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# Digital Transformation of Social Welfare Services in Madiun Regency

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**Abstract**—This study intends to analyze the condition of social welfare in Madiun Regency by referring to the 2024–2026 Regional Development Plan (RPD) document. The main focus of the study includes the challenges of poverty alleviation, empowerment of vulnerable groups, the effectiveness of social welfare policies, and the role of digitalization and integration of social data in inclusive social services. This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach with document analysis as the main method, supported by secondary data from government institutions and scientific references. The results of the study indicate that although the local government is strongly committed to improving social welfare governance, structural problems such as data inequality, limited human resource capacity, and minimal digital integration continue to hamper the program's effectiveness. On the other hand, digitalization and the utilization of integrated social data present strategic opportunities to create increasingly adaptive and inclusive social services. This study recommends strengthening the regional social information system, increasing the capacity of the apparatus, and multi-party collaboration as further steps to accelerate the achievement of equitable social welfare in Madiun Regency.

**Keywords**— *social welfare; empowerment; digitalization; Regency Theatre; RPD*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Social welfare development is one of the important pillars for realizing national development goals, which aim to create a just, prosperous, and equitable life for all people [1]. In the

context of regional autonomy, the district government has a strategic role in formulating policies and programs that address the various social challenges faced by the local community. Madiun Regency, as part of East Java Province, faces complex social dynamics, including poverty and hidden poverty, as well as the vulnerability of marginalized groups that require special protection. [2]

The *Madiun Regency Regional Development Plan (RPD) document for 2024–2026*, as stipulated in Madiun Regent Regulation Number 15 of 2023, serves as the main reference for determining the direction and priorities of social development over the next three years. This document not only indicates the commitment of local governments to improving people's living standards, but also serves as a strategic instrument for integrating sectoral approaches across all fields of development, especially in the social sector [2]. Based on the data and analysis contained in the RPD, it appears that efforts to improve social welfare in Madiun Regency have not been completely separated from structural defense. Social inequality between regions, limited access to basic services, and the lack of optimal social protection systems are central issues that require greater attention in the policy planning and implementation process [2]. Therefore, this paper aims to describe and examine the condition of social welfare in Madiun Regency based on the findings summarized from the 2024–2026 RPD document. The main focus of the discussion was on aspects of poverty, community economic empowerment, social protection for vulnerable groups, and the use of technology in social services. This study is expected to offer a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and prospects of social

development at the regional level, and to serve as the basis for formulating policy strategies that are more responsive and socially just.

Social welfare is a condition for the fulfillment of basic human needs, both material and non-material, that enable individuals and groups in society to live properly and responsibly, and to actively participate in social and economic life. According to Midgley, social welfare encompasses state- and other institutional social interventions to address social problems and improve people's quality of life. This intervention can take the form of social assistance, public services, and empowerment policies that help a prosperous and independent life for the community [3].

In Indonesia, the definition of social welfare juridically refers to Law Number 11 of 2009 concerning Social Welfare, which defines it as a condition for the fulfillment of the material, spiritual, and social needs of citizens in order to live a decent life and be able to develop themselves, so that they can carry out their social functions [4]. Within this framework, the state is obliged to provide comprehensive social welfare services, especially for vulnerable groups, for example, the elderly, people with disabilities, children, and the poor. Social welfare development is closely related to the social welfare development approach, which accentuates the integration of economic and social development. This approach prioritizes the state's role in providing social protection while encouraging community empowerment toward greater economic and social independence. Thus, social development is not only curative (overcoming problems), but also preventive and promotive [3].

Sen, in his theory of development as freedom, states that actual well-being is not measured solely by income or consumption, but rather by the extent to which individuals have substantive freedom to live a life that conforms to the values they consider valuable [5]. In this context, poverty is seen as a limitation on freedom, arising from economic, social, or institutional barriers. Therefore, social development must be designed to expand society's choices and opportunities, especially for the poor and vulnerable. The theory of social inequality (*social gap*) explains that the unequal distribution of resources can cause inequities in access to education, health, employment, and other social services. According to Wilkinson and Pickett, high social inequality can trigger various social problems, including reduced social participation, increased mistrust between groups, and decreased social stability [6]. Therefore, social welfare policies should be directed at reducing inequality through the redistribution of resources and the expansion of access to basic services [7].

Empowerment is a key approach in contemporary social development, aiming to increase individuals' and communities' capacity to make decisions and manage resources independently. Empowerment theory, according to Zimmerman, comprises three dimensions: personal control, collective participation, and critical understanding of the

social environment [8]. In the context of regional development, community-based empowerment is considered effective in responding to local needs contextually and strengthening social cohesion. Programs such as strengthening BUMDes and MSMEs, and involving vulnerable groups in development planning, embody this approach.

Social welfare development is a systematic, structured effort by the government to create decent, just, and sustainable living conditions for the community. In the context of Madiun Regency, social welfare issues such as poverty, unequal access to basic services, protection of vulnerable groups, and economic empowerment of the community pose challenges that demand comprehensive, evidence-based policy interventions [2]. Based on the *Regional Development Plan (RPD) of Madiun Regency for 2024–2026*, the local government has set human development and strengthening the social safety net as among its main priorities. The document also emphasizes the need for integration between economic and social development, as well as the importance of digitalization in social welfare services [2].

Several previous studies have addressed the issues of social welfare, poverty, and the digitalization of public services in Indonesia. A study by James Midgley (2014) emphasized that the effectiveness of social welfare policies in developing countries is heavily influenced by institutional capacity and cross-sectoral policy integration. Midgley highlighted that many countries face program fragmentation and weak inter-agency coordination, which impacts the ineffectiveness of social assistance distribution.

Another relevant study is Amartya Sen's (1999) study on development as freedom, which states that welfare is measured not only by increased income but also by expanding an individual's capabilities to access education, health care, and social participation. This perspective is widely used in human development studies and poverty alleviation policies at the national and regional levels.

