues, exercise appropriate discretion, and communicate empathetically without sacrificing accountability. Staff training should therefore extend beyond procedural instruction to include service communication, support for vulnerable groups, and field-level problem solving.

More broadly, social assistance delivery in maritime regions should be built on four policy

principles. First, proximity: services should be brought as close to citizens as possible. Second, clarity: service flow and beneficiaries' rights should be transparent and easy to understand. Third, coordination: implementation actors should be linked in practical and functional ways. Fourth, trust-building: procedures and communication should be used as tools to build public trust. When these four principles are integrated, social assistance becomes not merely a transfer instrument, but also a means of strengthening state legitimacy in the eyes of citizens.

5. CONCLUSION

This article shows that the effectiveness of social assistance delivery at KCP Ambon Rumatiga cannot be explained solely by the rapid distribution of benefits to 587 beneficiaries in less than one week. Service effectiveness in this case is shaped by a combination of five interrelated public administration dimensions: targeting accuracy and administrative justice; frontline responsiveness; service accessibility; cross-actor coordination; and transparency and accountability, which underpin public trust.

The central finding is that successful social assistance delivery in maritime communities depends on frontline organizations' ability to bridge standardized policy design with highly contextual citizen realities. Accurate verification secures distribution legitimacy; frontline responsiveness reduces administrative friction; good accessibility lowers the costs citizens must bear; operational coordination sustains implementation rhythm; and procedural openness strengthens confidence in distributing institutions. In an island context such as Ambon, accessibility and coordination are particularly decisive, as geographic and social barriers can easily erode program benefits if not anticipated effectively.

Theoretically, this article underscores the importance of understanding social assistance delivery as a frontline public administration issue rather than merely a macro-level welfare policy issue. In practice, it emphasizes that social assistance reform in maritime regions should be directed toward reducing citizens' access burdens, strengthening local coordination, and building trust through clear, accountable procedures. In this way, social assistance can serve not only as an instrument of economic redistribution but also to strengthen the quality of public service delivery in regions facing distinctive access and capacity challenges.

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