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Article

Perspectives of Online News Media on Extreme Poverty and Regional Budget Policy Response

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Abstract: A report of residents living in extreme poverty levels in Banyumas Regency necessitated the regional government's swift response through the Extreme Poverty Reduction Program, which required allocation from the regional budget (Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Daerah/APBD). However, the APBD was limited, and no allocation had been made for the program. This study aimed to investigate the responses of regional budget policies to the extreme poverty issue based on online news articles. The study employed content analysis methods and systematic literature reviews to analyze the data. The findings indicated that the Banyumas government's response to addressing extreme poverty was relatively satisfactory. The Banyuwangi government funded the program through the Unexpected Expenditure (Belanja Tidak Terduga/BTT) budget item within APBD, which was allocated as non-cash extreme poverty alleviation expenditure, while cash social assistance was to be sought from the provincial and central governments. It was found that regency/municipal governments did not have adequate budgetary capacity to independently finance extreme poverty alleviation programs, and thus, required significant support from the central and/or provincial government. A synergy between regency/municipal, provincial, and central governments is thus needed to better manage regional extreme poverty alleviation initiatives.

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I. Introduction

Poverty, defined as the inability to meet basic needs, remains a prevalent issue in national and regional development efforts. In Indonesia, the constitution mandates that the state maintain the welfare of the poor, and work towards eradicating poverty to elevate affected citizens to a more prosperous condition.

On September 30, 2021, the National Team for the Acceleration of Poverty Reduction (Tim Nasional Percepatan Penanggulangan Kemiskinan/TNP2K) released alarming findings (TNP2K, 2021), revealing that five regencies in Central Java Province were experiencing extreme poverty. According to the report Banyumas Regency, Banjarnegara Regency, Kebumen Regency, Pemalang Regency, and Brebes Regency in Central Java Province have extreme poverty rates of 6.83% (equivalent to 116,330 residents), 7.23% (equivalent to 67,010 residents), 7.68% (equivalent to 92,190 residents), 9.52% (equivalent to 124,270 residents), and 10.34% (equivalent to 197,520 residents), respectively (Mursid, 2021).

Within Banyumas Regency, the poverty rate was reported to be 13.26%, which is equivalent to 225,840 impoverished residents, of which 6.83% or 116,330 residents were extremely poor. The report used the education level of the heads of poor households as an indicator of social welfare. It revealed that 44.84% of the heads of households did not attend school, while only 36.22% had graduated from elementary school, 9.76% had graduated from junior high school, 9.17% had graduated from high school, and none had graduated from university. Additionally, the heads of households were of productive age and worked in the agricultural sector. The report also found that 3.59% of extremely poor households do not live in their own houses, 100% have access to electricity, 13.75% do not have in-house toilets, and 25.92% do not have access to potable water. Regarding access to finance and sources of financing, 15.95% have access to credit or financing facilities, while only 14.42% have saving accounts (TNP2K, 2021).

In response to the findings of extreme poverty in Banyumas Regency, the central government initiated the Acceleration of the Elimination of Extreme Poverty Program, which aims to fund social assistance programs covering education, health, social services, clean water and sanitation interventions, and community economic empowerment at the village level. The funding scheme for extreme poverty alleviation was collectively developed by the central government, regional governments, and nongovernment funding sources, such as the private sector and community contributions. Sources of funding for the regional budget (APBD) include transfers from the state budget (APBN), Regional Own-Source Revenue (Pendapatan Asli Daerah) PAD), balancing fund posts, and other budgetary posts that can be specifically allocated for the Acceleration of the Elimination of Extreme Poverty, such as Special Autonomy Funds (Dana Otonomi Khusus) for Aceh, Papua, West Papua, and DIY Specialty Fund for the Special Region of Yogyakarta, balancing fund through the General Allocation Fund (Dana Alokasi Umum/DAU), Revenue Sharing Fund (Dana Bagi Hasil/DBH), and Special Allocation Fund (Dana Alokasi Khusus/DAK). Regional Incentive Funds (Dana Insentif Daerah/DID) are allocated to provide incentives and rewards to regions for their performance in improving and achieving success in extreme poverty alleviation. Additionally, village funds are allocated to support poverty alleviation initiatives in villages. These funds are sourced from the APBD to reduce poverty and inequality in rural areas, while Regional Own-Source Revenues (Pendapatan Asli Daerah/PAD) are used to fund the implementation of regional autonomy in accelerating extreme poverty alleviation (Sepakat Wiki, 2022).

However, providing immediate funding for the extreme poverty alleviation program was challenging for the regional government as it required budget modification for unplanned programs. As a pillar of democracy, online news media play a vital role in directing the government's agenda (Schroeder, monitoring policy implementation and evaluation of government policies or programs (Liu et al., 2019; McHale, 2019), and representing the voice of the people to policymakers (Wahjono, 1988). Therefore, analyzing poverty alleviation budgeting reported by regional online news media is an interesting subject to study.

During times of crisis, budget policy responses must be swift to save lives and support

welfare, businesses, and the economy (Narayan & Kommunuri, 2021). The policy responses to the global COVID-19 pandemic are a good example to be examined. Countries have varied responses to budget policies depending on their perceptions of COVID-19 (Argento et al., 2020). In the first five months of the pandemic, Canada was reported to provide a faster and more comprehensive policy response than the United States (Béland et al., 2021). Indonesia's slow response at the start of the pandemic serves as a valuable lesson (Roziqin et al., 2021). The delayed or slow response by the Indonesian government during the early stages of the pandemic may have been due to a perceived high capacity that gave the government a false sense of confidence (Toshkov et al., 2022). The policy response during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in China reveals that it is a welfare state that prioritizes a comprehensive social safety net to alleviate the suffering of its citizens (Lu et al., 2020).