In the Indonesian context, various studies have examined the implementation of Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS) and the effectiveness of social assistance programs such as the Family Hope Program (PKH) and the Non-Cash Food Assistance Program (BPNT). Several studies have shown that the main problems in regional social welfare systems lie in data accuracy, overlapping beneficiaries, and weak village-based data updates (e.g., studies on the implementation of the DTKS (Distribution of Social Welfare) and post-pandemic social protection policies in various districts in East Java and Central Java). These studies generally focus on evaluating social assistance programs or analyzing national policies.

Furthermore, studies on digital transformation in public services have also developed rapidly. Studies on the implementation of the Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE) show that digitalization can increase the transparency

and efficiency of public services, but are often hampered by digital literacy among officials and the public, as well as uneven technological infrastructure. These studies generally position digitalization as an administrative and technological variable, without deeply linking it to the dynamics of regional-based social welfare.

While these studies have made important contributions, several research gaps remain. First, most previous research places social welfare within the framework of sectoral program evaluation, rather than within a comprehensive regional development planning document. Second, few studies specifically analyze the integration of social welfare policies, local economic empowerment, and digital transformation within a single regional policy analysis framework. Third, empirical studies focusing on Madiun Regency as the research locus are still very limited, particularly those that refer directly to the 2024–2026 Regional Planning Document (RPD) as the basis for analysis.

Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in the following aspects:

1. The approach based on regional planning documents (RPD 2024–2026) as the primary source of analysis, thus providing a strategic and structural overview of the direction of social welfare policy, rather than simply evaluating ongoing programs.
2. The integration of social welfare perspectives, capability theory, and a community empowerment approach in contextually interpreting regional policies.
3. The focus on digital transformation and social data integration as strategic variables in regional social welfare governance, analyzed simultaneously with issues of poverty and regional inequality.
4. The empirical contribution specific to the context of Madiun Regency, enriching the literature on regional-based social policy in Indonesia.

By clarifying this research's position among previous studies, this article not only strengthens its theoretical foundation but also demonstrates a clear scientific contribution to the development of social welfare studies and digital-based public policy governance at the regional level.

The framework of thought in this study is based on social welfare theory [3], development as an extension of freedom [5], and community empowerment approaches [8]. All three provide the basis that social welfare is not only a matter of material assistance, but also the expansion of capacity, access, and community participation in development. By referring to these theories, this article analyzes how the policy direction of Madiun Regency in the field of social welfare has been formulated in the *2024–2026 RPD*, and how the implementation of these policies addresses existing structural problems. The study focuses on five main aspects: poverty alleviation, social protection, local economic empowerment, inclusion of vulnerable groups, and digital social service transformation. Based on the background and framework of thought that has been presented, the discussion of the

problems in this study is focused on the following: how is the condition of social welfare in Madiun Regency based on data and policy directions in the Regional Development Plan (RPD) for 2024–2026; what are the main challenges faced by Madiun Regency in efforts to alleviate poverty and empower vulnerable groups; the extent of the effectiveness of social welfare policies and programs designed in the RPD in addressing inequality and improving access to basic services; and how the role of digitalization and social data integration in supporting the implementation of more inclusive and adaptive social welfare in Madiun Regency.

## II. METHOD

This study uses a **qualitative descriptive** approach to describe in depth the conditions and policies of social welfare in Madiun Regency, based on the *Regional Development Plan (RPD)* for 2024–2026. The qualitative descriptive approach is used because it can reveal the meaning, process, and context of a social phenomenon in a comprehensive and profound way [9] [10] [11] [12]. The focus of this approach is not on numerical measurement, but on an in-depth exploration of experiences, documents, and social practices in the field. The main data used is *the 2024–2026 Madiun Regency RPD document* issued by the Madiun Regency Bappeda. In addition, supporting data were obtained from official local government reports and academic literature on social welfare concepts and theories. Data collection is carried out through documentation studies, namely by identifying, studying, and analyzing document content systematically. Documentation studies are an important technique in qualitative research, especially when the main data are sourced from policy documents and official archives [13] [14]. The data collection process is focused on information related to social welfare programs, development targets and objectives, and implementation strategies contained in the document. Data analysis was carried out in a thematic qualitative manner, namely by organizing the data into main themes such as social welfare conditions, structural challenges, policy directions, and digital-based social service innovations. Thematic analysis was chosen because it provides flexibility in identifying patterns of meaning in complex text data. Furthermore, the data obtained were synthesized and analyzed based on the established theoretical framework, namely the theory of social welfare [3], the theory of development as freedom [5], and the approach of community empowerment [8]. Thus, the data are interpreted contextually and theoretically to produce a more comprehensive understanding of social welfare policies at the regional level. To ensure the validity of the data, the researcher triangulated the sources, namely by comparing information from the RPD document with academic literature and other official data, such as government statistical reports, policy evaluation reports, and relevant national regulations. Triangulation is used as a strategy to increase confidence and accuracy in the interpretation of research results [17] [18]. In addition, the researcher also conducted a study of the internal consistency of documents and assessed the relationship

between policies and actual social conditions faced by the people of Madiun Regency.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RPD noted that the poverty rate in Madiun Regency remains high, especially in rural areas. One of the factors causing this is the community's dependence on the traditional agricultural sector, which is low-productivity. In addition, access to education and health is still uneven, especially in remote areas. The Madiun Regency Government realizes that poverty is multidimensional. Therefore, the approach taken is not only charitable (social assistance) but also empowerment based on local potential. However, this effort requires time and consistency in budgeting, as well as synergy between regional apparatus. RPD shows that programs such as PKH (Family Hope Program), BPNT (Non-Cash Food Assistance), and disability assistance remain the foundation for the poor. However, it was found that there was still overlap in beneficiary data and a lack of integrated basic data updates. The problem of accuracy and validity of beneficiary data is a common obstacle in the implementation of social programs. RPD the dissemination of social information integration systems and the use of digital technology. This opens up opportunities for more *equitable and efficient* data-driven policy-based service optimization.

