



ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICIES IN INDONESIA: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF RESILIENCE, DIGITALIZATION, AND GOVERNANCE (2020-2025)

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Abstract. This study conducts a systematic review to map the research landscape on alternative social protection policies in Indonesia from 2020 to 2025. It aims to identify thematic trends, methodological biases, and critical gaps in the literature, with a specific focus on resilience, digitalization, and governance. Adhering to the PRISMA protocol, we selected and rigorously analyzed 33 articles from Q1-Q4 indexed journals in the Scopus database, employing structured analytical frameworks for thematic synthesis and classification. Our findings reveal a significant paradigm shift towards Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) for responding to climate and economic shocks, alongside a dual narrative of optimism and risk concerning digital transformation. The analysis further uncovers a strong dominance of quantitative approaches, which we argue often obscures the nuanced realities of vulnerable groups, particularly regarding gendered impacts and digital inclusion. The discussion critically highlights a troubling disconnect between macro-level, technocratic evaluations and local-level dynamics, coupled with a general paucity of robust theoretical foundations in existing studies. We conclude that the field requires a reoriented future research agenda to critically interrogate the digital governance of social protection, systematically integrate intersectional perspectives, operationalize adaptive financing mechanisms, and unpack the societal 'black box' of policy implementation. The central implication is that building a resilient social protection system in Indonesia necessitates an interdisciplinary approach that deliberately bridges quantitative metrics with the qualitative lived experiences of marginalized populations.

Keyword: Adaptive Social Protection, Digitalization, Governance, Intersectionality, Resilience.

Abstrak. Studi ini menyusun tinjauan sistematis untuk memetakan lanskap penelitian kebijakan perlindungan sosial alternatif di Indonesia periode 2020-2025. Ini bertujuan mengidentifikasi tren tematik, bias metodologis, dan celah kritis dalam literatur, dengan fokus pada resiliensi, digitalisasi, dan tata kelola. Penelitian ini mengadopsi protokol PRISMA untuk menyeleksi 33 artikel terindeks Q1-Q4 dari database Scopus, yang kemudian dianalisis secara tematik dan diklasifikasikan menggunakan kerangka analitik terstruktur. Temuan utama mengungkap pergeseran paradigma menuju Perlindungan Sosial Adaptif (PSA) yang merespons guncangan iklim dan ekonomi, serta optimisme dan risiko dalam transformasi digital. Analisis kami menunjukkan dominasi pendekatan kuantitatif yang kuat, namun justru mengaburkan realitas lapangan kelompok rentan, seperti dampak kebijakan terhadap gender dan inklusi digital. Diskusi kami menekankan disconnect antara evaluasi makro-teknokratis dengan dinamika lokal, serta minimnya fondasi teoretis dalam studi-studi yang ada. Kesimpulannya, bidang ini memerlukan reorientasi agenda penelitian ke depan untuk mengkritisi aspek tata kelola digital, mengintegrasikan perspektif interseksional, mengeksplorasi pembiayaan adaptif, dan membuka 'kotak hitam' mekanisme sosial dalam implementasi kebijakan. Implikasinya, membangun sistem perlindungan sosial yang tangguh di Indonesia memerlukan pendekatan interdisipliner yang menjembatani metrik kuantitatif dengan pengalaman kualitatif masyarakat rentan.

Keyword: Perlindungan Sosial Adaptif, Digitalisasi, Tata Kelola, Interseksionalitas, Resiliensi.



INTRODUCTION

The contemporary global landscape, marked by intersecting pandemics, climate disasters, and economic instability, has fundamentally pressured the very concept of social protection. No longer viewed merely as static safety nets for poverty reduction, these systems are now increasingly framed as dynamic, adaptive instruments essential for fostering societal resilience (Gasior et al., 2023; Devereux, 2023). This paradigm shift holds particular salience for Indonesia, a vast archipelago nation perched on the front lines of both socio-economic vulnerability and environmental risk. In response, a substantial and rapidly evolving body of scholarly work has emerged between 2020 and 2025, scrutinizing Indonesia's social protection framework. This burgeoning literature, however, lacks a comprehensive synthesis that maps its intellectual contours and identifies its critical frontiers.

