

Exploring the Dimensions of Perceptions on “Ayuda” Programs of the Government

Shaira Lynn A. Ramos*, Liezel T. Gasing, Krezza Mae G. Baquero, Julio Martin D. Bersamen, Glenne B. Lagura

Davao del Norte State College, Panabo City, Philippines

*Corresponding Author

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ABSTRACT

“Ayuda,” a Filipino term meaning “help” or “assistance,” refers to the Philippine government’s various financial aid programs. While widely implemented in the Davao Region, limited studies have examined how beneficiaries themselves perceive these programs at the local level. Focusing on the beneficiaries, rather than on administrators, provides insights on how effectively “ayuda” addresses the needs and realities of its intended recipients. This study explores the public’s perception of government “ayuda” programs in Davao del Norte through an exploratory sequential mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys. A total of 18 participants were involved in the qualitative phase, while 240 respondents participated in the quantitative phase. The initial phase gathered responses through in-depth interviews, which were analyzed to extract 40 significant statements capturing how beneficiaries perceive the “ayuda” distribution. These statements informed a structured survey, analyzed through exploratory factor analysis. The statistical results identified six key dimensions that shape public perception: survival-based utilization, political instrumentalization, equity and access discontent, contingent dependency framing, governance legitimacy affirmation, and assistance adequacy critique. These findings reveal the complex and multi-dimensional nature of how beneficiaries assess “ayuda” programs. There is a clear gap between what “ayuda” programs are designed to do and how the public perceives and relies on them. Public perceptions continue to evolve, influenced not only by economic pressures but also by how these programs are implemented on the ground. Such findings highlight the need for policy reforms that address both structural limitations and the experiences of beneficiaries.

Keywords: Financial Aid Program, Exploratory Factor Analysis, Exploratory Sequential Mixed-Methods, Davao del Norte, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Over time, the distribution of financial aid programs, commonly referred to as “ayuda,” has become a recurring component of the Philippine government’s response to crises. Whether in the aftermath of natural disasters, economic downturns, or public health emergencies, the provision of cash assistance or relief goods has consistently been positioned as an immediate and central measure to address the needs of affected populations. The term “ayuda” is derived from the Spanish verb *ayudar*, meaning “to help” or “to assist,” and is widely used in the Philippines to refer to government-administered financial assistance programs (Punongbayan & Suzara, 2025). Given its central role in the country’s crisis management efforts, understanding how these programs are perceived by beneficiaries, rather than focusing on administrators, is essential to ensuring that financial aid achieves its intended social outcomes.

In broader international contexts, such as within the framework of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), social assistance—or “ayuda”—refers to financial aid, including direct transfers, subsidies, or other forms of support to individuals or communities, typically intended to reduce poverty, improve access to essential services, or respond to emergencies (Munyemana et al., 2024). Although “ayuda” is not a

standardized term in global policy literature, its conceptual framework parallels recognized forms of social assistance aimed at addressing poverty-related challenges (Philippine Information Agency, 2024).

In the Philippines, “ayuda” gained prominence during the COVID-19 pandemic through large-scale initiatives like the Social Amelioration Program (Flores, 2022), later expanding to include programs such as the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) and Ayuda Para sa Kapos ang Kita Program (AKAP) (Department of Social Welfare and Development, 2025). AICS provides immediate crisis aid as a rights-based safety net, while the AKAP offers supplemental support to below-minimum wage earners. Over the years, several efforts have been made to streamline aid distribution through systems like PhilSys and Listahan (Cudis, 2021). However, existing studies emphasize both the promise and pitfalls of aid distribution. While digital systems have improved reach and monitoring, perceptions of inequality, favoritism, and political interference continue to persist. Such issues have been noted in regions such as Kalinga, Central Visayas, and Zamboanga (Lo-oy, 2025; SunStar Cebu, 2024; Braga & Braga, 2024), prompting DSWD to reaffirm its commitment to fair, needs-based support (Department of Social Welfare and Development, 2024).

Internationally, similar concerns arise: while cash aid can improve well-being, it is often short-lived and susceptible to misuse or favoritism (Hilal et al., 2022; Altındağ & O’Connell, 2023; Trinh et al., 2022). The international status quo on the perception of financial aid is characterized by ongoing lack of consensus regarding its overall effectiveness, leading to a complex and often contradictory perception (Dreher et al., 2024). Similarly, in Davao Region, several “ayuda” programs have been implemented. But despite its positive intentions, it is often viewed as an act of politicization (Zapata & Manfredi, 2015). These recurring concerns reveal a deeper issue, although “ayuda” programs aim to provide equitable support, questions about fairness, accessibility, and transparency remain unresolved at the local level. Hence, due to numerous issues surrounding these programs, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) assured the public that “ayuda” programs will remain free from political interference (Patumbon, 2024).