RPD highlighted that facilities and services for vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and people with disabilities, are still limited, both in the form of direct services and economic empowerment. The lack of attention to vulnerable groups reflects the need to mainstream social inclusion in every development program. Expanding entrepreneurship training, increasing public accessibility, and engaging local communities are important parts of the solution. RPD shows a strong push to strengthen the community's economy through MSMEs, cooperatives, and entrepreneurship training aligned with village potential. Empowering the local economy is a strategic step in reducing inequality and creating sustainable prosperity. However, its success depends heavily on ongoing mentoring, access to capital, and a supportive market. RPD emphasizes that strengthening social welfare must be carried out in an integrated manner with human resource development, increasing community participation, and innovation in data- and technology-based policies. However, challenges such as regional fiscal limitations and cross-sector coordination are still the main obstacles. In general, the 2024–2026 Madiun Regency RPD shows a progressive direction in building social welfare. However, for optimal results, it requires regular updating of social data, a multi-stakeholder collaborative approach, strengthening institutional capacity and local human resources, and increasing transparency and accountability in social programs.

#### **Social Welfare Conditions in Madiun Regency Based on RPD 2024–2026**

According to the Madiun Regency Regional Development Plan (RPD) for 2024–2026, social welfare is one of the main focuses of regional development. Data shows that Madiun Regency still faces challenges in alleviating poverty, as reflected in the poverty rate, which remains relatively high compared to the national target. In addition, access to basic services such as health, education, and social protection for vulnerable groups remains geographically and socially uneven. Local government assistance has designed various programs, such as direct social assistance, community empowerment through skills training, and strengthening the social safety net for the elderly, people with disabilities, and underprivileged families. The RPD document also emphasizes the importance of digitizing social data systems to improve service effectiveness and monitor social welfare programs.

The *Madiun Regency Regional Development Plan (RPD) document for 2024–2026* emphasizes that social welfare development is one of the main pillars in achieving inclusive, equitable, and sustainable human development goals. Based on the data in the RPD, the poverty rate in Madiun Regency in 2022 is still within the range of 11.18%, higher than the average for East Java Province at 10.49%. This indicates that poverty remains a serious challenge. Several sub-districts with high poverty rates are spread across rural areas, especially those that do not have adequate economic infrastructure. Vulnerable community groups such as the elderly, people with disabilities, abandoned children, and underprivileged families still experience limited access to basic services such as education, health, and social security. RPD noted that coverage of social welfare services is uneven and does not reach remote areas. This is due to limited facilities, human resources, and inaccurate data collection.

The Human Development Index (HDI) of Madiun Regency in 2022 was 71.78, which is classified as "high" but still below the national average. The largest contributions to HDI come from long-term educational expectations and per capita expenditure, while life expectancy and average length of schooling remain challenges. Human development, as an important dimension of social welfare, still requires stronger interventions, especially in the education and health sectors. Inequality in the provision of social services between regions remains real. Some sub-districts have much more complete basic service facilities than other sub-districts, especially in suburban and hilly areas. This inequality directly affects people's limited access to social security and basic state protection.

The 2024–2026 RPD shows that Madiun Regency is developing a digitalization system for the management of social welfare data through applications and integration among OPDs. However, this system is still in its early stages and faces challenges in terms of digital literacy, technological infrastructure, and inter-agency coordination. As a result, the assistance with the data collection and verification processes for social recipients is often out of sync or overlaps. RPD affirmed the local government's commitment to expanding

economic empowerment programs by strengthening MSMEs, cooperatives, and BUMDesa. In addition, various social protection programs such as Regional Social Security (Jamkesda), food assistance, and social rehabilitation are part of the strategy to accelerate community welfare.

### **Key Challenges in Poverty Alleviation and Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups**

Major challenges identified in the RPD document include social inequality between village and sub-district areas, low levels of education and skills of some communities, and limited access to business capital for MSME and BUMDes actors. Vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people with disabilities, and children need more intensive social protection due to their complex vulnerability conditions. In addition, the lack of optimal data integration between related agencies has led to lower-quality data collection and distribution of social assistance. This condition is an obstacle to ensuring that assistance is on target and accelerating the empowerment process. Poverty alleviation and empowerment of vulnerable groups are the top priorities in the social development agenda of Madiun Regency. However, these programs still face a number of complex structural and technical challenges. Most of the poor in Madiun Regency experience structural poverty, a condition characterized by limited access to economic resources, education, employment, and public services. In addition, there is a pattern of cultural poverty, in which certain groups experience limited motivation and adaptability to change, especially in skills and entrepreneurship. This results in a cycle of poverty that is difficult to break.

One significant challenge is the lack of optimal integration of social data across regional apparatus organizations (OPD). The Integrated Social Welfare Database (DTKS), which serves as a reference for the provision of social assistance, still faces issues with data accuracy and updating. This assistance affects not being on target for the program, in the form of direct cash assistance, food assistance, and other social security benefits. Vulnerable groups such as women heads of households, the elderly, people with disabilities, and youth who have dropped out of school often do not have adequate access to skills training, business capital, and job opportunities. The available economic empowerment programs have not reached all levels of society in need, especially in rural and suburban areas. RPD shows that the success of social programs is strongly influenced by the capacity of village officials and field social workers. However, there is still a shortage of social assistance workers who have adequate competence, especially in conducting assessments, assisting poor families, and facilitating community economic empowerment.

