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Digital Public Services and Community Access: Effectiveness of the Digital Village Application (DIGIDES) in Waiheru Village, Ambon City

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study analyzes the effectiveness of the Digital Village Application (DIGIDES) in improving administrative public services, service access, citizen participation, and community satisfaction in Waiheru Village, Baguala District, Ambon City.

Methodology: This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through direct observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation involving village officials, the application operator, and community beneficiaries. Data were analyzed through reduction, display, verification, and interpretation based on public service effectiveness indicators.

Main Findings: The findings show that DIGIDES has improved service accuracy, administrative efficiency, population data management, and transparency for village officials and digitally capable residents. However, its community-level use remains limited because of uneven digital literacy, inadequate socialization, operator dependency, and unstable internet connectivity. These constraints affect service access, restrict citizen participation, and create uneven changes in village governance: residents who are digitally literate benefit from faster services, while older residents, low-literacy groups, and people with limited internet access remain dependent on face-to-face assistance.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study combines effectiveness analysis with a social impact perspective by treating village digitalization not merely as a technological innovation but as a public service process that shapes inclusion, access, participation, and relations between village officials and citizens.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Public service is not merely an administrative activity but a social right that must be delivered fairly, transparently, and accountably. In Indonesia, the right to public service is strengthened through the Public Service Law and the electronic-based government system policy, which require government institutions to provide services that are accessible, responsive, and oriented toward citizens [1], [2]. In this context, digital public service is expected to expand access to administrative services, reduce bureaucratic barriers, and improve the quality of interaction between the state and citizens. However, digitalization should not be understood only as the replacement of manual procedures with technology. It is also a social process that changes how citizens obtain information, how officials exercise authority, and how communities participate in governance [3], [4].

The literature on digital government emphasizes that digital transformation requires organizational, institutional, and cultural change, not simply the installation of applications or information systems. Mergel, Edelmann, and Haug argue that public sector digital transformation is shaped by external demands, internal readiness, process redesign, and expected public value [5]. Janowski also explains that digital government evolves from simple digitization toward transformation, engagement, and contextualization [6]. Similarly, Gil-Garcia, Dawes, and Pardo show that digital government research is closely related to public management issues such as leadership, policy design, technology, data governance, and public value [7]. Therefore, the effectiveness of village digitalization must be assessed not only by technical performance but also by its contribution to access, participation, accountability, and inclusion [8].

At the same time, digital public services can reproduce new forms of inequality when they are implemented without sufficient attention to digital literacy, infrastructure, and social conditions. The digital divide literature shows that unequal access to devices, internet networks, skills, and meaningful use of technology can limit the benefits of digital transformation for vulnerable groups [9]-[12]. In rural and village contexts, this issue is especially important because communities may differ significantly in education, age, income, network access, and confidence in using digital applications. As a result, a digital service that is administratively efficient for officials may not automatically be inclusive for all citizens. Citizens with smartphones, internet access, and digital skills may experience faster services, while residents with limited literacy or unstable connectivity may remain dependent on conventional face-to-face services.

Village government occupies a strategic position because it is the closest level of government to citizens. It provides administrative documents, population services, local information, and initial access to government programs. The adoption of information and communication technology at the village level is therefore expected to improve public service quality, strengthen transparency, and support data-based decision-making [13]-[15]. The smart village and digital village literature further suggests that rural digitalization can support governance, local development, economic participation, and access to information when it is implemented through a community-oriented and context-sensitive approach [16]-[18].

One digital innovation used in Indonesian village administration is the Digital Village Application (DIGIDES). DIGIDES is promoted as a village information system that supports village administration, population data management, public service processing, communication, and information dissemination [19], [20]. In Waiheru Village, Baguala District, Ambon City, this application has been adopted to assist administrative services such as domicile certificates, business certificates, introduction letters, and other population-related documents. Previous community service work in Waiheru indicates that village administration digitalization is relevant because manual administrative systems are often slow, paper-based, and vulnerable to data errors [21].

The social problem in Waiheru Village is not only whether the application exists, but whether it can be used meaningfully by the community. Before digitalization, services were mostly manual, resulting in queues, uncertain completion times, limited access to service information, and dependence on direct interaction with village officials. After DIGIDES was introduced, village officials gained a more structured administrative tool, but many residents still had limited knowledge of how to access and use the system. This creates a gap between administrative modernization and citizen experience. Digital public service becomes effective only when citizens understand the service channel, are able to use it, and feel that the process improves their access and relationship with the village government.