This study analyzes the perception of the “ayuda” beneficiaries in the cities of Davao del Norte, focusing specifically on the perception of the effectiveness, impact, fairness, and the assistance efforts of AICS and AKAP. Along with that, this study will also determine common patterns in the responses by the beneficiaries and utilize exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Moreover, the global significance of this study stems from its contribution to the growing body of knowledge on “ayuda” programs. Additionally, in a social context, the analysis of these perceptions provides valuable insights that can be utilized to come up with refined knowledge that will benefit government agencies, such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and Local Government Units, by offering data-driven recommendations for improving the design and implementation of “ayuda” programs. Future researchers will also gain an understanding of how beneficiaries perceive the impact of “ayuda” programs on their lives, particularly the dimensional factors that influence accessibility and overall satisfaction among beneficiaries.

METHOD

Study Participants

Bona fide post-beneficiaries of government “ayuda” programs, specifically the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) and Ayuda para sa Kapos ang Kita Program (AKAP) in 2024, who were also bona fide residents of the three cities in Davao del Norte: Panabo City, Tagum City, and the Island Garden City of Samal, were purposively selected to participate in this study. Snowball sampling was employed, enabling researchers to gather additional participants through referrals from initial subjects who met the inclusion criteria (Naderifar et al., 2017). Moreover, Hennink and Kaiser (2021) established that, based on 16 tests employing different approaches to saturation, the sample size required to achieve data saturation ranged between 5 and 24 interviews. To ensure diverse perspectives, three participants were selected from each identified “ayuda” program within each city, resulting in a total of 18 participants for the qualitative phase of the study.

Meanwhile, the number of participants for the quantitative phase was determined after completing the qualitative phase and achieving data saturation, at which point the questionnaire was finalized. The researchers determined the sample size based on the total number of items in the instrument. According to Gorsuch (1983), Hatcher

(1994), and Suhr (2006), as cited by Memon et al. (2020), the sample-to-item ratio for exploratory factor analysis should not be less than 5-to-1, meaning that at least five respondents should be recruited for every item. Adhering to this guideline, the researchers opted for a 6-to-1 ratio to ensure both the reliability of the factor structure and balanced participant distribution across selected locations. Given a total of 40 items in the questionnaire, this ratio resulted in 240 respondents, evenly divided among the three cities in Davao del Norte, with 80 respondents from each location.

Table 1. Distribution of Research Participants

	Qualitative Phase		Quantitative Phase	
	AICS	AKAP	AICS	AKAP
Panabo City	3	3	40	40
Tagum City	3	3	40	40
Island Garden City of Samal	3	3	40	40
Total	9	9	120	120
	18		240	

Materials and Instruments

This study employed an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design, utilizing open-ended questionnaires and survey questionnaires as the primary data collection instruments (Creswell, 2009). Data were initially collected through the open-ended questionnaire, which was divided into three sections: the main research objectives, four questions from the interview guide, and twelve probing questions. The interview guide was designed to explore beneficiaries' perceptions of government "ayuda" programs. To ensure clarity, cultural relevance, and comprehensibility, the questionnaire was translated into Tagalog and Bisaya and underwent validation by a panel of expert evaluators. This process assessed adherence to ethical guidelines and the appropriateness, clarity, open-endedness, and overall adequacy of the items. Prior to the actual interviews, the interview guide was pre-tested through a dry run to identify questions participants might find difficult. This ensured that the conversation was comprehensible and that all required information was obtained. Responses were then translated and documented for analysis.

Following the qualitative phase, quantitative data were obtained using a survey questionnaire. Responses were recorded using a 7-point Likert scale, where 7 indicated "strongly agree" and 1 indicated "strongly disagree." Before administration, the questionnaire was evaluated by experts to confirm clarity, presentation, organization, suitability, and alignment with research objectives. The qualitative findings informed the questionnaire's development, with major themes and dimensions serving as its framework. The finalized survey questionnaire consisted of 40 items and was pilot-tested with five respondents to assess reliability using Cronbach's Alpha. The initial coefficient was 0.797, indicating acceptable internal consistency. After standardization of items, Cronbach's Alpha increased slightly to 0.799, further confirming the instrument's reliability. Internal consistency reflects the extent to which all items measure a single construct and is essential prior to the use of any research instrument (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Design and Procedure

The study employed an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design, integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. This design involved an initial qualitative phase followed by a quantitative phase and concluded with the integration of both strands (Berman, 2017). Qualitative methods were used to uncover in-depth insights into beneficiaries' perceptions, while quantitative procedures confirmed and generalized these findings (Creswell & Clark, 2017). This design was

appropriate as it first explored perceptions of AICS and AKAP and then validated these insights through quantitative analysis.

