

Humanity Injustice in the Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) Program: A Critical Philosophical Study of Social Justice in Indonesia

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Abstract: The ideal of social justice mandated by the fifth principle of Pancasila remains challenged by persistent inequality, uneven access to welfare, and gaps between public policy objectives and their implementation in Indonesia. The Free Nutritious Meals (Makan Bergizi Gratis or MBG) Program represents an important case for examining whether state welfare policies have realised substantive social justice or merely administrative distribution. This study aims to critically analyse the relevance and actualisation of Pancasila's fifth principle through a philosophical examination of the MBG Program as a manifestation of the relationship between the state and citizens. This research employs a qualitative approach using literature review and policy discourse analysis by examining academic works, philosophical perspectives, and public policy discussions related to social justice, humanity, and the MBG Program. The findings reveal that the MBG Program reflects a gap between the normative ideals of social justice and policy practices, particularly in terms of accountability, public participation, and protection of human dignity. The study further shows that social justice cannot be reduced to the distribution of material benefits but must include ethical responsibility, recognition of citizens as active subjects, and participatory governance mechanisms. Therefore, this research argues that the realization of Pancasila-based social justice requires a transformation from administrative welfare policies toward justice-based governance that integrates humanity, accountability, and community participation as fundamental principles of public policy.

Keywords: Social Justice; Pancasila's Fifth Principle; Free Nutritious Meals Program; Public Policy Ethics; Justice-Based Governance.

1. Introduction

Social justice for all Indonesian people is the breath of independence and the moral spirit of the nation. The fifth principle of Pancasila, which affirms "social justice for all Indonesian people," is not merely an ideological formula, but rather the nation's ontological promise to its people: that the lives of Indonesians must be guaranteed in dignity and humanity. However, in contemporary reality, this principle is increasingly blurred amid public policies that actually hurt the people themselves. The Free Nutritious Meals (Makan Bergizi Gratis or MBG) program, which was initiated by the government with the noble intention of addressing child nutrition issues, has ironically become a symbol of the decline of social justice in this country. What should have been a manifestation of the state's love for its people has now become a portrait of human rights violations.

International studies on school feeding programs show that such policies can significantly improve child nutrition and educational outcomes when implemented with strong institutional coordination and strict food safety monitoring. However, research also warns that large-scale feeding programs may generate serious public health risks if supply chains, hygiene standards, and local governance mechanisms are inadequate (Aurino et al., 2019; Drake et al., 2018). The MBG program was launched with ambitious goals: to reach 82 million beneficiaries with a budget of Rp 71 trillion in 2025, increasing to Rp 335 trillion

the following year. The government claims that this policy is a revolutionary breakthrough for achieving nutritional equity and reducing stunting. However, the facts on the ground show an irony. Kompas reported that from January to September 2025, there were more than 6,400 cases of MBG-related food poisoning across 18 provinces (Arlinta, 2025). In Lampung alone, the Bandar Lampung Legal Aid Institute recorded more than 500 cases in the last two months, including food with worms and spoiled food served to students (Oktavia, 2025). This situation shows that policies designed in the name of justice are actually creating new suffering for the poor.

This series of events reveals a profound irony: a program intended to uphold justice has instead become a form of human rights abuse. This pattern is similar to findings from various national human rights studies, which show that the state often fails to prevent violations of citizens' rights due to weak oversight mechanisms. Research on the implementation of the Human Rights Court Law shows that unclear criminal elements, weak victim protection, and the dominance of political interests have resulted in a legal system unable to guarantee civilian safety. When state accountability mechanisms are weak, policies intended to protect citizens can create new harm for vulnerable groups, as seen in the MBG case (Wardani & Suroto, 2023).

In this context, social policy appears to operate as a tool of political legitimization rather than a means of ethical service. Noam Chomsky refers to this phenomenon as manufacturing consent, which is how those in power use narratives of virtue to cover up relations of domination (Herman & Chomsky, 2010). When the state is more concerned with building thousands of kitchens than ensuring a single plate of decent food for a poor child, then social policy has lost its soul as a form of compassion.