Some areas of Madiun Regency, especially mountainous and border areas, continue to face limitations in basic infrastructure, including roads, internet connectivity, and public services. This assistance makes it difficult for people to mobilize, socialize, and access economic empowerment

programs. As a result, the development gap between urban and rural areas remains quite striking. The regional budget for the social welfare sector remains limited, so many programs depend on transfers from the central government. This dependency makes it difficult for local governments to implement programs that are local, responsive, and sustainable, especially in community-based empowerment schemes. RPD noted that most beneficiary communities remain passive and have not been fully involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of empowerment programs. A lack of ownership of the program makes results unsustainable and at risk of failure when aid is stopped.

### **The Effectiveness of Social Welfare Policies and Programs in Overcoming Inequality and Improving Access to Basic Services**

Analysis of the RPD document shows that Madiun Regency's social welfare policy seeks to adopt a community-based empowerment approach and improve cross-sector coordination. Skills training programs and the formation of joint business groups (KUB) have increased the community's economic capacity. However, the program's effectiveness is still limited by several factors, including the lack of human resources at the village level, limited infrastructure, and the persistence of social stigma against vulnerable groups. Local governments are also working to strengthen regulations and monitoring mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability in program implementation.

The poverty alleviation program run by the Madiun Regency Government has shown positive achievements, with a decrease in the percentage of the poor population from 11.91% in 2021 to 10.79% in 2022. However, the poverty depth and severity index has increased, indicating that the extreme poor group is still not optimally reached by program interventions [2]. The HDI of Madiun Regency has increased from 71.88 in 2021 to 72.39 in 2022. This increase reflects improvements in education, health, and people's purchasing power, the main indicators of HDI. The performance of the community empowerment program shows a 71% achievement rate, with a budget efficiency of 30.70%. This shows that the program is running relatively efficiently, although it still needs to be strengthened in terms of the quality of its implementation and its sustainability impact [2]. Some of the strategies that are considered effective in the implementation of empowerment programs include community participation in the planning and implementation stages of the program, a holistic approach that includes economic, social, and health aspects, consistent and sustainable local government support, and periodic monitoring and evaluation for responsive program adjustments [2]. Regional development priorities include improving the quality of education, health, and social protection services. This strategy is implemented to reduce the gap between social groups and between village and city areas in accessing basic services [2]. In general, social welfare policies and programs in Madiun Regency have been effective in reducing poverty and improving the community's

quality of life. However, the increase in the depth of the poverty index shows that the program has not fully reached the most vulnerable groups. Optimization of data-driven, participatory, and integrative approaches is needed to strengthen long-term impact.

### **The Role of Social Data Digitization and Integration in Helping Inclusive Social Welfare Services**

The 2024–2026 Madiun Regency RPD emphasizes the importance of information technology in the social service system. Social data digitization aims to create an integrated database that makes it easier to identify potential beneficiaries, speed up the service process, and increase transparency and accuracy in aid distribution. However, the implementation of digitalization still faces obstacles such as limited internet access in rural areas and low digital literacy for some people. The local government plans to train and build the capacity of human resources as part of a strategy to strengthen digital-based social services.

The Madiun Regency Government in the 2024–2026 Regional Development Plan (RPD) recognizes the importance of digital transformation in enhancing the effectiveness of inclusive and targeted social welfare services. Along with the increasing demand for efficient, adaptive, and data-based public services, digitalization is becoming a strategic key in social welfare governance. RPD shows that Madiun Regency is developing an integrated social welfare information system. These efforts include building a database of poor and vulnerable residents, updating the Integrated Social Welfare Database (DTKS), and digitizing the verification and validation process for prospective social assistance recipients. The use of this information system aims to reduce aid distribution errors, prevent program overlap, and increase the accuracy and speed of decision-making by related OPDs.

Despite a strong commitment to digitalization, Madiun Regency faces digital infrastructure constraints in several remote areas, particularly in villages with limited internet access. On the other hand, low digital literacy among village officials and vulnerable communities is an obstacle to the optimal use of the digital system. This condition can lead to data mismatches or delays in social welfare data entry, affecting the effectiveness of social assistance program interventions.

The application of digitalization in social services has great potential in increasing transparency and accountability. RPD highlighted the importance of a digital reporting system, dashboard monitoring, and program evaluation that can be accessed across OPDs. Thus, the implementation of social welfare programs can be better monitored, more transparent, and more responsive to public complaints. Digitalization also facilitates community interaction through services for aid registration, complaints, and assistance status tracking. RPD indicates that one of the biggest challenges in the digitization of social services is the weak coordination of data across sectors. Each OPD still uses a different data collection system

and format, which makes integration and synchronization difficult. This causes data mismatches between social services, health offices, education offices, and village governments. Concrete steps are needed for system consolidation, including data standardization, application interoperability, and the formation of a district-level social data management team.

Digitalization, when optimized with a participatory and inclusive approach, has the potential to expand the scope of services to vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people with disabilities, and the poor. Initiatives to use simple mobile applications, SMS gateways, and bold consulting services can help people with limited mobility to remain adequately served. However, for these benefits to be felt, there needs to be training, digital support, and tools tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups.

### **Discussion**

Social welfare is an important indicator of regional development success. Madiun Regency's 2024–2026 RPD has set a development direction and strategy focused on reducing poverty, improving people's quality of life, and strengthening social protection. The poverty rate in Madiun Regency in 2022 was 10.21%, higher than the average for East Java Province (10.49%). The prevalence of poverty is higher in rural areas, which generally depend on the subsistence agriculture sector. Inequality persists, especially between the central and suburban sub-districts. The causative factors include low agricultural productivity, limited access to education and health, and low ownership of productive assets by the poor. Poverty in Madiun Regency, although decreasing numerically, remains a structural problem, especially in rural areas. Inequality between central and suburban sub-districts indicates an uneven distribution of resources. This is influenced by the dependence on the primary sector with low productivity and limited access to basic services and economic opportunities. The implication is that social development must consider an integrated region-based approach, by encouraging village economic transformation, basic infrastructure investment, and community capacity building.