The qualitative phase guided the development of the quantitative phase. Saturated data from the qualitative findings were used to develop a survey questionnaire. Recognizing the limitations of a single-method approach, the mixed-methods design was adopted to address a broader range of research questions and enhance the comprehensiveness of the findings.

The first phase commenced after obtaining approval from the research adviser and the Dean of the Institute of Leadership, Entrepreneurship, and Good Governance at Davao del Norte State College, along with informed consent for interviews. Snowball sampling was employed to identify participants who met the inclusion criteria. Participants received consent letters outlining the study's purpose, their role, ethical considerations, and data privacy rights. Permission to audio-record interviews was requested, with access restricted to the researchers.

After data collection, the qualitative data were transcribed, and data saturation was assessed. The resulting instrument was pilot-tested with two participants to validate reliability and suitability. In the quantitative phase, the finalized questionnaire demonstrated internal consistency and reliability. The survey was administered to beneficiaries of the "ayuda" programs using snowball sampling. All participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation and were assured that data would be used solely for research purposes.

Data Analysis

This study employed various statistical techniques to investigate the underlying factors that influenced public perceptions of government "ayuda" programs. In the qualitative phase, data analysis followed a systematic approach, beginning with the consolidation and condensation of extensive data, progressing through the identification of significant patterns, and culminating in the extraction of insights to develop a coherent line of evidence. Following Ruona's (2005) approach, the researchers organized and condensed the data, recognized patterns and themes, and verified the credibility of the analysis and conclusions.

For the quantitative analysis, responses from the survey questionnaire were compiled and organized. Data reduction techniques were applied to identify the key domain structures related to perceptions of government "ayuda" programs. Specifically, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was employed to determine the dimensionality of constructs, with an eigenvalue cutoff at 1.0 or higher. Factor loadings above +0.40, identified through Varimax rotation (Kaiser, 1958), were considered significant. Subsequently, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was utilized to ascertain the number of underlying constructs, latent variables, or factors within the items. This process revealed the latent structure of the data, thereby establishing the reliability and validity of the factors. To ensure quality, the researchers adhered to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Ethical Consideration

The study adhered to established ethical guidelines, prioritizing the protection of participants' rights and the integrity of the research process. Potential participants were provided with information regarding the study's objectives, the voluntary nature of participation, and their rights, including the authority to withdraw. To maintain anonymity in the qualitative phase, code names were assigned in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). In the quantitative phase, participants were issued letters clarifying the academic purpose of data collection and assuring the confidentiality and secure handling of their personal information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings of Qualitative Phase

Utilizing an in-depth interview approach, this study uncovered significant insights into the dimensions of perceptions of "ayuda" programs by the government. By meticulously analyzing qualitative data from these

interviews, the research team extracted key insights and organized them into forty key elements that classify and describe the perceptions of “*ayuda*” beneficiaries in this specific context, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Formulated Meaning for Dimensions of Perceptions on “Ayuda” Programs of the Government.

Formulated Meaning for Dimensions of Perceptions on “Ayuda” Programs of the Government	
1.	sometimes distributed based on favoritism.
2.	a short-term solution to a long-term problem.
3.	influenced by personal or political connections.
4.	unfair when some people are left out even if they are in need.
5.	good as long as it is not selective or biased.
6.	a blessing during emergencies.
7.	something I rely on to meet basic needs.
8.	an assistance that supports my children’s school expenses and needs.
9.	more helpful when it is given on a regular basis.
10.	sometimes given based on who you know, not what you need.
11.	a political tool used to gain favor from citizens.
12.	a form of help that I associate with a certain politician.
13.	only given to those who are registered voters.
14.	a tool that helps me pay for essential bills like electricity and water.
15.	helpful for sustaining my small business.
16.	a way for me to buy basic necessities like rice and groceries.
17.	a resource that enables me to cover my medical and maintenance medicine costs.
18.	a means to help me settle debts and other financial obligations.
19.	useful for buying food when we’ve already run out of budget.
20.	easier to access if you are related to someone in charge.
21.	not equally accessible to everyone in our neighborhood.
22.	questionable when I see the same families getting it over and over.
23.	not sufficient due to inflation and rising costs.
24.	not enough to support my family for more than a few days.
25.	given only when elections are near.
26.	used by some politicians to boost their public image
27.	not a debt of gratitude I owe to any politician.
28.	unfair when families who are well-off still receive it.
29.	often accompanied by speeches from politicians promoting themselves.
30.	a necessary backup, but not something to rely on forever.
31.	needed only when people cannot meet their needs on their own.
32.	a necessary support system during times of crisis.
33.	something that encourages dependency.
34.	a short-term help when I have no one else to rely on.
35.	important when jobs are scarce or income is delayed.
36.	a source of hope for low-income families.
37.	a support that I can survive without.
38.	a proof that the government is fulfilling its duty.
39.	not a form of corruption.
40.	a practical way for the government to return the taxes paid by the people.