The problems faced are not only technical but structural. Maghfur Ahmad wrote in his opinion piece in Kompas that “without social justice, the future of our country will be a dark Indonesia.” He described a paradoxical situation in which social justice is only “powerful on paper, fragile in action.” He also highlights public policies that do not favour the people, such as the increase in VAT and the privatization of assets, which show how social justice in Indonesia is trapped in the logic of bureaucratic capitalism (Ahmad, 2025). In this context, MBG is just one of many new faces of the state's moral inequality towards its citizens.

This crisis of social justice is reinforced by what Jan Mealino Ekklesia describes in his article Social Justice for Marginalized Groups. He asserts that the principles of collectivism and mutual cooperation, the heart of the Pancasila ideology, have now been replaced by exploitative power relations (Ekklesia, 2024). In the context of MBG, the common people are once again positioned as objects (Canivez, 2004), passive subjects who are recipients of policy, rather than empowered citizens. They become objects of state policy, rather than equal partners in the moral development of the nation. As a result, social justice has become nothing more than a political slogan that has lost its human basis.

On the other hand, the President himself acknowledged that “the MBG poisoning case is a big problem” and promised to summon the relevant officials to evaluate the program (Anugrahanto, 2025). However, the government refused to impose a moratorium. The Deputy Minister of State Secretary emphasized that “the program will continue,” despite growing public pressure to temporarily halt it (Basyari, 2025). This statement shows that the state prefers to maintain its image rather than uphold substantive justice. In the framework of John Rawls such actions violate the principle of difference: social justice demands real favouritism towards the weakest groups, not just administrative equalization (Rawls, 1971).

In her report, Ester Lince Napitupulu states that MBG “has weakened the national education ecosystem.” Teachers and principals are burdened with administrative tasks without adequate support, while children become victims of poisoning in spaces that should be safe for learning (Napitupulu, 2025). Patrya Pratama from the Inspirasi Foundation even called the MBG a human-made disaster that “violates children's right to feel safe at school.” This tragedy confirms that policies that are supposed to protect are actually neglecting, creating fear and trauma for the nation's future generations.

In the context of humanistic philosophy, this situation marks the destruction of the principle of *homo homini socius* taught by Driyarkara. The state, which should be the friend of the people, has instead become a bureaucratic predator. Social justice, which ideally grows from collective consciousness, has shifted to oppressive political rhetoric. As Yudi Latif reminds us, “social justice is the core of all other principles; it is the concrete manifestation of the values of Pancasila.” Thus, violations of social justice are not only administrative failures, but betrayals of the foundations of the state (Driyarkara, 2006; Latif, 2019).

On a global level, Thomas Piketty shows that widening economic inequality is a sign of the moral collapse of modern states. When public policy operates to serve the economic and political elite, the common people lose their place in the system (Pemberton et al., 2020). The MBG, which swallowed hundreds of trillions of rupiah but ended up poisoning thousands of victims, is a concrete portrait of such moral inequality in Indonesia. It reflects what Kuntowijoyo calls “human exploitation in the face of nationalism”, a social structure that systematically oppresses the people through seemingly populist policies (Kuntowijoyo, 2018). Contemporary research in public policy also shows that large-scale welfare programs often encounter structural failures when governance capacity and accountability mechanisms are weak. Studies in development policy indicate that social assistance programs in developing countries frequently fail to reach their intended beneficiaries due to institutional fragmentation, weak monitoring systems, and political capture of welfare programs (Garritzmann et al., 2023; Hickey et al., 2019). These findings suggest that the gap between the normative ideal of social justice and policy implementation is not only a philosophical issue but also a structural governance problem.