Programs such as PKH, BPNT, and disability assistance have been running, but are not optimal. There is still overlap in aid recipients, especially because data collection does not sync between agencies. Integrated social welfare data (DTKS) is not always accurate because it is slow to update. Most of the assistance is still charitable, not yet fully encouraging beneficiaries' independence. Many social assistance programs, such as PKH and BPNT, have not fully reached the poor in a targeted manner. The overlap and inaccuracies in DTKS data highlight the weaknesses of the social data collection system. Although the government has begun adopting digital technology, data literacy at the local level and management capacity remain obstacles. Therefore, regular data updates, training of village officials, and

participatory supervision by the community are crucial to ensuring the effectiveness of social assistance programs.

The accuracy issues of the Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS) identified in this study are consistent with global findings related to social registry targeting. A World Bank study (2021) demonstrated that exclusion and inclusion errors are common challenges in data-driven social protection systems in developing countries. Furthermore, research by Kidd and Athias (2020) demonstrated that household-based targeting approaches often fail to capture the fluctuating dynamics of poverty, necessitating a regularly updated and participatory social registry system. These findings reinforce the argument that cross-OPD data integration and village-based updates are essential prerequisites for the effectiveness of regional social policies.

Vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people with disabilities, and women heads of households have not been fully served optimally in the social welfare system. Basic services for people with disabilities and the elderly are still limited, both in quality and quantity. The lack of disaggregated data makes it difficult to design effective interventions for this group. Vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people with disabilities, and women heads of households continue to be marginalized, both in social services and in access to empowerment programs. The lack of disaggregated data and the absence of affirmative policies hinder social inclusion efforts. There is a need for affirmative policies that prioritize the rights of vulnerable groups, the provision of disability-friendly public services, and community-based empowerment.

The government has encouraged the formation of BUMDes (Village-Owned Enterprises), the development of cooperatives, and the growth of MSMEs based on local potential. However, many BUMDes have not operated optimally due to limited management and capital. Access to microfinance and training is still minimal, especially in remote villages. Initiatives to develop BUMDes and MSMEs as the local economic engine have been evident, but their implementation still faces various challenges, including managerial weaknesses, limited access to capital, and unstable markets. This shows the importance of continuous mentoring, strengthening networks among local business actors, and involving universities and the business world to build sustainable village business models.

The government has begun to implement a digital system for data collection on social assistance, such as through SIKS-NG (Social Welfare Information System - Next Generation). Social complaint services and evaluation monitoring are in place, but the main challenge is digital community literacy and the capacity of village government human resources to operate the system. Although efforts are underway to digitize social services, such as the management of DTKS and community complaints, the disparity in digital literacy between the community and the village apparatus remains high. This means technology optimization is not fully felt by

the community. A sustainable digital capacity-building strategy and the simplification of application systems are needed to make it easier for villages with minimal ICT infrastructure to use them.

This discussion emphasized that the issue of social welfare in Madiun Regency does not require only sectoral intervention but also a deep, sustainable structural transformation. The RPD has provided clear directions, but its realization is highly dependent on the quality of governance, availability of resources, cross-sectoral commitment, and active community participation. An important lesson from this document is that a data-driven, collaborative, and participatory approach is a key to improving the overall social welfare system. The findings of this study show that the condition of social welfare in Madiun Regency still faces various complex structural, cultural, and technical challenges. Based on the analysis of the 2024–2026 RPD document and observations of human development data and indicators, several important aspects warrant further discussion.

The poverty rate in Madiun Regency, which remains above the average for East Java Province (11.18% in 2022), reflects the ongoing structural social welfare problem. These findings are consistent with the initial hypothesis that Madiun Regency faces obstacles in the distribution of resources and in access to basic services. In the context of the previous literature, structural poverty in rural areas is caused by limited access to the economy, education, and connectivity. This is exacerbated by the lack of economic diversification of rural communities, which still depend on the traditional agricultural sector with low productivity. The implications of this condition suggest that commodity-based interventions alone are not enough. Social transformation based on empowerment and upskilling is needed, with an inclusive multi-sector approach. Local governments also need to adopt sustainable social policy strategies that are oriented towards long-term welfare. [19]

Discussions on restricting access to basic services such as health, education, and social security reinforce the notion that existing social policies are not yet fully inclusive. Data shows that groups such as people with disabilities, poor elderly, and vulnerable families have not been optimally served due to limited facilities, manpower, and an uneven data collection system. This reinforces the findings of research such as that conducted by Midgley (2014), which found that social welfare systems in developing countries often occur during the implementation phase due to permits, a lack of valid data, and weak coordination between agencies. Within the framework of rights-based social welfare thinking, local governments have an obligation to ensure access to social services without discrimination. Therefore, integrating social data and expanding social protection programs should be top priorities.

Although the Human Development Index (HDI) of Madiun Regency is classified as "high" (71.78), the quality of

its constituent components, such as life expectancy and average years of schooling, remains suboptimal. This indicates that the achievement of HDI has not reflected an equal distribution of quality of life across the entire community. Health literacy and education are still a challenge, especially in villages far from service centers. In the context of social development, according to Amartya Sen (1999), welfare is not only measured by income or statistical achievement, but also by *capability*, namely the ability of people to live a life that values their values [5]. Thus, increasing HDI must be accompanied by policies that build human capacity, especially through vocational education, preventive health, and community involvement in the development process.

Suburban and hilly areas in Madiun Regency still face inequality in access to basic infrastructure, including roads, internet networks, and social services. This aligns with Myrdal's theory of regional disparity, which emphasizes that areas with weak infrastructure tend to lag behind in social and economic development because they are unable to attract investment or provide adequate public services [20]. Therefore, the region-based development approach (territorial approach) must be strengthened by adjusting intervention policies based on the geographical and social characteristics of each sub-district in Madiun Regency. The condition of social welfare, which is still not ideal, also underscores the need to strengthen institutions and social service governance. Limited human resource capacity at the village level, lack of coordination among OPDs, and weak supervision of social program implementation are latent problems that are often not resolved.