Findings for Quantitative Phase

To assess the suitability of the data for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity were computed. The KMO value was 0.839,

which, according to Kaiser's (1974) guidelines, falls within the acceptable range for factor analysis. This suggests that partial correlations among variables are low, indicating the presence of underlying common factors. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity produced a Chi-Square value of 4350.628 with 780 degrees of freedom ($p < .001$), confirming that correlations among items are statistically significant. These results validate that the dataset is factorable and appropriate for dimension reduction using EFA (Field, 2013; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019; Hair et al., 2010).

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.839
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4350.628
	df	780
	Sig.	.000

These results confirmed the dataset's suitability for EFA and justify the use of PCA with Varimax rotation to identify the underlying structure of perceptions toward "ayuda" programs. Furthermore, the Kaiser Criterion (Kaiser, 1960) was used to guide factor extraction via Principal Component Analysis (PCA). Eight factors with eigenvalues above 1.0 were identified, accounting for 63.495% of the total variance—exceeding the 50% threshold considered acceptable in social science research (Hair et al., 2010; Yong & Pearce, 2013).

Factor 1 recorded the highest eigenvalue of 5.678, explaining 14.20% of the total variance. This was followed by Factor 2 (5.085, 12.71%), Factor 3 (4.382, 10.95%), Factor 4 (3.369, 8.42%), Factor 5 (2.420, 6.05%), and Factor 6 (1.855, 4.64%). Factors 7 and 8, although exceeding the eigenvalue threshold (1.552 and 1.057, respectively), contributed marginal proportions of variance (3.88% and 2.64%).

Table 4. Latent Roots Criterion

	Eigenvalues	Proportion Variance	Cumulative Variance
Factor 1	5.678	14.196	14.196
Factor 2	5.085	12.713	26.910
Factor 3	4.382	10.954	37.863
Factor 4	3.369	8.422	46.286
Factor 5	2.420	6.049	52.335
Factor 6	1.855	4.637	56.972
Factor 7	1.552	3.881	60.853
Factor 8	1.057	2.642	63.495

While the eigenvalue criterion suggested an eight-factor solution, further analysis using the scree plot and rotated component matrix supported reducing the structure to six interpretable components. This aligns with EFA best practices, which recommend supplementing eigenvalues with interpretability, item loading strength, and theoretical coherence (Fabrigar et al., 1999; Costello & Osborne, 2005). After Varimax rotation, only six factors showed sufficient internal consistency and conceptual clarity. Factors 7 and 8 were excluded due to weak loadings and interpretive ambiguity. The retained six-factor model met statistical standards and aligned with Rawls' Theory of Justice and Social Exchange Theory, strengthening its theoretical and empirical validity. Thus, the final six-factor solution offers a robust and parsimonious representation of public perceptions of "ayuda" programs, forming the basis for the thematic and policy discussions that follow.

The factor extraction process was further examined using the graphical method of the Scree Plot. The Scree Plot presents the eigenvalues plotted against their respective component numbers to visually assess the optimal number of factors to retain. The plot demonstrates a clear inflection point, or "elbow," occurring between Components 6 and 7. The first six components exhibit substantial eigenvalues greater than 1.0; after this, the slope levels off, and the remaining eigenvalues gradually decline, clustering near zero. This indicates that additional factors beyond the sixth contribute minimal unique variance and likely reflect random error or specific variance rather than true common factors.

The Scree Plot thus provides empirical support for a six-factor solution, consistent with the results of the eigenvalue criterion (Latent Roots Criterion). The convergence of both the Kaiser Criterion and the Scree Test strengthens the decision to retain six factors, indicating a stable factor structure within the dataset. The consistency between both statistical (eigenvalues) and visual (scree plot) criteria demonstrates the robustness of the factor extraction process and supports the construct validity of the instrument used to measure perceptions of government-provided “ayuda” programs. Exploratory Factor Analysis, using Principal Component Analysis extraction and Varimax rotation, yielded a six-factor solution, with factor loadings presented in Table 5. Loadings above 0.70 were considered strong indicators of item-factor association. Each factor showed clear item clustering with minimal cross-loadings, indicating well-defined factor structures.