The urgency of writing this article stems from concerns about moral degradation in the practice of social justice in Indonesia. The voices of MBG victims are not merely technical complaints, but ethical calls for the state to review its humanitarian orientation. As Levinas stated, the face of another person always calls for responsibility (Nikodemus & Riyanto, 2023; Riyanto, 2018). In the faces of children suffering from the food provided by the state, we see the face of a nation that has lost its empathy. Giving them a voice means restoring the light of social justice as the core of Pancasila.

From an academic perspective, research on social policy in Indonesia is generally technocratic and rarely highlights its philosophical dimensions. Ravallion in *World Development* shows that many aid programs in developing countries fail to reach the poorest groups due to moral bias and structural weaknesses (Ravallion, 2020). Nussbaum, through her capability approach, asserts that true justice can only be measured by humans' ability to live with dignity (Nussbaum, 2006, 2011, 2019). However, few studies have examined how social policies in Indonesia violate the principles of humanity that form the basis of its constitution. This paper attempts to fill that gap.

Through a philosophical-critical study of the MBG program, this paper seeks to highlight the paradox of social justice in Indonesia: how policies created in the name of humanity actually harm humanity itself. This reflection is not intended to reject social programs, but rather to remind us that social justice is not the result of state administration,

but rather the fruit of the nation's moral consciousness. As Aristotle asserted, “justice is not a part of virtue, but the whole of virtue.” If the state fails to act justly, then what is lost is not only welfare, but also its soul as a civilized nation.

The methodological design used in writing this article is a qualitative literature study and comparison of literature on related and relevant themes, such as Social Justice, Free Nutritious Meal Programs, and themes related to humanity. The sources were taken from recent articles on the theme published on the official Kompas newspaper website over the last five years, combined with scientific study sources on the theme from both indexed academic journals and books that specifically discuss related themes and relevant practical implications.

2. Discussion

The paradoxical existence of social justice in Indonesia has attracted the attention of academics who demand a review, especially in practical matters, so that Pancasila, which is the collective dream of Indonesian society, can be realized. Responding to the focus of this paper, the discussion will open with an overview of the current humanitarian situation in our beloved Indonesia, followed by a critique of the MBG program, which appears noble in theory but immoral in its implementation, giving the impression that the failed products of this program do not favor the victims. The discussion will conclude with a synthesis that describes the fifth principle of Pancasila, Social Justice, which seems to have faded in our beloved Indonesia.

2.1. The Panoramic View of Humanity in Indonesia Today

Humanity is at the core of all moral ideals of the Indonesian nation. It is not merely an ethical concept, but the heart of statehood that guides public policy. Pancasila affirms “just and civilized humanity” as the moral foundation of the nation's politics: that humans must be treated as dignified beings, not tools for economic or political interests. However, in contemporary policy practice, this value is becoming increasingly blurred. Humans are often reduced to statistical data, project targets, or government program achievement figures.

Ágnes Heller asserts that true justice cannot be achieved solely through rules or legal mechanisms, but through a living morality, “*la difesa di una prospettiva pluralistica della vita buona*,” namely the defense of a pluralistic good life. For Heller, humanity is the moral horizon that must underpin all political practices and social policies. Justice without humanity only gives rise to a cold bureaucracy that has lost its soul (Heller, 2024).

In modern political systems, as criticized by Tom Frost, the state is often trapped in a legal logic that disregards the ethical dimension. He calls this phenomenon the “abandonment of the ethical project,” in which public policy is carried out based on administrative calculations without considering the ethical relationship between the government and its citizens (Frost, 2021). This view is relevant to understanding the failure of policies such as the Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG), which was morally intended to help children but in reality, harmed them. A state that fails to bear the moral consequences of its policies has essentially discarded humanity as an ethical principle.

Meanwhile, Emmanuel Levinas, through his reading of Frost, asserts that humanity begins with a relationship of responsibility towards “the other.” Ethics precedes law; before the state talks about rights and obligations, it must first see the faces of the people who are the subjects of its policies. In the Indonesian context, those faces are school children who are victims of inadequate food. They are not numbers receiving aid, but individuals who

are hurt by structural negligence. This is where the humanitarian crisis finds its most concrete form.