Within the framework of governance theory, social welfare governance should be geared towards collaboration between governments, civil society, and the private sector to ensure participatory, adaptive, and accountable policy responses. The digitalization and integration of the data being developed is an important opportunity, but its success depends on political will and investment in human resource capacity. Overall, these findings and studies show that although Madiun Regency has demonstrated a commitment to improving social welfare, various multidimensional challenges continue to hinder the provision of fair and equitable social services. Synergy among responsive policies, capacity building, and the sustainable use of information technology is needed to create an inclusive, socially equitable welfare system.

This study found that poverty alleviation and poverty among vulnerable groups in Madiun Regency still face major challenges across structural, institutional, and cultural aspects. One of the important findings of this study is that poverty in Madiun Regency is structural, namely influenced by limited access to education, job worthiness, and health services. RPD data shows that although the poverty rate has decreased gradually, Madiun Regency still has a relatively high poverty rate (11.18% in 2022), higher than the East Java average. These findings support the initial hypothesis that

poverty in Madiun Regency is not simply the result of individual or household factors, but is an accumulation of social injustice and systemic weakness. From the perspective of *Structuralist Poverty Theory*, as put forward by Charles Valentine (1968), poverty is perpetuated by an unequal social and economic system that creates social exclusion of the poor. Therefore, poverty alleviation reform policies need to include structural measures, such as expanding access to quality education, land reform, and the creation of productive jobs in line with local potential.

Observations of the geographical distribution of poverty show a concentration of poor people in rural areas, especially in remote or agrarian areas. This illustrates the inequality of development between regions caused by *urban bias*, namely the tendency of policies and investments to be more concentrated in urban areas or district administrative centers. In the literature on regional development, regional inequality is directly linked to social welfare inequality [21]. The Madiun Regency DPRD has not shown a strong affirmative strategy to address the backwardness of marginalized villages. In particular, vulnerable groups in these areas continue to be excluded from development benefits, including infrastructure, basic services, and economic empowerment.

Most of the poor in Madiun Regency depend on the informal sector and traditional agriculture, which have low added value and are vulnerable to external shocks such as weather or market price fluctuations. Lack of skills and low levels of education are the main obstacles to the social mobility of the poor. These findings confirm that community economic empowerment cannot be achieved through cash assistance or charitable programs alone. On the contrary, a *productive welfare* approach is needed, namely, strengthening the capacity of individuals and communities through job skills training, access to capital, and sustainable micro-business training [22]. This aligns with field findings showing weak demand for empowerment programs that have been implemented, as well as low community participation in planning programs.

Weaknesses in social data governance are one of the fundamental challenges in alleviating poverty. The study's findings show that the Integrated Social Welfare Database (DTKS) does not reflect the actual conditions in the field community. Many eligible residents are not registered, while ineligible residents are still registered as beneficiaries. The fragmentation of non-integrated inter-OPD programs also leads to overlapping interventions and inefficient resource allocation. This shows that the poverty alleviation system has not been managed with an *integrated social policy* approach, in which data is the primary basis for policy planning and implementation. In the context of modern social development, evidence-based decision-making is essential to ensure targeted and measurable interventions.

Vulnerable groups such as the poor elderly, people with disabilities, women heads of households, and children from

underprivileged families still do not receive adequate social protection. RPD noted that several empowerment programs exist, but many remain symbolic, unsustainable, and not grounded in the needs of real target groups. The empowerment approach needs to shift from *top-down charity-based* to *bottom-up empowerment-based*. According to Julian Rappaport's empowerment theory, effective empowerment must provide space for active participation, control over resources, and the strengthening of the internal capacity of vulnerable groups so that they are able to fight for their own rights within the social system [23].

The discussion of these findings shows that poverty alleviation and support for vulnerable groups in Madiun Regency cannot be done in a piecemeal or short-term manner. Holistic, intersectional, and community-based public policies are needed. Local governments must develop collaborative mechanisms between OPDs, village governments, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. Digital innovation and data integration systems are the foundation for improving the accuracy of program goals. On the other hand, critical education, market needs-based training, and the formation of joint business groups can encourage the economic independence of the poor and vulnerable. The application of *the concept of social investment in a welfare state* can serve as an ideal model, where social policy is not just a fiscal burden but a long-term investment in human development.

The findings of this study show that the Madiun Regency Government has implemented several social welfare programs and policies aimed at reducing inequality and expanding access to basic services, particularly through social protection programs, direct cash assistance, social security, and education and public health services for the poor and vulnerable. This is reflected in macro indicators such as the Human Development Index (HDI), which shows a gradual upward trend (71.78 in 2022), as well as a decrease in the poverty rate from year to year. However, based on observations and supporting data, the effectiveness of these policies is not evenly distributed across all target groups. There are still community groups in rural and disadvantaged areas that have limited access to basic services, including quality education, decent health care, and adequate housing. These findings reinforce the initial hypothesis that, although social policies have been formally designed, their implementation still faces spatial constraints (regional inequality), bureaucratic constraints, and socio-cultural constraints.

One of the main weaknesses of social policy in Madiun Regency is the fragmentation in the planning and implementation of intersectoral programs. In the RPD, many social programs are run by various Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPDs), but they are not fully integrated in terms of data, targets, and reporting mechanisms. This results in overlapping interventions, budget inefficiencies, and confusion among beneficiaries at the community level. According to the *Integrated Social Policy* approach [3], the

effectiveness of social welfare programs can be achieved only through synergy among agencies, cross-sector coordination, and an accurate, up-to-date database. Without initiative, efforts to reduce inequality will only be short-term and unsustainable.