Table 5. Rotated Component Matrix for Perceptions on “Ayuda” Programs of the Government

Item Number	1	2	3	4	5	6
19	0.827					
7	0.812					
16	0.777					
14	0.777					
15	0.775					
8	0.766					
17	0.753					
18	0.752					
6	0.732					
11		0.786				
29		0.763				
12		0.758				
13		0.753				
25		0.752				
3		0.74				
27		0.728				
26		0.725				
10			0.79			
20			0.779			
22			0.754			
4			0.745			
21			0.735			
28			0.733			
5			0.726			
1			0.69			
32				0.79		
31				0.775		
34				0.773		
33				0.768		
30				0.75		
35				0.748		
38					0.836	
39					0.829	
40					0.821	
24						0.822
23						0.819
2						0.794

Dimension 1: Survival-Based Utilization

Dimension 1 yielded 9 items, with a coefficient pattern ranging from 0.827 to 0.732 for this dimension, as shown in Table 6. This span implies consistency among the elements in the dimension. The coefficients demonstrate a strong connection between variables, creating a harmonious and interconnected set of items within Dimension 1. Item 6 has the lowest coefficient value at 0.732, while Item 19 has the highest at 0.827. All items got coefficient values greater than the minimum requirement, which is ± 0.40 .

Table 6. Constructs and loadings under Dimension 1

Dimension	Description	Item	Constructs	Loadings
Survival-Based Utilization	These statements reflect how beneficiaries rely on “ayuda” to meet day-to-day essentials such as food, utilities, education, and health expenses. It emphasizes aid as a vital coping mechanism amid economic vulnerability.	19	useful for buying food when we’ve already run out of budget.	0.827
		7	something I rely on to meet basic needs.	0.812
		16	a way for me to buy basic necessities like rice and groceries.	0.777
		14	a tool that helps me pay for essential bills like electricity and water.	0.777
		15	helpful for sustaining my small business.	0.775
		8	an assistance that supports my children’s school expenses and needs.	0.766
		17	a resource that enables me to cover my medical and maintenance medicine costs	0.753
		18	a means to help me settle debts and other financial obligations.	0.752
		6	a blessing during emergencies	0.732

Dimension 2: Political Instrumentalization

Dimension 2 identified 8 items, with coefficients ranging from 0.786 to 0.725, as indicated in Table 7. This range suggests consistency among the elements in this dimension. The coefficients within this range indicate strong connections between the variables, reflecting a cohesive set of items within Dimension 2. Item 26 has the lowest coefficient value at 0.725, while item 11 has the highest value at 0.786. All items exceed the minimum requirement of ± 0.40 .

Table 7. Constructs and loadings under Dimension 2

Dimension	Description	Item	Constructs	Loadings
Political Instrumentalization	Captures how “ayuda” is seen as a political tool used for vote buying, patronage, or enhancing a politician’s image. It exposes the tension between assistance and political interest.	11	a political tool used to gain favor from citizens.	0.786
		29	often accompanied by speeches from politicians promoting themselves.	0.763

		12	a form of help that I associate with a certain politician.	0.758
		13	only given to those who are registered voters.	0.753
		25	given only when elections are near.	0.752
		3	influenced by personal or political connections.	0.74
		27	not a debt of gratitude I owe to any politician.	0.728
		26	used by some politicians to boost their public image.	0.725

Dimension 3: Equity and Access Discontent

Dimension 3 identified 8 items with coefficients ranging from 0.79 to 0.69, as presented in Table 8. This range suggests consistency among the elements in this dimension. The coefficients within this range indicate strong connections between the variables, reflecting a cohesive set of items within Dimension 3. Item 1 has the lowest coefficient value at 0.69, while Item 10 has the highest value at 0.79. All items surpass the minimum requirement of ± 0.40 .