Previous studies have examined DIGIDES and digital village programs in several Indonesian contexts. Agastha and Fikri studied DIGIDES-based public service in Pandau Jaya Village and found that service quality was generally good but still required training and socialization [22]. Aisyah and Suriyani examined the implementation of digitalization programs in Kapar Village and emphasized administrative improvement through digital services [23]. Jhon, Warbal, and Wokanubun evaluated DIGIDES in village administration and highlighted implementation issues related to service principles and administrative performance [24]. Kusumawati discussed digital village development strategies for literacy, public service, and community self-reliance [25]. Ikbal and colleagues reviewed digital transformation in rural areas and stressed the importance of infrastructure, digital capacity, and development direction in developing countries [26]. Fatmala, Sakir, and Mayasari analyzed the influence of human resource quality and infrastructure support on DIGIDES-based village public service innovation in Ambon City [27].

The research gap addressed in this study lies in the limited attention of prior DIGIDES studies to the social consequences of village digitalization. Existing research by Agastha and Fikri, Aisyah and Suriyani, Jhon et al., Kusumawati, Ikbal et al., and Fatmala et al. provides important insight into implementation, service quality, digital literacy, and infrastructure, but it does not sufficiently explain how digital services affect service access, citizen participation, relations between officials and residents, and the risk of excluding groups with limited digital capacity [22]-[27]. Therefore, this study offers novelty by combining effectiveness indicators with a social impact analysis of public service access and village governance. The urgency of this research is to ensure that DIGIDES is not evaluated only as a technological tool, but as a public service mechanism that should protect citizens rights, strengthen participation, and prevent digital exclusion in village administration.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the Digital Village Application in improving administrative public services and community service satisfaction in Waiheru Village, Baguala District, Ambon City. The analysis focuses on clarity of objectives, clarity of strategy, accuracy of service processes, achievement of targets, and tangible results, while also examining the social implications of these indicators for citizens, service access, participation, and village governance.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study used a descriptive qualitative research design. The qualitative approach was selected because the study sought to understand the implementation of DIGIDES in its natural administrative and social context, including the experiences of village officials and community members. Qualitative research is appropriate for exploring meanings, perceptions, institutional practices, and contextual problems that cannot be sufficiently captured through numerical measurement alone [28], [29]. The descriptive orientation enabled the researcher to explain factual conditions, service practices, digital literacy constraints, and community responses systematically.

The study applied a public service effectiveness perspective using indicators adapted from Sondang P. Siagian: clarity of objectives, clarity of strategy, accuracy of service processes, achievement of targets, and tangible results [30]. These indicators were used not only to judge whether DIGIDES was effective or ineffective, but also to analyze how each indicator affected citizens access to services, participation opportunities, and relations between officials and the community.

2.2. Research Location and Time

The research was conducted in Waiheru Village, Baguala District, Ambon City. This location was chosen purposively because Waiheru Village has implemented the Digital Village Application in administrative services. The research was carried out for approximately one to two months, adjusted to the stages of observation, interviews, document collection, data verification, and analysis.

2.3. Informants, Subjects, and Objects

Informants were selected purposively because the study required information from individuals who were directly involved in or affected by DIGIDES implementation. Purposive selection is appropriate in qualitative inquiry when researchers need information-rich cases that can explain a phenomenon in depth [31], [32]. The main informant was the Head of Waiheru Village. Key informants included the Village Secretary and the operator or manager of the Digital Village Application. Additional informants consisted of three community members who had experience with village administrative services. The research subjects were the Waiheru Village Office apparatus and community members, while the research object was the effectiveness of DIGIDES in supporting public services and community satisfaction.

2.4. Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to examine service activities, interaction patterns, infrastructure conditions, and the use of the application in the village office. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore the objectives, strategies, benefits, constraints, and social impacts of DIGIDES from the perspectives of officials and citizens. Documentation was used to collect written records, service documents, policy-related materials, and administrative evidence. Triangulation across techniques and sources strengthened the credibility of the findings [29], [31].