The findings regarding structural poverty in Madiun Regency align with development literature, which states that poverty in rural areas is often perpetuated by limited access to productive assets, infrastructure, and public services. A World Bank study (2022) confirmed that spatial inequality and low regional connectivity are key determinants of regional poverty in developing countries. Furthermore, a Bappenas (2022) report on social protection reforms states that regions with limited fiscal capacity tend to experience gaps in the effectiveness of social programs compared to regions with better infrastructure and governance. Theoretically, this phenomenon also supports the capability deprivation approach proposed by Amartya Sen, which argues that poverty is not solely a matter of income but also limited access to basic opportunities such as education, health, and economic participation.

In education, although the school participation rate is increasing, there is still a quality gap between regions. Rural schools generally lack teachers, decent basic education facilities, and internet access. Meanwhile, in the health sector, access to quality services in remote areas is still limited by distance, the availability of medical personnel, and infrastructure. The literature, as presented by Sen in *Development as Freedom*, holds that access to basic services is a form of substantive freedom that determines individuals' well-being [5]. In this context, the effectiveness of social policies is measured by the extent to which government intervention opens access and improves the quality of services in a fair and equitable manner.

Social assistance programs such as Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT), the Family Hope Program (PKH), and assistance for people with disabilities have been implemented, but beneficiary data collection remains problematic. In many cases, citizens who are entitled are not registered in the DTKS (Integrated Social Welfare Data), while those who are not entitled continue to receive assistance. This condition can be seen as a weak social data verification and validation system. In fact, data accuracy is the cornerstone of effective public policy. Previous research has stated that targeting systems in social policy must be data-based, dynamic, and participatory, so that programs can truly reach target groups fairly.

RPD 2024–2026 underscores the importance of digitalization in the social service system [24]. However, from observation, this digital transformation is still constrained by the capacity of the village's human resources, the availability of digital infrastructure, and the community's digital literacy. This means that although digitalization is a great opportunity for improving service effectiveness, its implementation is not yet fully inclusive and risks widening

digital inequality (the *digital divide*). The implementation of digitalization must be accompanied by a strategy for digital empowerment of village communities and training for the regional apparatus so that technology becomes a tool to simplify services, not a new obstacle.

From a macro perspective, the effectiveness of social welfare policies cannot be separated from three main factors: data-driven planning, adaptive program design, and the ability to implement programs that are responsive to local conditions. The Madiun Regency Government must strengthen the interagency data integration system, adopt a participatory approach to problem identification, and prioritize collaboration among the public, private, and civil society sectors. Normatively, welfare policy must shift from a charitable approach to a *rights-based* and *empowerment-based* approach, where the community is not only a beneficiary but also an active actor in the formulation of social solutions. The effectiveness of social welfare policies in Madiun Regency is still partial. Several achievements have shown positive trends, but their implementation still faces many obstacles, especially in integration systems, data quality, and apparatus capacity. Institutional reforms, strengthening social literacy, and investing in inclusive digital systems are needed so that these policies can truly address inequality and expand equitable access to basic services.

The findings show that the Madiun Regency Government has placed digitalization as an important part of the social welfare service strategy, as stated in the 2024–2026 RPD. Digitalization is intended to increase efficiency, speed up aid distribution, and enable beneficiary verification. This is in line with the national agenda through *SPBE (Electronic-Based Government System)* and the integration of *Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS)*. Field findings show that some sub-districts have started using digital reporting applications or systems for poverty data collection, social assistance services, and tracking empowerment programs. However, its implementation has not been evenly distributed throughout the village or regional administrations. From the perspective of public information systems theory (Heeks, 2002), digitalization will be effective when it is accompanied by technical readiness, an adaptive organizational culture, and continuous training for officials. Without these conditions, digitalization will amount to mere administrative labeling rather than substantive transformation in public services.

Findings regarding the challenges of digitizing social services in Madiun Regency reinforce the literature on the digital divide in public governance. Richard Heeks' (2002) study stated that the failure of e-government implementation in developing countries often occurs due to a mismatch between system design and local institutional capacity (design–reality gap). Furthermore, Mark Warschauer (2004) emphasized that digital transformation does not automatically result in social inclusion without the support of digital literacy and equitable access to infrastructure. A World Bank report (2022) also stated that successful integration of a digital-

based social registry requires system interoperability, data standardization, and ongoing training for local operators. Thus, digitalization in Madiun Regency holds great potential, but its effectiveness is largely determined by the readiness of the institutional and social ecosystems at the village level.

One of the working hypotheses in this study is that inclusive social welfare services rely heavily on *the integration of accurate, dynamic, and open social data*. The findings support this: so far, there is still duplication of beneficiary data across programs, as well as a gap between data centers (DTKS) and field conditions. Social data integration is essential to prevent exclusion errors (those who should have received assistance but are not recorded) and inclusion errors (those who are not eligible but receive assistance). The Madiun Regency RPD mentioned the need to optimize the *social integration dashboard*, but it has not explained in technical terms how the interoperability system between OPDs and village agencies works. These findings are in line with research by the World Bank (2021), which states that *an integrated, regularly updated social record system* can improve the accuracy of targets and the efficiency of social spending [25]. In the context of Madiun, this is very important given the region's character, which comprises a combination of village areas that require the provision and management of data.

At the implementation level, several main obstacles were found, namely the capacity of human resources at the village level which is still limited in the use of digital systems, the uneven availability of ICT infrastructure (internet, devices, servers), the digital literacy of the community and village apparatus is not sufficient, and the lack of training and capacity building after the implementation of digital technology. As a result, digitalization tends to be seen as an additional burden rather than a problem-solving tool. This needs to be a serious concern so that digital transformation does not widen social and administrative gaps. In line with Warschauer's (2003) argument about *the digital divide*, without digital inclusion, technological innovation can actually strengthen the exclusion of poor and marginalized groups. Therefore, digitalization must be accompanied by *a digital empowerment policy* at the local level [26].