Table 8. Constructs and loadings under Dimension 3

Dimension	Description	Item	Constructs	Loadings
Equity and Access Discontent	Represents concerns about unfair distribution, favoritism, and selective accessibility, especially when political ties or social connections influence eligibility over genuine need.	10	sometimes given based on who you know, not what you need.	0.79
		20	easier to access if you are related to someone in charge.	0.779
		22	questionable when I see the same families getting it over and over.	0.754
		4	unfair when some people are left out even if they are in need.	0.745
		21	not equally accessible to everyone in our neighborhood	0.735
		28	unfair when families who are well-off still receive it.	0.733
		5	good as long as it is not selective or biased.	0.726
		1	sometimes distributed based on favoritism.	0.69

Dimension 4: Contingent Dependency Framing

Dimension 4 identified 6 items with coefficients ranging from 0.79 to 0.748, as depicted in Table 9. It represents different degrees of correlation between the statements. The coefficients are within an acceptable range for factor analysis, with relatively good values indicating a strong relationship between the constructs. Item 35 has the

lowest coefficient value at 0.748, while Item 32 has the highest coefficient value at 0.79. Table 9 shows the constructs and loading under dimension 3, which all surpassed the minimum requirement of ± 0.40 .

Table 9. Constructs and loadings under Dimension 4

Dimension	Description	Item	Constructs	Loadings
Contingent Dependency Framing	Highlights the dual perception of “ <i>ayuda</i> ” as necessary during crises yet worrisome due to potential long-term dependency, situating it as a fallback rather than a development pathway.	32	a necessary support system during times of crisis.	0.79
		31	needed only when people cannot meet their needs on their own.	0.775
		34	a short-term help when I have no one else to rely on.	0.773
		33	something that encourages dependency.	0.768
		30	a necessary backup, but not something to rely on forever.	0.75
		35	important when jobs are scarce or income is delayed.	0.748

Dimension 5: Governance Legitimacy Affirmation

Dimension 5 identified three items with coefficients ranging from 0.836 to 0.821, as shown in Table 10. It suggests nuanced contributions from each element to the overall construct, with values falling within a defined spectrum.

Item 40 has the lowest coefficient value at 0.821, while Item 38 has the highest value at 0.836. Nonetheless, all items had coefficient values higher than ± 0.40 .

Table 10. Constructs and loadings under Dimension 5

Dimension	Description	Item	Constructs	Loadings
Governance Legitimacy Affirmation	Expresses perceptions that “ <i>ayuda</i> ” reflects the government’s ethical obligation to provide care and redistribute public resources—affirming the role of state as provider and steward.	38	a proof that the government is fulfilling its duty.	0.836
		39	not a form of corruption.	0.829
		40	a practical way for the government to return the taxes paid by the people.	0.821

Dimension 6: Assistance Adequacy Critique

Dimension 6 yielded three items with coefficient patterns ranging from 0.822 to 0.794. This range of coefficients signifies diverse yet interconnected values associated with the corresponding components.

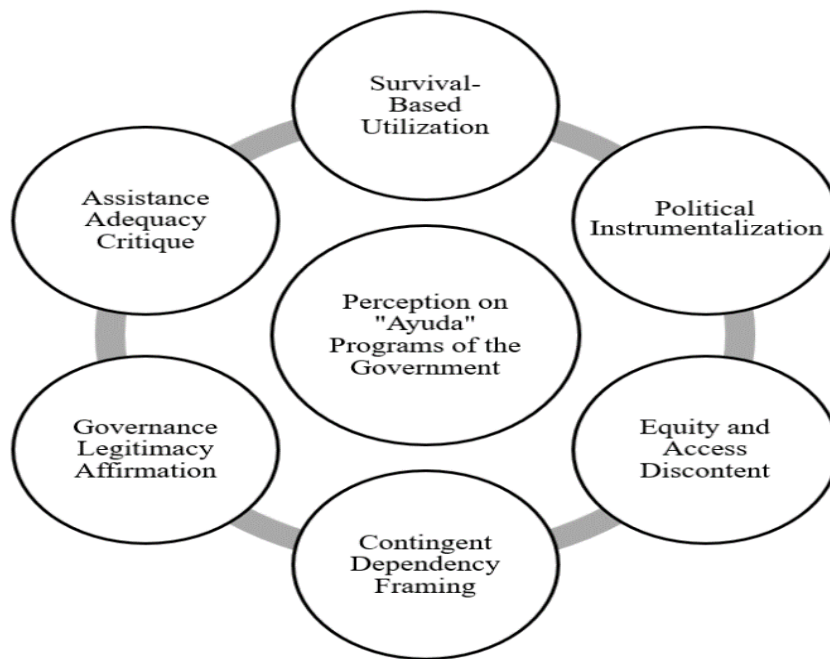
Table 11 shows an overview of the constructs and loadings under Dimension 6. Item 2 had the lowest coefficient value of 0.794, while item 24 had the highest at 0.822. However, all items exceed the minimum threshold of ± 0.40 .