Table 1. Research Instrument Grid

Data collection technique	Instrument	Informants / data source	Main focus	Expected output
Observation	Observation checklist and field notes	Service activities at the Waiheru Village Office	Service flow, infrastructure, queue, officer-citizen interaction, and DIGIDES use	Empirical notes on service practice and constraints
Semi-structured interview	Interview guide and audio recorder	Village head, village secretary, DIGIDES operator, and community members	Objectives, strategies, access, satisfaction, participation, and social impact	Interview transcripts and thematic summaries
Documentation	Documentation checklist	Service documents, population records, policy materials, and	Procedures, administrative evidence, and service outputs	Document matrix and supporting evidence

		application-related records		
Researcher field journal	Reflexive notes	Field context and researcher observations	Emerging issues, inconsistencies, and interpretation notes	Analytical memos for triangulation

2.5. Data Sources

This study used primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from direct observation and interviews with village officials, the DIGIDES operator, and community members. Secondary data were collected from service documents, village records, relevant regulations, books, journal articles, previous research, and online sources related to digital government, digital village development, public services, and digital inclusion.

2.6. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, consisting of data condensation or reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification [29], [33]. Data reduction was conducted by selecting and coding information related to the five effectiveness indicators and their social implications. Data display was carried out through thematic organization so that patterns of access, participation, administrative change, and service constraints could be compared across informants. Conclusion drawing was conducted by interpreting the relationship between empirical findings and concepts from digital governance, public service, and digital divide literature.

2.7. Research Procedures

The research procedures were conducted systematically. The study began with the identification of public service problems in Waiheru Village, followed by a review of literature on digital governance, village digitalization, public service effectiveness, and digital inclusion. The researcher then developed research instruments, selected informants, collected data through observation, interviews, and documentation, analyzed the data using qualitative procedures, verified the findings through triangulation, and formulated conclusions and recommendations. The research procedure is presented in Figure 1.

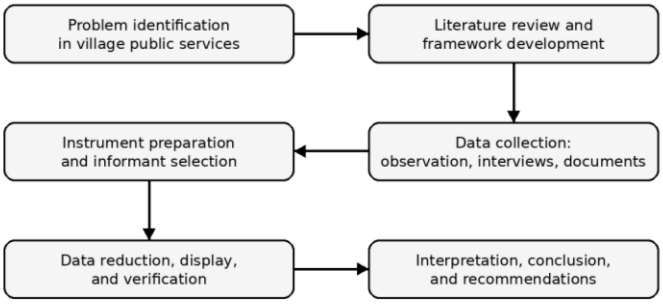

Figure 1. Research Procedure Flowchart

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussion of DIGIDES implementation in Waiheru Village based on five effectiveness indicators: clarity of objectives, clarity of strategy, accuracy of service processes, achievement of targets, and tangible results. The discussion does not stop at whether the application is effective or ineffective; it also explains the impact on citizens, implications for service access, changes in relations between village officials and the community, and the groups that benefit or may be left behind. The analysis draws on digital government, information system success, technology adoption, and public value perspectives [34]-[38]

3.1. Clarity of Objectives

The findings indicate that the objectives of DIGIDES implementation were relatively clear at the administrative level. Village officials understood that the application was introduced to modernize administrative services, reduce dependence on manual procedures, improve data organization, shorten service processing time, and increase transparency. These objectives are consistent with digital government principles that emphasize efficiency, data-based administration, and better public service delivery [5]-[7].

However, the clarity of objectives was not equally understood by the community. Many residents perceived DIGIDES only as an additional service channel, not as part of a broader effort to improve access, transparency, and participation. This shows that institutional clarity does not automatically become public clarity.

When objectives are not communicated to citizens, the application may be seen as a technical requirement rather than a public service right. As a result, residents may continue to depend on conventional services even though a digital channel is available.

The social impact of this condition is important. For digitally literate residents, DIGIDES can reduce the need for repeated visits to the village office and provide easier access to service information. For residents who do not understand the purpose of the application, digitalization may create uncertainty and hesitation. The relation between officials and citizens also changes unevenly: officials begin to work through digital records and procedures, while many citizens still expect direct explanation and personal assistance. This finding supports the argument that digital transformation requires communication, trust-building, and user orientation, not merely system availability [8], [35].

3.2. Clarity of Strategy

The village government adopted a general strategy by integrating DIGIDES into existing administrative processes and assigning an operator to manage the application. This strategy helped ensure that digital services were not separated from daily village administration. It also supported internal coordination because the operator became a technical reference point for document processing and data management. From an administrative perspective, this reflects an initial step toward organizational adaptation in digital public service delivery [13].