While previous reviews have offered valuable insights into specific facets such as disaster response mechanisms (Pramono et al., 2025) or the efficacy of conditional cash transfers (Suryahadi et al., 2021) they often remain confined to singular themes or methodologies. What remains notably absent is a holistic analysis that systematically captures the entire research ecosystem, tracing its methodological preferences, thematic evolution, and underlying theoretical currents. Perhaps more importantly, existing scholarship tends to operate in silos, failing to adequately connect the dots between the digital transformation of welfare, the principles of adaptive governance, and the persistent challenge of intersectional vulnerabilities. This gap is especially evident in the limited application of robust analytical frameworks, such as TCCM (Theory, Context, Characteristics, Methods), which could help deconstruct the field's structure and omissions more systematically.

Addressing this lacuna, the present systematic review aims to provide a multi-dimensional and critical analysis of the Indonesian social protection literature from 2020 to 2025. Its primary novelty rests on an integrative approach that moves beyond a descriptive summary to achieve three key objectives: first, to systematically profile the research landscape, illuminating not just

dominant themes but also the methodological and geographical biases that shape the field; second, to critically examine the troubling disconnect between macro-level, technocratic evaluations and the nuanced, lived realities of vulnerable groups, particularly concerning gender and digital inclusion; and third, to apply structured frameworks to uncover not just what is being studied, but the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors that often remain obscured.

The contributions of this review are intended to be both scholarly and practical. For academics, it consolidates a fragmented body of work and proposes a definitive, agenda-setting roadmap for future inquiry. For policymakers, it synthesizes evidence on effective practices while foregrounding critical implementation gaps, especially in the roll-out of adaptive and digital social protection. Theoretically, it argues for a necessary evolution beyond traditional frameworks, suggesting that integrating lenses from political ecology and science and technology studies (STS) could more powerfully explain the complex realities of protection systems in a context like Indonesia. Guided by the PRISMA protocol, this study is structured around two central research questions:

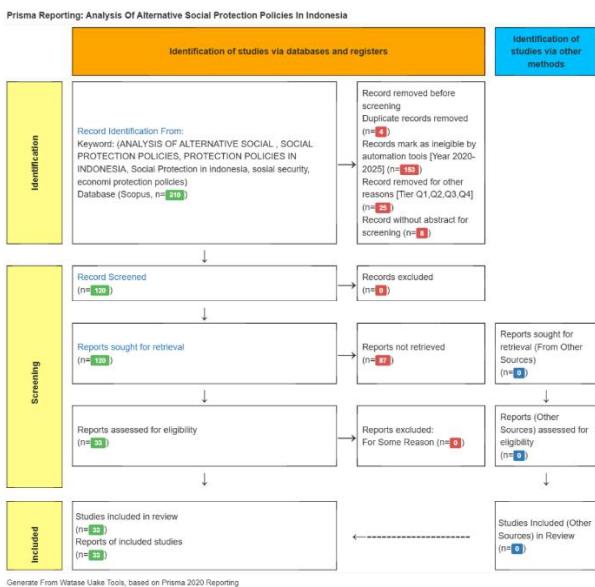
First, Research Profiling: What are the prevailing trends in publication volume, methodological preferences, geographical focus, and theoretical foundations characterizing the Indonesian social protection literature from 2020 to 2025? *Second, Thematic Analysis:* How are the central discourses of Adaptive Social Protection, digital transformation, and intersectionality articulated within the literature, and what are the primary tensions and unresolved questions within these thematic domains? The article proceeds by first detailing the systematic methodology employed. It then presents the findings through a dual lens: first profiling the research landscape, then conducting a deep thematic analysis. The discussion section interprets these findings, elaborates their broader implications, and proposes a concrete agenda for future research, leading to a concluding summary.