Table 11. Constructs and loadings under Dimension 6

Dimension	Description	Item	Constructs	Loadings
Assistance Adequacy Critique	Represents dissatisfaction over the inadequacy of the aid provided, particularly in relation to inflation, cost of living, and long-term financial insecurity—emphasizing structural insufficiencies.	24	not enough to support my family for more than a few days.	0.822
		23	not sufficient due to inflation and rising costs.	0.819
		2	a short-term solution to a long-term problem.	0.794

The six-factor model offers a comprehensive empirical representation of the multiple dimensions that shape public perceptions of government “*ayuda*” programs. The factor structure aligns well with both the conceptual framework and empirical evidence presented in prior studies.

This multidimensional structure reflects the complex nature of “*ayuda*” programs, which are influenced not only by economic need but also by political dynamics, perceptions of fairness, public trust, and the adequacy and intent of government support.



Framework for the Dimensions of Perceptions on “*Ayuda*” Programs of the Government

Figure 1: The framework of the Dimensions of Perceptions on “*Ayuda*” Programs of the Government

Figure 1 presents the framework of this study. The exploratory factor analysis yielded six underlying dimensions of perceptions on “*ayuda*” programs of the government. These are (1) survival-based utilization, (2) political instrumentalization, (3) equity and access discontent, (4) contingent dependency framing, (5) governance legitimacy affirmation, and (6) assistance adequacy critique. These dimensions reveal a depth to public perceptions that goes beyond mere surface opinions, revealing a complex interaction of public expectations, lived experiences, and socio-political considerations.

These findings show that there is a clear difference between what the “*ayuda*” programs are intended to do and who they are designed for, versus how the public perceives and relies on them. While AICS is designed for economically disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals facing crisis, and AKAP targets individuals who belong to the low-income category, i.e., those who earn below the statutory minimum wage (Department of Social Welfare and Development, 2024), this study shows that “*ayuda*” has, in practice, become a way for political

interests to influence and shape what people expect from these programs. This reflects the ongoing political patronage in the Philippines, where access to aid depends on connections rather than need. Such practices are viewed as corruption, weakening public trust, and undermining the programs' purpose of providing fair social protection (Palatino, 2025).

Despite concerns, the immediate impact of "ayuda" cannot be denied, as it effectively addresses the day-to-day essentials of beneficiaries, such as food, healthcare, education, and utilities. This alignment between program design and user experience speaks to high levels of satisfaction and trust in "ayuda". This exemplifies how "ayuda" reflects the government's ethical obligation to provide care and redistribute public resources—affirming the role of the state as provider and steward, consistent with the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees (Republic Act No. 6713, 1989), which mandates commitment to the public interest and responsiveness to the needs of the people. However, contrasting perceptions highlight the insufficiency of "ayuda," especially in light of rising inflation and living costs. The very success of "ayuda" in delivering immediate relief simultaneously highlights its limitations: cash aid alone cannot resolve the deeper issues such as underemployment, limited social services, and chronic poverty that drive families back to "ayuda". Households often cycle back to "ayuda" because they remain highly vulnerable to everyday struggles such as illness, job loss, or sudden price hikes, and lack the means to build a cushion against future risks.

Moreover, there exists a dual perception of "ayuda" as both necessary during crises yet worrisome due to potential long-term dependency. It is widely understood as a temporary or emergency measure, rather than a sustainable development pathway. Consequently, "ayuda" fails to address the structural and long-term aspects of poverty. For "ayuda" to become a transformative policy, "ayuda" must be coupled with far-reaching economic reforms and long-term significant investment in education, health, skills training, job creation initiatives to lessen long-term dependency on "ayuda" (Tackie, 2021; Punongbayan & Suzara, 2025). Collectively, this study addresses a notable gap in the limited existing studies on governmental assistance programs, particularly by exploring the motivations behind citizens' attitudes toward "ayuda." Given that this phenomenon remains an extensive and complex socio-political factor, a nuanced understanding of its effects extends beyond mere resource allocation to encompass its broader societal consequences.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the underlying dimensions of public perceptions concerning government "ayuda" programs within the three city governments of Davao del Norte using an exploratory sequential mixed-methods approach. The study identified six dimensions shaping these perceptions: (1) survival-based utilization, (2) political instrumentalization, (3) equity and access discontent, (4) contingent dependency framing, (5) governance legitimacy affirmation, and (6) assistance adequacy critique. These dimensions reveal a complex interaction of expectations, lived experiences, and socio-political considerations. The qualitative results provided insights that guided the quantitative phase in determining the main variables that shape public perceptions toward "ayuda."