Thomas Nagel reminds us that social justice is always paradoxical: it demands moral ideals amid human practical limitations. The state, says Nagel, has an obligation to continue striving for justice, even though it can never achieve it perfectly. Thus, when the government ignores the moral process in pursuit of political targets, it has failed to fulfill its ethical responsibility to its people (Nagel, 2023).

In the context of education and social policy, Penny Jane Burke and Matt Lumb propose the idea of social justice praxis, which is critical awareness manifested in transformative action. According to them, social justice should not stop at rhetoric or slogans, but must be realized in concrete, participatory, and reflective practices (Burke & Lumb, 2024). If the MBG is implemented without public participation, without community oversight, and without the voices of the poor who are its target, then the program fails to become a praxis of justice. It becomes merely a display of compassion, not a policy that humanizes.

Bradley Campbell asserts that many social policies fail not because of bad intentions, but because of a misunderstanding of social justice as a morality that is closed to empirical data and social context. "Social justice," he writes, "must be understood as a discipline of thinking, not just spontaneous empathy." If public policy is not rooted in the sociology of society, it will fall into shallow and performative morality (Campbell, 2024). MBG is a classic example: launched with good intentions, but implemented without in-depth study of economic structures, consumer culture, and logistical capacity in the region.

Humanity demands empathy rooted in social responsibility. In the view of social theology, as conveyed by Seprianus Padakari and Rezeki Gulo, love and justice are an inseparable unity. The church, in this context, has a prophetic duty to remind the world that justice without love is a moral void, while love without justice is a spiritual illusion (Padakari & Gulo, 2025). This message also applies to the state. A government that feeds its people but shows no concern for the dignity of the recipients does not actually uphold justice; rather, it imitates empty charity.

Therefore, rebuilding Indonesia's humanitarian landscape requires ethical and structural reform. Such reform should be grounded in Pancasila as an ethical and practical framework for public policy, particularly by ensuring that policy formulation responds to social, economic, cultural, and geographical disparities while promoting solidarity, inclusivity, and equitable access to public services (Tude, 2025). First, public policy must be based on a human-centered governance paradigm that places humans at the center of reflection, not merely as objects of intervention. Second, a mechanism of moral accountability is needed to assess the ethical impact of each policy on the dignity of citizens. Third, public awareness of human values must be fostered through social ethics education so that the community can assess policies not only from their results, but also from the methods and intentions behind their implementation. Only then will humanity return to being the living breath of the nation, rather than merely an administrative slogan.

Global research on inequality confirms that public policies that ignore social participation tend to reproduce structural injustice. According to Fraser (2008), justice in modern societies must integrate three dimensions: redistribution, recognition, and representation. When public policies only focus on distributive aspects without ensuring participation and recognition of vulnerable groups, social justice becomes merely procedural rather than substantive (Fraser, 2019). Global inequality studies demonstrate that widening economic disparities weaken democratic institutions and reduce citizens' trust in public policies. Empirical research confirms that unequal societies tend to experience

higher levels of social instability and lower policy effectiveness (Alvaredo et al., 2018; Pemberton et al., 2020).

2.2. Critics of the Free Nutritious Meals (Makan Bergizi Gratis/MBG) Program

The Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG) was launched with ambitious goals: to reduce stunting, improve child welfare, and foster social justice. The government is targeting 82 million beneficiaries with a budget allocation of Rp71 trillion in 2025, which will increase fivefold the following year. However, reports from various national media outlets reveal another side to the program. Kompas reported more than 6,400 cases of food poisoning across 18 provinces, including 500 in Lampung, due to stale or worm-infested food (Oktavia, 2025).