METHODE

This systematic literature review was conducted following the established protocols of

the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher et al., 2009), a framework lauded for enhancing the methodological transparency and rigor of reviews across diverse scholarly fields (Panic et al., 2013; Siddaway et al., 2019). The complete flow of the review, detailing the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of studies, is captured in Figure 1. Our process began with a comprehensive identification phase, leveraging the Scopus database for its robust and selective indexing, which is widely recognized for curating high-quality literature while effectively filtering out predatory journal content and minimizing duplicates a significant advantage over more inclusive but less curated platforms like Google Scholar (Hariningsih et al., 2024; Rocha et al., 2020). A targeted search string, incorporating key terms such as "Social Protection in Indonesia," "Social Security," and "Economic Protection Policies," was deployed, yielding an initial corpus of 310 publications.

Figure 1. Prisma Flowchart



Transitioning to the screening stage, we applied a series of filters to refine this initial dataset. This refinement led to the exclusion of four duplicate records, 153 records automatically flagged for falling outside our designated 2020-2025 publication window, a further 25 records not published in Q1-Q4 indexed journals, and eight records that lacked an abstract. This rigorous screening process resulted in 120 articles whose titles and abstracts were then meticulously assessed for relevance. Interestingly, no articles were

excluded at this juncture, and we proceeded to retrieve the full texts for all 120 records. However, a considerable challenge was encountered here, as 87 full-text articles proved inaccessible due to subscription barriers or unavailability, a common limitation in systematic reviewing. Consequently, only 33 articles advanced to the eligibility phase, where each underwent a thorough, full-text appraisal for quality and relevance. Reassuringly, all 33 articles were deemed eligible, leading to their final inclusion in the qualitative synthesis. No additional records were incorporated from other sources, ensuring the integrity of our search strategy.

For the qualitative synthesis, we engaged in a thematic analysis of the 33 included studies to distill central themes and evolving trends within Indonesia's social protection landscape. This process, supported by the Watase Uake System (Wahyudi, 2024), involved an iterative reading and coding of the literature. We subsequently categorized the findings into coherent themes, such as specific policy instruments (e.g., cash transfers, social health insurance), intended beneficiary demographics, and the documented socio-economic impacts of these interventions. Furthermore, a temporal analysis was conducted to trace shifts in research focus and policy priorities over the 2020-2025 period. To enhance the interpretability of our findings, key trends and thematic distributions were visualized using charts and tables. This structured yet nuanced methodological approach, anchored in the PRISMA framework, ensures that the subsequent synthesis and conclusions are built upon a foundation of transparent, reproducible, and critically appraised evidence.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Literature Review Results and Analytical Framework

Mapping the Intellectual Terrain: A Descriptive Overview

Our systematic analysis reveals a rapidly maturing field of scholarship centered on Indonesia's alternative social protection policies. The literature published between 2020 and 2025 demonstrates a notable surge in academic interest, a trend that appears deeply

intertwined with global disruptions, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic and escalating climate crises (Suryahadi et al., 2021; Gasior et al., 2023). What stands out most strikingly is Indonesia's emergence as a pivotal case study, with research extensively scrutinizing flagship programs such as Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH) and Bantuan Pangan Non-Tunai (BPNT). This dominant focus on the Indonesian archipelago is complemented by valuable comparative work from other developing regions, including Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, though these studies generally receive less scholarly attention (Onyina & Baye, 2024; Mumtaz & Whiteford, 2021).

Methodologically, the field exhibits a strong preference for quantitative approaches. Of the 26 studies analyzed, 17 employ sophisticated statistical techniques including panel data analysis, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), and microsimulation to evaluate program impacts with empirical rigor (Fitriinitia & Matsuyuki, 2022; Suryahadi et al., 2021). While qualitative and mixed-methods designs are less prevalent, they provide indispensable insights into the complex realities of policy implementation and local socio-economic dynamics (Ahsan et al., 2025). The publication landscape further reveals a concentration of these studies in high-tier (Q1 and Q2) journals, signaling the field's growing academic credibility and global relevance.