Nevertheless, the strategy was not yet comprehensive. Socialization to residents was mostly informal and conducted during service interactions at the village office. There was no structured schedule for community training, no systematic digital literacy assistance, and no measurable target for increasing independent application use. Capacity building for officials was also limited, creating dependency on specific individuals. If the operator is unavailable or if internet connectivity is unstable, service continuity can be disrupted.

The implication for citizens is that access to digital services remains mediated by officials. Residents who already have digital skills may benefit from faster and more predictable services, but residents who need assistance still have to visit the village office. This condition creates a hybrid service relation: the village government moves toward digital administration, but the community still relies on face-to-face support. Such a strategy benefits the administration but has not fully transformed citizen participation. Literature on technology adoption shows that usefulness and ease of use influence whether users accept digital services [36], [37]. Therefore, an effective strategy must include continuous training, public communication, and infrastructure support.

3.3. Accuracy of Service Processes

DIGIDES contributed positively to the accuracy of service processes. Administrative requests became more structured because data input, verification, and document preparation followed a clearer workflow. Digital records reduced the risk of missing files, repeated data entry, and inconsistent administrative information. This improvement is aligned with information system success theory, which emphasizes system quality, information quality, and service quality as key dimensions of digital service performance [34].

The application also improved the ability of officials to search and update population data. Compared to manual archives, digital data storage made information easier to retrieve and reduced the possibility of document duplication. For citizens, this can produce more reliable administrative outputs and reduce repeated correction of documents. Improved accuracy therefore has a direct social benefit: it reduces transaction costs, minimizes uncertainty, and strengthens citizens trust in village administrative services.

However, accuracy is still affected by technical and social constraints. Unstable internet connectivity sometimes delays data entry and document processing. Residents with limited digital skills may also make mistakes when filling service requests or may need help from officials. This means that procedural accuracy depends not only on the application but also on network reliability, user competence, and assistance mechanisms. If these supporting elements are weak, digital services may become accurate for officials but difficult for citizens. This condition confirms digital divide arguments that meaningful access requires skills and support, not only technology [9]-[12].

3.4. Achievement of Targets

The achievement of targets shows partial success. Internally, the village office has used DIGIDES to support document processing and data management. This indicates that the application has contributed to administrative modernization. Digital archiving helps officials monitor service outputs and reduce reliance on paper-based records. In this sense, DIGIDES benefits village officials by simplifying work routines and supporting administrative accountability.

Community-level targets, however, have not been fully achieved. Many residents still prefer direct services at the village office because they are more familiar with face-to-face interaction, lack confidence in using applications, or have limited internet access. The absence of clear performance indicators, such as the percentage of services processed digitally, average service completion time, or number of residents trained, also makes target achievement difficult to measure objectively.

This finding has social implications. The main beneficiaries of DIGIDES are village officials and residents who are digitally literate, have smartphones, and can access the internet. The groups potentially left behind are older residents, residents with limited education, people without stable internet access, and citizens who rarely receive information about the application. The risk is not that digitalization fails entirely, but that its benefits are distributed unequally. In public service terms, formal availability of a digital channel does not guarantee equal access. This supports the view that digital government must be evaluated through inclusion and public value, not only through efficiency [38], [39].

3.5. Tangible Results

The tangible results of DIGIDES implementation can be seen in four aspects: ease of use, service speed, accuracy, and transparency. For village officials, the application made administrative tasks more organized because data entry, document templates, and service records were available in a structured system. For residents who were familiar with smartphones and digital applications, DIGIDES provided easier access to information and reduced uncertainty about service procedures.

Service speed improved when technical conditions were stable. Digital data retrieval and automated document preparation reduced the time needed to process certain administrative documents. This improvement matters socially because citizens often evaluate public services not only by legal correctness but also by time certainty, simplicity, and fairness. Faster service can reduce opportunity costs for residents who must work, travel, or manage household responsibilities.

Transparency also improved because service information and administrative data became easier to organize and communicate. Nevertheless, transparency was not equally experienced by all citizens. Residents who did not know how to access the application or who relied on verbal explanations still depended on officials for information. Therefore, transparency should be understood as both data availability and public understandability. This is consistent with studies on open and digital government, which emphasize that transparency requires accessible information, citizen capacity, and responsive institutions [40]-[42].