Allegations of maladministration have exacerbated the situation. The Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia found delays in the verification of food suppliers, discrimination in the appointment of contractors, and inadequate hygiene supervision (Arlinta, 2025). The director of FIAN Indonesia even assessed that the MBG was “designed to fail” because it lacked a clear legal basis and sanitation standards. In the context of policy theory, this phenomenon signifies structural policy failure, not merely implementation failure. Policy studies have long demonstrated that public policy failures often emerge not merely from poor implementation but from systemic governance weaknesses. McConnell argues that policy failure often occurs when governments prioritize political symbolism over administrative readiness, resulting in programs that are highly visible politically but institutionally fragile (McConnell, 2015).

Nagel reminds us that distributive justice demands a balance between efficiency and morality (Nagel, 2023, pp. 63–65). Programs that are managed hastily for the sake of political image will lose their moral legitimacy. A state that is hasty in “giving” but does not enforce responsibility is actually creating a new form of inequality: between those who eat properly and those who are forced to eat spoiled food. Here, public policy becomes a moral paradox.

From a public ethics perspective, Frost refers to this phenomenon as ethical emptiness, a moral void in bureaucracy. He argues that state institutions that lose their ethical relationship with the people will only produce lifeless rules (Frost, 2021, p. 80). MBG that is implemented without empathy, transparency, and participation is a clear example of unethical bureaucracy. The government provides food, but without showing respect for the lives it feeds.

Burke and Lumb’s analysis deepens this criticism. They assert that social justice praxis demands “transformative participation,” namely, the active involvement of the community in the entire policy cycle: planning, implementation, and evaluation (Burke & Lumb, 2024, p. 183). MBG fails in all three areas. The community is not involved in menu design, supervision, or partner selection. As a result, policies intended to uphold justice actually create new inequalities between the center and the regions.

In many areas, especially 3T (*Terdepan* - Frontier, *Terluar* - Outermost, *Tertinggal* - Underdeveloped) regions such as Nias, Mentawai, and Southeast Maluku, food distribution is delayed by up to a week. On the other hand, large cities experienced oversupply. This spatial inequality shows how formal justice (every student has the right to food) fails to become substantive justice (every child receives adequate and timely food). Heller refers to this condition as a deviation from dynamic justice, a situation in which policies cease to move toward the greater good because they have lost their moral direction (Heller, 2024, p. 79).

The socio-political impact of MBG cannot be ignored. As described by Kiftiyah, Palestine, and Abshar, MBG has opened up new opportunities for political clientelism at the local level. The appointment of food suppliers is often based on political affiliation or personal connections, rather than meritocracy. This erodes public trust in the principle of social justice and reinforces the perception that public policy is a tool for power rather than welfare (Kiftiyah et al., 2025).

Campbell refers to this phenomenon as the ideologization of justice, a process in which the value of justice is invoked to justify unfair practices. By claiming to be the executor of social justice, the state actually closes the space for criticism (Campbell, 2024, p. 142). Here, justice becomes an ideological instrument to control public opinion, rather than a means of moral reflection.

Criticism also comes from a human rights perspective. FIAN Indonesia assesses that the MBG violates children's rights to access safe, healthy food (Arlinta, 2025). In Heller's terminology, such violations indicate the absence of the state's moral agency: the government has not only failed to fulfill its administrative obligations but also to carry out its ethical responsibilities towards its citizens (Heller, 2024, p. 142).

To respond to this crisis, a reformist approach based on public ethics is needed. First, MBG governance reform must involve independent institutions, universities, and civil society organizations to ensure transparency and accountability. Participatory governance has been widely recognized as a key mechanism to improve policy legitimacy and effectiveness. Empirical studies show that policies designed with community participation are more responsive to local needs and less prone to corruption and elite capture (Fung, 2015; Gaventa & Barrett, 2012). Second, citizen audit mechanisms need to be developed so that the public can directly monitor food quality and finances. Third, the government needs to apply the principle of participatory justice, namely, citizen involvement in designing, supervising, and evaluating policies that concern their basic rights. With these steps, the MBG can be restored as a true instrument of social justice.