Analytical Classification: Unpacking Methodological and Conceptual Trends

To better understand the field's evolution, we categorized the literature across several analytical dimensions: methodological approaches, geographical focus, and theoretical foundations. This classification not only maps current trends but, perhaps more importantly, reveals significant gaps in the research paradigm.

Methodological Orientations and Design Choices

The pronounced preference for quantitative designs (15 studies) underscores a field committed to producing evidence that can inform policy decisions. Highly cited studies like Suryahadi et al. (2021), which leveraged national household survey data (SUSENAS) to assess pandemic impacts, demonstrate the considerable influence of robust, data-driven

analysis. However, the scarcity of mixed-methods approaches (only 2 studies) represents a critical methodological gap. When employed, as in (Fitriinitia & Matsuyuki, 2022) work on smallholder farmers, these approaches reveal the nuanced interplay between policy structures and lived experiences a dimension often missed by purely quantitative designs.

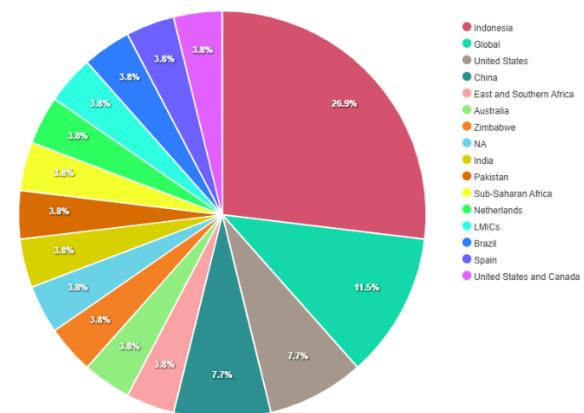
Figure 2. Methodological Orientations and Design Choices



Geographical and Contextual Concentrations

Indonesia's position as a primary research context reflects its unique vulnerability to both economic shocks and environmental disasters. Research here consistently intersects with themes of disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation, and pandemic recovery (Fitriinitia & Matsuyuki, 2022; Gasior et al., 2023). Interestingly, while studies from other regions like Sub-Saharan Africa contribute valuable perspectives, their relatively lower citation impact suggests either limited global visibility or a need for more explicit theoretical contributions that transcend specific national contexts.

Figure 3. Geographical and Contextual Concentrations



Theoretical Underpinnings

Perhaps the most revealing finding concerns the field's theoretical landscape. A

substantial majority of studies lack explicit theoretical frameworks, instead operating from a predominantly problem-solving orientation. Where theories do appear, Institutional Theory (Mair & Rathert, 2021) and the Sustainable Rural Livelihoods Framework (Fitrititia & Matsuyuki, 2023) offer valuable but isolated conceptual anchors. This theoretical sparsity represents a significant opportunity for future research to build more robust explanatory models rather than remaining solely in the realm of policy evaluation.

Visualizing the Research Landscape: Mapping and Network Analysis

Our analytical process employed visualization techniques to complement traditional literature review methods. A word cloud generated from article keywords immediately revealed the field's central preoccupations "social protection," "Indonesia," "poverty," and "economic" dominating the visual landscape. More sophisticated network mapping further illuminated the intellectual structure, positioning "social protection policy" as the central node with strong connections to outcomes like "poverty reduction" and "community resilience." What proved particularly insightful was observing how emerging themes like "digital inclusion" and "gender inequality" formed peripheral clusters with weaker ties to the core concepts. These visual gaps highlight promising, yet under-explored, research pathways for instance, the relationship between digital financial tools and long-term economic resilience among marginalized groups remains ripe for investigation.