Participants were beneficiaries of two key initiatives, AICS and AKAP, both providing direct cash aid under the DSWD. Results showed a difference between the intended purpose of these programs and how the public perceives and relies on them. While AICS targets individuals in crisis and AKAP supports low-income earners (Department of Social Welfare and Development, 2024), the study suggests that "ayuda" has become a tool through which political interests influence expectations. Public perception shows a shift from viewing "ayuda" as temporary relief to seeing it as a semi-permanent solution, contributing to increased reliance.

These perceptions are shaped by economic pressures and local-level implementation practices. Claims of favoritism have affected trust in the system, highlighting tensions surrounding equity and transparency. Although "ayuda" effectively addresses daily essentials, such as food, healthcare, education, and utilities—and aligns with the principle of serving vulnerable sectors (Republic Act No. 6713, 1989), its inherent limitations have become more evident. Support is increasingly seen as insufficient, especially amid rising costs of living. As a temporary measure, "ayuda" does not address long-term poverty, underscoring the need for broader economic reforms and investment in education, health, and employment opportunities (Punongbayan & Suzara, 2025).

The study's findings support the combined lens of Rawls' Theory of Justice and Homans' Social Exchange Theory. Beliefs that "ayuda" is influenced by political affiliation challenge Rawls' "justice as fairness." Beneficiaries' cost-benefit assessments reflect Homans' view that individuals weigh immediate gains against perceived costs, reinforcing the perception of "ayuda" as necessary but temporary and insufficient for long-term socio-economic security. This gap between provided assistance and actual needs contributes to dissatisfaction and highlights the need for structural interventions. Collectively, this research addresses gaps in limited studies on governmental assistance programs by examining the motivations shaping public attitudes toward "ayuda." Understanding these perceptions extends beyond resource allocation and underscores their broader societal implications.

RECOMMENDATION

Local Government Units (LGUs) should actively involve themselves as major assistants to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in the implementation of AICS and AKAP through enhanced roles in beneficiary assessment, eligibility check-up, and case validation. They must ensure that all documentary requirements such as valid identification, residency documents, and income verification are presented and examined before assistance is given. LGUs should streamline and publish eligibility criteria and documentary requirements and ensure these are applied to all applicants to reduce favoritism and political bias. Making requirements accessible and transparent increases accountability and trust in local programs (Kalidoss and Ghate, 2025). LGUs should also establish open grievance and appeals channels and cooperate with third party monitors such as civil society organizations or local audit committees.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) needs to tighten adherence to updated guidelines through implementation protocols, capacity-building, and compliance checks for LGUs. Uniform norms of eligibility should be applied in all areas to avoid inconsistency and political interference. It is recommended that the DSWD develop a centralized database on beneficiaries, incorporate digital sources of application and tracking, and institutionalize feedback channels to enhance responsiveness and transparency. Legislative efforts, including the proposed DSWD Regional Warehouses Act (House of Representatives of the Philippines, 2025), recognize the need to strengthen support systems for efficient, transparent, and timely service delivery.

Policy Recommendation: Strengthening Eligibility Requirements and Standardizing Implementation. This policy alternative aims to address concerns about politicization, lack of equality, and declining trust by strengthening eligibility criteria and processes. It suggests clearer eligibility criteria, mandatory submission and verification of income documents, and public checklists of required documentation in the AICS and AKAP guidelines. It also recommends standard implementation procedures in all Local Government Units (LGUs) to ensure consistent and fair application nationwide. Independent assessments of performance, enhanced grievance systems, and transparent appeals channels are also advised. These improvements are consistent with the Local Government Code of 1991 (Republic Act No. 7160) which requires LGUs to deliver social welfare services efficiently, responsibly, and transparently.

Budget recalibration should ensure that appropriations match demand, inflation rates, and the changing needs of vulnerable populations in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA). Digital government platforms such as centralized datasets of beneficiaries, online applications, and real-time tracking should also be integrated. These systems must comply with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173) to ensure safe and ethical handling of personal information. These measures promote transparency, efficiency in service, and increased trust in government distribution of aid.

Future research should examine how political beliefs, affiliations, or trust in local leadership shape individuals' experiences with government aid programs across regions, income brackets, and vulnerable sectors. Such studies may reveal disparities in access, satisfaction, and perceptions of fairness. Researchers are encouraged to apply confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to strengthen validity and reliability of survey instruments and to conduct longitudinal studies to track changes in public attitudes. These approaches can inform evidence-based reforms and support the development of more equitable and politically neutral aid programs.

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