2.3. The Face of Social Justice in Indonesia Today

Social justice in Indonesia today faces multidimensional challenges that transcend economic and political boundaries. At the structural level, development inequality remains an old wound that has yet to heal. Based on the Indonesian Social Justice Index (IKSI - *Indeks Keadilan Sosial Indonesia*), regions in eastern Indonesia, such as Papua, West Papua, and East Nusa Tenggara, still lag behind in terms of education, health, and access to basic welfare (Harbowo, 2020). This disparity indicates that social justice has not yet become a universal reality throughout the archipelago but remains fragmented by geography and political economy. As explained by Yudi Latif, the state's failure to fulfill concrete justice risks giving rise to identity politics as compensation for structural injustice (Harbowo, 2021). Thus, the issue of social justice is now not only a matter of economic distribution, but also relates to political stability and national morality.

In addition, the dimension of social justice has now been expanded to include ecological and digital aspects. Aleks Alistya (2025) asserts that social justice cannot be separated from climate and ecological justice. Environmental injustice, such as the destruction of small islands and the exploitation of natural resources in Raja Ampat, is a clear example of the absence of justice for ecological communities and future generations (Purwanti, 2025). Violations of environmental rights are not only a legal issue, but also a social ethical issue that demonstrates a lack of awareness of the relationship between humans, nature, and the state. In the digital age, inequality also manifests in the form of a gap in access to technology and information. A World Bank report shows that only 36

percent of adults in rural areas have internet access, compared to 62 percent in urban areas (Bank, 2021, p. 18). This shows that digital transformation can actually deepen social injustice if it is not accompanied by affirmative policies for disadvantaged groups.

Social justice also needs to be viewed from the perspective of marginalized groups. As described by Jan Mealino Ekklesia, social justice in Pancasila should ensure the welfare and decent livelihoods of the poor, small farmers, informal workers, and marginalized indigenous communities. However, in reality, public policy still favors the elite and big capitalists. This creates an “ethics of subsistence” in which the poor only strive to survive, not to thrive (Ekklesia, 2024). In this context, social justice must be rooted in practical collectivism, namely economic and social solidarity that strengthens mutual cooperation, rather than merely ideological jargon. The government needs to foster awareness that marginalized groups are not a burden on development, but rather important subjects in the formation of an inclusive social order.

Furthermore, the discourse on social justice also reveals moral issues and the state's responsibility towards its people. Rakhmat Hidayat reminds us that social justice is often reduced to an empty slogan without practical meaning. The Kamisan Action carried out by Mrs. Sumarsih for more than 16 years reflects how ordinary people must fight for justice on their own amid the state's neglect. In this context, the state often deals directly with the people through repressive practices and criminalization, revealing a structural and systemic crisis of justice (Hidayat, 2024). Therefore, the struggle for social justice must be understood as a collective humanitarian struggle, a moral effort to restore human dignity as the primary goal of the state.

In the context of ideology, Cyprianus Anto Saptowalyono asserts that social justice is the culmination of all the principles of Pancasila. Without social justice, the values of divinity, humanity, unity, and democracy lose their substance. Social justice is not only the ultimate goal of Pancasila, but also a moral measure of government and society. However, the tendency of the state to interpret Pancasila in a singular way risks monopolizing the interpretation of justice, making it an instrument of legitimizing power rather than an ethical inspiration for the common good. According to him the academic world and civil society need to take on a critical role in balancing the state's hegemony of interpretation of social justice, so that Pancasila remains an open ideology that embodies the spirit of participation and universal humanity (Saptowalyono, 2022).