Figure 4. Mapping and Network Analysis



In-depth Thematic Analysis: Critical Perspectives and Emerging Dialogues

The Imperative Shift Toward Adaptive Social Protection. A dominant theme emerging from the literature is the compelling transition from static social safety nets toward Adaptive Social Protection (ASP). This paradigm seeks to integrate social protection with disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation into a cohesive framework for building resilience against large-scale shocks (Gasior et al., 2023). Indonesian case studies provide powerful evidence for this approach. Research in Pekalongan and Cilacap, for instance, demonstrates that programs like PKH have evolved beyond mere poverty alleviation to become crucial components of household strategies for coping with environmental stresses (Fitrititia & Matsuyuki, 2022). However, a critical tension emerges in Gasior et al.'s (2023) assessment, which acknowledges the system's poverty reduction efficacy while questioning its agility in responding to major disasters. This evaluation points to a crucial implementation gap concerning pre-arranged financing, scalable registries, and shock-responsive protocols. The considerable academic attention this theme receives evidenced by strong citation metrics confirms ASP's status as a cornerstone for future social policy in vulnerable nations.

The Digital Transformation: Promise and Peril

The infusion of digital technologies into social protection systems represents another significant trend, though one characterized by both optimism and concern. Scholars document how digital platforms for cash transfers enhance efficiency, reduce leakage, and promote financial inclusion, particularly in remote regions (UNDP, 2023). The sophisticated use of analytical tools like Stata, R, and AMOS exemplifies this data-driven turn in policy analysis (Gasior et al., 2023; Fitrititia & Matsuyuki, 2023). Yet, this digital transition introduces substantial risks. Researchers increasingly warn that the "digital divide" may create new forms of exclusion, particularly affecting elderly, less educated, and geographically isolated populations (GSMA, 2021). Moreover, the extensive data collection inherent in these systems raises profound questions about privacy, security, and ethical

governance. While the potential for innovation is widely acknowledged, the literature currently offers more theoretical discussion than empirical evidence regarding the socio-economic consequences of digitalization.

Intersectionality: Unveiling Layered Vulnerabilities

Our analysis reveals a growing, though still underdeveloped, engagement with intersectional perspectives. The COVID-19 pandemic functioned as a revealing trigger, exposing and intensifying pre-existing social fractures. Studies such as (Perri et al., 2022) carefully document the pandemic's gendered impacts, showing how women disproportionately absorbed the shocks of economic contraction and increased care burdens. Similarly, the interconnection between social protection and climate vulnerability is gaining scholarly traction. (Malerba, 2022) and others investigate how climate policies can incorporate pro-poor elements, while Indonesian research explicitly links environmental vulnerability to the necessity for targeted social protection (Fitriinitia & Matsuyuki, 2022). Despite these advances, themes like "inclusive growth" (Onyina & Baye, 2024) and the specific circumstances of persons with disabilities remain noticeably marginal in the literature, their lower citation impact suggesting they have yet to permeate the field's mainstream discourse.

The Technocratic Core: Effectiveness, Targeting, and Sustainability

At its foundation, much of the literature engages deeply with the technocratic dimensions of social protection effectiveness, targeting accuracy, and financial sustainability. Research consistently examines variables such as beneficiary selection precision, program cost-efficiency, and long-term fiscal viability (Fischer, 2019; Hung et al., 2023). Indonesia's PKH program frequently appears as an exemplar of successful Conditional Cash Transfer design, with demonstrated positive impacts on health and education outcomes (Suryahadi et al., 2021). However, an important counter-narrative in the literature cautions against over-relying on technical solutions. Scholars like (Megawati et al., 2024) compellingly argue that community participation and local legitimacy constitute

fundamental prerequisites for sustainable success, not merely optional additions. The central challenge, then, involves balancing sophisticated targeting mechanisms with genuine community engagement to ensure both efficiency and social cohesion.