Despite facing a number of challenges, the digitalization of social services in Madiun Regency has great potential if it is directed to the use of social big data for spatial-temporal mapping of poor areas, real-time social service dashboards based on the integration of DTKS, village data, and Social Services, and integrated service platforms that combine reporting, complaint, and direct monitoring programs by the community. RPD said that improving the social information system is part of the development priority. This opens up a great opportunity to encourage *an e-welfare* approach that allows people to be actively involved in voicing and disseminating social policies.

The inclusivity of welfare services is not only about who receives assistance, but also how their right to access services

is realized in an able manner. The integration of data and digital systems allows for a more personalized, precise, and sustainable approach to supporting vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people with disabilities, abandoned children, and poor families. With an integrated system, local governments also find it easier to identify families who need cross-sectoral interventions, such as education, health, and economic empowerment, simultaneously. This addresses the challenges posed by conventional social policy models, which tend to be sectoral and unresponsive to the complexity of citizens' needs. The role of digitization and social data integration is crucial in encouraging inclusive social welfare services in Madiun Regency. However, its effectiveness depends heavily on infrastructure readiness, human resource capacity, and cross-sector policies that support the digital ecosystem as a whole. Without restrictions on these aspects, the transformation of digital risk becomes a mere administrative tool and fails to reach the groups most in need. Therefore, an integrated strategy is needed between *technology, human capacity, regulation, and community participation* to ensure that digitalization truly becomes a tool for the well-being of all citizens, without exception.

The results of this study have generally provided answers to the fundamental questions in the introduction, namely, *what is the current condition of social welfare in Madiun Regency, the main challenges faced in efforts to alleviate poverty and empower vulnerable groups, and the role of digitalization and social data integration in encouraging more inclusive services*. Key findings show that while local governments have demonstrated a commitment to social welfare transformation, structural, technical, and resource barriers continue to hinder their effectiveness. The initial purpose of the study was to analyze the condition of social welfare in Madiun Regency based on the 2024–2026 RPD document and prove the effectiveness of policies and the role of information technology. The results show that social welfare conditions still face classic challenges, particularly regarding poverty and access to basic services. Efforts to alleviate poverty have not fully addressed the root of the problem, such as the limited productive capacity of poor families. Digitalization has begun, but it is not optimal or yet fully inclusive. Thus, this research scientifically answers *what* aspects and *how* social welfare problems occur in the region.

The interpretation of the results shows that the fundamental problems lie in *data fragmentation, limited cross-sector coordination, and low human resource capacity to implement social policies at the grassroots level*. Digitization and the integration of social data are promising solutions, but they require an adaptive system tailored to local needs. This research emphasizes the importance of seeing social welfare not only as a matter of aid distribution, but as part of a comprehensive human development system. In this context, *governance* theory and *public service reform* are particularly relevant for analyzing how local governance can strengthen data-driven, inclusive policies. The results of this

study are consistent with national and international studies that state that the effectiveness of welfare programs is highly determined by data quality, institutional coordination, and the desire for intervention. For example, a study by Bappenas (2022) emphasizes that the integration of DTKS and the strengthening of operators' capacities in the regions are the main prerequisites for the success of social protection programs. World Bank research (2021) also underscores the importance of an integrated social registration system to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of government social spending. However, this study also found that local contexts (such as village structure in Madiun Regency and the spread of digital infrastructure) are differentiating factors that affect the successful implementation of social digitalization. This shows the need for an adaptive, decentralized approach to digital social policy.

The accuracy issues of the Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS) identified in this study are consistent with global findings related to social registry targeting. A World Bank study (2021) demonstrated that exclusion and inclusion errors are common challenges in data-driven social protection systems in developing countries. Furthermore, research by Kidd and Athias (2020) demonstrated that household-based targeting approaches often fail to capture the fluctuating dynamics of poverty, necessitating a regularly updated and participatory social registry system. These findings reinforce the argument that cross-OPD data integration and village-based updates are essential prerequisites for the effectiveness of regional social policies.

Based on the findings and limitations of this research, several research directions can be pursued in the future, namely, micro-qualitative studies and more in-depth research on the experiences of poor and vulnerable groups in accessing social services, including their perceptions of digitalization and social assistance. Evaluation of the implementation of social technology, a study of the effectiveness of village- and sub-district-based social information systems, including analysis of user experience by implementing officials and beneficiaries. Institutional network analysis using *a social network approach* to understand the relationships among OPDs, village institutions, and external partners in the implementation of welfare programs. A social data integration model, developed to be adjusted by regions with limited infrastructure and human resource capacity, such as *a modular digital welfare system* model. And comparative studies between regions, comparing Madiun Regency with other districts in East Java or Indonesia that have good practices in the digitization of social services, to identify the key factors of success. By broadening perspectives and research methods, future studies are expected to provide more concrete inputs for developing social welfare development strategies that are adaptive, data-driven, and truly reach the community equally. Especially in the face of global challenges such as digital inequality, demographic changes, and post-pandemic social complexity.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

This research shows that efforts to improve social welfare in Madiun Regency are in an important transition phase, characterized by integration towards more inclusive policies through digitalization and strengthening of social data. Local governments have developed development strategies that include poverty reduction, empowerment of vulnerable groups, and increased access to basic services. However, structural challenges such as data fragmentation, inequality in human resource capacity, and limited digital infrastructure remain real obstacles to achieving these goals. In summary, this study concludes that the effectiveness of social welfare policies is highly determined by regions' ability to build an adaptive service system based on accurate data and managed collaboratively by stakeholders. Digitization and integration of social data are not only technical tools but also the foundation of inclusive and equitable governance transformation. Thus, achieving social welfare in Madiun Regency during the 2024–2026 period is highly dependent on the synergy among reform policies, technological innovation, and contextual social empowerment. This includes a development approach that is not only technocratic but also responsive to local dynamics and the aspirations of citizens as development subjects.

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