The widening economic inequality also weakens the foundation of social justice. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS - *Badan Pusat Statistik*) data shows a decline in poverty rates from 9.36 percent (2023) to 8.57 percent (2024), but in-depth analysis shows that this decline is illusory because the national poverty line is too low, at only around Rp 21,250 per day (Ahmad, 2025). Meanwhile, the middle class continues to shrink and 59 percent of the workforce still depends on the informal sector. This inequality is exacerbated by rampant corruption and the dominance of economic oligarchs who control the country's strategic assets. This situation reveals a paradox: Indonesia has a strong ideological foundation for realizing social justice, but in practice, it is increasingly trapped in the logic of capitalism and political patronage.

The dimension of social justice also extends to education financing. Anita Lie highlights that the plan to impose a multi-rate VAT on education services should be read in the context of social solidarity. She argues that wealthy families should contribute more to education funding so that state subsidies can focus on low-income groups. A fair fiscal policy is a concrete manifestation of the fifth principle of Pancasila in the national education system. However, this policy must be accompanied by fair oversight and implementation to avoid adding to the burden on low-income communities (Lie, 2021). In this context,

social justice does not stop at moral rhetoric but demands political courage to reorganize the system of public resource distribution.

Meanwhile, the crisis of justice is also evident in the management of natural resources and environmental protection. Mining activities on small islands, such as in Raja Ampat, reveal a conflict between economic interests and social ethics. Although most communities reject mining in coastal areas, the practice continues with the state's blessing, demonstrating a weak commitment to the principle of ecological justice (Purwanti, 2025). The inequality of benefits between local communities and the economic elite exacerbates social alienation, where the people do not enjoy the benefits of natural wealth in their own region. This phenomenon underscores the need for social justice-based environmental policies that recognize local communities as the rightful owners of resources and guardians of ecosystem sustainability.

In the long term, the struggle for social justice requires the formation of a collective character that rejects extreme individualism. Social justice presupposes an interconnectedness among humans, society, and the environment within a holistic ethical system (Alistya, 2025). Therefore, Indonesia needs a new approach to public policy that is not only oriented towards economic growth but also towards the distribution of welfare and ecological sustainability.

Finally, social justice must once again be placed at the center of public morality and the direction of national development. As Maghfur Ahmad reminds us, “without social justice, the future of Indonesia will be dark.” This statement is not merely a metaphor, but a philosophical warning that justice is the existential foundation of the state (Ahmad, 2025). A state that neglects the poor, the marginalized, and the environment is essentially reneging on the social contract of Pancasila. Therefore, the realization of social justice requires moral courage, ethical leadership, and redistributive policies that favor the weakest, as emphasized by John Rawls that inequality can only be justified if it benefits those who are most disadvantaged.

3. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) Program reveals a significant tension between the normative ideals of Pancasila's fifth principle and the practical realisation of social justice in Indonesian public policy. The findings show that social justice cannot be reduced merely to the distribution of welfare resources but must include ethical responsibility, accountability, recognition, and meaningful citizen participation. The MBG case indicates that welfare-oriented policies may generate new forms of vulnerability when implementation prioritises administrative targets over institutional preparedness, public oversight, and the protection of human dignity. Furthermore, this study reveals that the challenge of social justice in Indonesia involves both distributive and participatory dimensions; therefore, achieving substantive justice requires transforming welfare policies from a charity-based approach toward justice-based governance grounded in humanity, democratic participation, and moral accountability. Theoretically, this research contributes to Pancasila studies by emphasizing that the actualization of the fifth principle should be assessed not only through policy outcomes but also through the ethical processes of policy formulation and implementation. Social justice, in this perspective, is understood as a continuous relational process between the state and citizens rather than merely an administrative achievement. Practically, this study suggests that future welfare programs should strengthen participatory mechanisms, independent monitoring, and context-sensitive governance to ensure that public policies

genuinely respond to citizens' needs. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its reliance on qualitative literature analysis and policy discourse rather than empirical investigation of institutional practices, budgetary mechanisms, and beneficiaries' lived experiences. Future research should further examine these dimensions to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how Pancasila-based social justice can be institutionalized within contemporary public governance in Indonesia.

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