Global Shocks and the Reimagined Social Contract

The literature unequivocally demonstrates that global shocks, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, have catalyzed a fundamental rethinking of social protection systems and the underlying social contract. The pandemic exposed the profound inadequacy of existing systems to manage economy-wide disruptions, prompting unprecedented though often temporary expansions of social assistance worldwide (Gammie et al., 2019). Indonesia's response, thoroughly analyzed in studies like (Suryahadi et al., 2021), tested the limits of administrative capacity and targeting systems through rapid program scaling. This crisis has consequently stimulated a broader scholarly discussion about social protection's role as an essential component of a resilient state a perspective that resonates with evolving conceptions of the social contract (Ncube & Murray, 2024). The substantial scholarly impact of pandemic-related research confirms its role in transforming social protection from a marginal safety net into a central element of modern governance.

Synthesis and Implication for Future Research

This systematic analysis portrays a field that has achieved considerable depth in empirically evaluating Indonesia's social protection landscape while facing several critical frontiers for advancement. The strong quantitative and applied focus, though valuable, would benefit significantly from greater integration of mixed-methods approaches to capture the complex realities of policy recipients. Theoretically, the field stands to gain substantial depth through more deliberate engagement with conceptual frameworks from political economy, institutionalism, and justice theories.

Looking forward, several research priorities demand attention: 1) The Digital Governance of Social Protection: Moving beyond

technological optimism to critically examine the governance, ethics, and equitable impacts of digital identification and payment systems. 2) Longitudinal and Intergenerational Impacts: Investigating the long-term effects of social protection on human capital development, economic mobility, and multi-generational resilience. 3) Financing Adaptive Systems: Exploring innovative financing mechanisms, including climate-finance instruments and catastrophe insurance, to sustain shock-responsive social protection. 4) Deepening Intersectional Analysis: Systematically incorporating analyses of gender, disability, age, and ethnicity to ensure social protection systems achieve genuine inclusivity.

This systematic literature review (SLR) provides a critical synthesis of the evolving landscape of alternative social protection policies in Indonesia, a nation perennially confronted by a complex interplay of socio-economic vulnerabilities, climatic disasters, and global health crises. The analysis reveals a significant paradigm shift: social protection is no longer viewed merely as a static poverty alleviation tool but is increasingly conceptualized as a dynamic, adaptive instrument crucial for building resilience against multifaceted shocks. This discussion delves into the nuanced implications of our findings, critically evaluates them against the extant literature, underscores the novel contributions of this review, and outlines the attendant theoretical and practical implications.

Synthesis and Critical Interpretation of Dominant Themes

The dominance of the social protection theme, particularly its intertwinement with disaster risk reduction and pandemic response, underscores a critical evolution in policy thinking. Our findings confirm that in the Indonesian context, social protection systems are being stretched beyond their traditional mandates. In line with global trends identified by Gasior et al. (2023) and Tenzing (2020), Indonesian scholarship increasingly frames social protection as a core component of climate adaptation and disaster resilience strategies. For instance, the study by Fitriinitia & Matsuyuki (2022) in Pekalongan powerfully illustrates how social protection, analyzed through the

Sustainable Rural Livelihoods Framework, is integral to the coping strategies of communities facing recurrent flooding. This extends the findings of earlier work by Costella & others (2023), which primarily focused on poverty concepts, by embedding social protection within the specific ecological and economic vulnerabilities of a developing region.

Similarly, the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as extensively documented by Suryahadi et al. (2021) acted as a stark stress test for Indonesia's social protection architecture. Our review corroborates their conclusion that the pandemic necessitated a move towards more responsive and adaptive systems. However, this review adds nuance to this understanding by highlighting that the rapid deployment of cash transfers, while crucial, also exposed systemic weaknesses in long-term planning and inclusivity. Contrary to a purely technocratic view that celebrates rapid response, our synthesis suggests that the focus on immediate pandemic relief may have inadvertently overshadowed deeper, pre-existing structural inequities, a gap that future policies must address.