The relation between officials and citizens also changed. DIGIDES encouraged officials to adopt data-based work patterns and made service processes more traceable. At the same time, citizens increasingly expected faster, clearer, and more predictable services. However, because digital literacy remains uneven, officials still play an important role as facilitators. This means that digital village governance in Waiheru is not yet a fully self-service model. It is a guided digital service model in which officials, operators, and community assistance remain central to service inclusion.

3.6. Dialogue with Previous Research

The findings of this study are supported by previous research. Agastha and Fikri found that DIGIDES-based public services can improve service quality, but they also emphasized the need for training and socialization so that the application can be used more optimally [22]. Aisyah and Suriyani similarly showed that digitalization programs can support village public services, but implementation depends on the readiness of officials, community understanding, and operational support [23]. Jhon et al. highlighted that DIGIDES implementation must be evaluated against public service principles, including equality and service compatibility [24]. These studies support the present finding that DIGIDES improves administration but requires stronger inclusion mechanisms.

This study also aligns with Kusumawati, who argues that digital village development should improve literacy, public service, and community self-reliance [25]. Ikbal et al. emphasize that rural digital transformation in developing countries faces infrastructure, capacity, and governance challenges [26]. Fatmala et al. show that human resource quality and infrastructure support influence DIGIDES-based service innovation in Ambon City [27]. Compared with these studies, the present research adds a more explicit social impact analysis by explaining who benefits, who may be left behind, and how digitalization changes the relationship between officials and citizens.

International literature strengthens this interpretation. Rogers diffusion theory explains that innovation adoption depends on perceived relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability [38]. E-government adoption research also shows that trust, perceived usefulness, ease of use, and service quality influence citizen willingness to use digital services [39]. Meanwhile, transparency and participation studies emphasize that digital tools can improve accountability only when citizens are able to access, understand, and use information [43]-[45].

The academic impact of this research is its contribution to the study of digital public services at the village level by linking effectiveness indicators with social access, citizen participation, and digital inclusion. The study shows that evaluating a digital application only through administrative efficiency is insufficient. A digital service may improve internal performance while still leaving some citizens dependent on manual assistance [46]-[48]. Practically, the findings provide input for the Waiheru Village Government and related stakeholders to strengthen socialization, digital literacy training, operator backup systems, infrastructure coordination, and citizen-oriented service standards.

This research also has limitations. First, the study used a qualitative design with a limited number of informants, so the findings cannot be statistically generalized to all villages. Second, the research focused on the implementation experience in one village, which may differ from villages with stronger infrastructure or different demographic characteristics [49], [50]. Third, the study did not quantitatively measure application usage rates, service processing time, or satisfaction scores before and after implementation. Future research should use mixed-method designs, compare several villages, and include quantitative indicators such as service completion time, user satisfaction, digital adoption rate, and the distribution of benefits across age, gender, education, and income groups.

4. CONCLUSION

The combined revision of this study shows that the Digital Village Application (DIGIDES) has contributed to improving public services in Waiheru Village, particularly in service accuracy, administrative efficiency, data management, and transparency. The objectives and strategic intentions of digitalization are relatively clear among village officials, and the application has helped standardize service processes. However, the effectiveness of DIGIDES remains partial because community utilization is still limited by uneven digital literacy, inadequate socialization, unstable internet connectivity, and dependency on specific operators.

From a social impact perspective, DIGIDES benefits village officials and digitally capable residents by making services faster, more organized, and more traceable. At the same time, residents with limited digital skills, older citizens, and people with limited internet access may be left behind if assistance and socialization are not strengthened. Therefore, the success of village digitalization should be measured not only by the existence of an application, but also by whether citizens can access, understand, and benefit from it equally. The relation between officials and citizens is gradually shifting from purely face-to-face administration toward data-based and guided digital services, but inclusive facilitation remains essential.

The study recommends that Waiheru Village strengthen structured socialization, provide regular digital literacy assistance, train more than one application operator, establish measurable service performance indicators, and coordinate with relevant agencies to improve internet infrastructure. Future research should apply mixed-method or comparative designs across several villages to measure the long-term effects of DIGIDES on service access, citizen satisfaction, participation, accountability, and digital inclusion.

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