The emergence of Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) as a key conceptual framework represents a significant theoretical advancement. The work of Gasior et al. (2023) using micro-simulation models to design ASP in Indonesia demonstrates a sophisticated attempt to pre-emptively model policy impacts. This approach contrasts with more traditional, ex-post evaluation methods and signifies a growing recognition of the need for evidence-based, forward-looking policy design. This trend aligns with global calls for anticipatory governance but is distinctly tailored to Indonesia's unique archipelagic and disaster-prone context.

Novelty and Contribution of this Systematic Review

While previous reviews and studies have examined specific aspects of social protection in Indonesia, such as disaster response or pandemic impacts, this SLR offers a novel perspective by systematically mapping the entire research ecosystem through multiple analytical frameworks (TCM, TCCM, 3W1H, CIMO). Unlike prior studies that often focus on a

single theme or methodology, this review provides a holistic, multi-dimensional analysis that reveals critical interconnections and overlooked gaps.

A primary novel contribution of this review is the identification of a significant disconnect between the macro-level, quantitative focus of dominant research and the nuanced realities of local contexts and specific vulnerable groups. The findings reveal an understudied aspect of social protection research in Indonesia: the relative neglect of gender dynamics and intersectional vulnerabilities. While Perri et al. (2022) and others have flagged gender inequalities, our analysis shows that this perspective remains marginal in the main corpus of literature, particularly in studies dominated by quantitative and modeling approaches. For example, the promising research on ASP and digitalization largely fails to systematically incorporate a gender lens, potentially leading to interventions that, while efficient, may reinforce existing power imbalances and exclude women, people with disabilities, and other marginalized communities.

Furthermore, this review identifies a critical geographical and methodological gap. The overwhelming focus on specific regions like Pekalongan or national-level datasets contrasts with the severe lack of research in Eastern Indonesia (e.g., Maluku, Papua). These regions, characterized by geographic isolation, unique socio-cultural structures, and acute vulnerability to climate change, represent a glaring blind spot. By highlighting this, our review challenges the field to move beyond its current geographical comfort zone to develop truly context-sensitive policies.

The application of the CIMO framework in our analysis provides a novel structural understanding of the policy mechanics. It reveals that while Interventions like CCTs and digital platforms are being actively studied, and their short-term Outcomes (e.g., poverty reduction) are measured, the Mechanisms specifically, the role of local institutions, community trust, and political economy factors are often treated as a black box. The long-term sustainability and transformative potential of these interventions remain uncertain without a deeper understanding of these underlying mechanisms.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this review have several profound theoretical implications. First, they necessitate an expansion of the theoretical foundations underpinning social protection. Traditional institutional and social development theories, while relevant, are insufficient to fully capture the complexities revealed. There is an urgent need to integrate Political Ecology Theory to better understand how power relations and resource distribution shape the effectiveness and equity of social protection in disaster-prone and marginalized regions. This integration would help explain why certain groups remain excluded despite policy intentions.

Second, the prominence of ASP and digitalization calls for the incorporation of theories from resilience science and science and technology studies (STS). Theories of adaptive governance and socio-technical systems can provide a more robust framework for analyzing how digital tools are adopted, adapted, and sometimes resisted within specific Indonesian cultural and institutional contexts, moving beyond a purely techno-optimistic view.

Third, our review underscores the imperative for interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks. The separation of social, environmental, and technological domains in research is a hindrance to developing holistic policies. Future theoretical models must braid together insights from development economics, climate science, gender studies, and digital sociology to adequately address the intertwined challenges Indonesia faces.

Practical Implications

For policymakers and practitioners, this review offers several pointed recommendations. The strong evidence supporting Adaptive Social Protection necessitates a shift from reactive to anticipatory policy planning. Government agencies should invest in building robust data systems and simulation capacities, as demonstrated by Gasior et al. (2023), to model the impacts of various shocks and pre-design trigger-based response mechanisms.

The push for digitalization must be pursued with a conscious focus on inclusivity. While Mumtaz & Whiteford (2021) demonstrate

the efficacy of machine learning for targeting, our review cautions that digital platforms can create new forms of exclusion. Practical steps must include investing in digital literacy programs, ensuring offline alternatives, and strengthening data privacy regulations to protect vulnerable populations.

Most critically, our findings demand a deliberate focus on gender and inclusion. Program designs must move beyond uniform approaches. This involves conducting gender-sensitive needs assessments, ensuring women's participation in program governance, and tailoring interventions to address the specific constraints faced by women, informal workers, and indigenous communities, as suggested by the gaps in the literature highlighted by Budiono et al. (2022) and Perri et al. (2022).

Finally, the geographical gaps identified call for decentralized and localized pilot programs in under-researched regions like Eastern Indonesia. Policymakers should foster action research partnerships with local universities and NGOs to co-design and test social protection models that are appropriate for these unique contexts.

CONCLUSION

This systematic review maps the rapidly evolving scholarship on Indonesia's social protection policies between 2020 and 2025. Our synthesis reveals a field at a critical juncture, marked by a significant paradigm shift. Social protection is no longer seen merely as a static safety net but is increasingly framed as a dynamic, adaptive instrument vital for navigating a landscape of intersecting crises, from climate disasters to economic shocks. While the literature demonstrates considerable strength in empirically evaluating programs like Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH), a pronounced preference for quantitative methods has fostered a predominantly technocratic focus on targeting and fiscal efficiency.

However, this review contends that the field's current trajectory is hampered by several critical oversights. Perhaps most notably, we identify a troubling disconnect between macro-level, technocratic assessments and the nuanced, lived experiences of the most vulnerable. The

dominant discourses around Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) and digitalization, though valuable, often pay lip service to intersectionality without systematically integrating it. The specific gendered impacts of these policies, alongside the vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities and geographically isolated communities like those in Eastern Indonesia, remain glaringly under-explored. Furthermore, the theoretical foundations of the field are surprisingly thin, with many studies opting for a pragmatic, problem-solving approach over engaging with robust conceptual frameworks that could illuminate the underlying mechanisms of policy success and failure.

Future Research Directions

Moving forward, the field must pivot to address these gaps with more nuanced and critical inquiry. Four avenues appear particularly promising: 1. Interrogating the Digital Transformation: Future research should move beyond a techno-optimistic view to critically examine the political economy of digital governance. This involves unpacking the ethical dilemmas, power dynamics, and new forms of exclusion created by digital ID and payment systems. 2. Centering Intersectional Vulnerabilities: There is an urgent need to embed gender-sensitive and intersectional frameworks at the core of research design. This would illuminate how policies interact with pre-existing social stratifications, particularly for women in the informal economy and marginalized communities in regions like Papua and Maluku. 3. Operationalizing Adaptive Financing: The conceptual appeal of ASP must be matched by research into practical financing mechanisms. Exploring innovative instruments like climate-risk finance and catastrophe bonds, and the institutional reforms needed to support them, is a crucial next step. 4. Unpacking the Societal Mechanisms: Rather than focusing solely on inputs and outputs, future studies should employ mixed-methods to open the 'black box' of policy implementation. This means investigating the role of local institutions, community trust, and political will factors that ultimately determine the long-term sustainability and social legitimacy of these programs.

In closing, this review argues that the future robustness of Indonesia's social protection framework hinges on its ability to transcend a narrow, technocratic paradigm. Our central contribution lies in demonstrating that genuine resilience will only be achieved through an interdisciplinary research agenda that deliberately bridges the gap between quantitative metrics and qualitative human experience. For policymakers, the imperative is clear: policies must be not only efficient and shock-responsive but also deeply inclusive, ethically grounded, and reflective of the complex socio-ecological tapestry of the Indonesian archipelago.

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