It is crucial to analyze the regional budget policy responses to the extreme poverty crisis to assess the effectiveness of the regional governments in addressing the issue in their areas. The swift budget policy response is a key indicator of a regional government's performance in tackling poverty. The vulnerable residents affected by poverty live in challenging circumstances and require close attention from governments (Ozili, 2022). responsiveness of a government to public issues is highly dependent to the quality of its institutions (Aksoy et al., 2020).

Previous studies have shown the importance of policy responses in public budgeting to address pandemics and pandemicinduced poverty. The pandemic has underscored the need to protect and support the most vulnerable citizens, and a fair distribution of fiscal resources is essential in achieving this goal (Andrew et al., 2020). The response of public budgets to economic crises during pandemics revealed that the budget was often focused on aiding the economy and health system, with less attention paid to the impact of such actions on public finances (Poljašević et al., 2020). In 2020, Taiwan's special budget was primarily designated for COVID-19 treatment, economic stimulus, and bailouts (Liao et al., 2021). Nigeria's Federal State

Budget during the pandemic focused on interventions that provided short-term economic assistance to the poor and small businesses, while also attempting to reduce inequality by reducing the negative impact of the pandemic on groups, households, unemployed (Ejiogu et al., 2020). The Egyptian Government's budget response to the pandemic provided economic and social assistance but left a significant gap, negatively impacting the poverty level and the sustainability of the country's public finances (Elkhashen et al., 2021). The quality of life of the extremely poor is largely contingent upon the government's commitment, and in this analysis, the focus of examination is the budget policy perspective. There were two aspects of novelty in this study: First, it examined budget policy responses in the context of two critical/emergency situations, namely the COVID-19 pandemic and the extreme poverty crisis. Second, it utilized online news media as a data source, which is rarely used approach in studies on budget policy responses.

II. Methods

This study employed both content analysis (Shava et al., 2021) and systematic literature reviews. The systematic literature review offered an in-depth understanding of the particular topic based on previous studies (Denney & Tewksbury, 2013). As part of the study, online news content related to extreme poverty was collected in September 2021 to November 2021. This period was considered sufficient for the study's objectives. The online news media referred to in this study include https://radarbanyumas.co.id, https://banyumas.tribunnews.com, https:// jateng.tribunnews.com, https://www.gatra.com, https://jateng.antaranews.com, and https://voi.id. The selected online media content provided sufficient information to depict the regional budget policy responses to alleviate extreme poverty in the regions. The contents were arranged chronologically and resulted in the mapping of the regional government's budget policy responses to address the issue of extreme poverty reduction in their region. Along with analyzing the budget policy responses, this study conducted a systematic literature review, which added to the robustness of the study findings.

III. Results and Discussion

A. Allocating BTT APBD Budget for Noncash Aid in the Extreme Poverty Reduction Program

After the National Team for the Acceleration of Poverty Reduction (TNP2K) announced on 30 September 2021 that a significant number of residents in Banyumas Regency were living below the extreme poverty level, the Banyumas Regency government promptly responded by identifying potential budget allocations that could be guickly utilized. The prompt provision of extreme poverty alleviation programs, which were not previously included in development funding priorities, indicated that risk management and budget policy responses to extreme poverty reduction in Banyumas Regency were carried out relatively well. Two weeks after the TNP2K announcement, the Banyumas Regency government announced its intention to allocate funds for the Extreme Poverty Reduction Program from the Unexpected Expenditure (BTT) budget item. The BTT allocation in the regional budget (APBD) was IDR84 billion. The initial plan to use BTT for extreme poverty reduction was raised on 14 October 2021, two weeks after the TNP2K announcement (Radar Banyumas, 2021).

During times of crisis, the government's policy response must differ from that of normal situations. Data showing a significant number of residents living in extreme poverty levels indicate extraordinary situation that requires immediate and effective action. It is also important to note that this data was collected when countries were still grappling with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide. The findings from the UAE highlight the need for swift action and policies to address the COVID-19 crisis. These include measures such as coercive control, mitigation efforts driven by centralized decision-making, strengthening administrative capacity through collaboration, inter-department coordination, effective communication allocation of adequate resources, and fostering a high level of trust in the government (Sahu, 2021). Of particular relevance to this study is the aspect of allocating adequate financial resources (Le et al., 2021). The utilization of the BTT budget for extreme poverty

reduction programs is theoretically and conceptually reasonable. During times of crisis, it is common for budgets that are typically allocated for routine purposes to be redirected to address urgent needs (Alfirdaus & Yuwono, 2020). One of the key budget policy responses in emergency situations is reallocating funds for healthcare infrastructure and procurement of essential medical equipment (Purwanto et al., 2020).

In the case of the Banyumas Regency government, their approach in utilizing the BTT budget to address the extreme poverty issues was thoughtful and deliberate. Before utilizing this budget item, the Banyumas government proactively sought approval by sending a letter to the Ministry of Home Affairs inquiring about the feasibility of utilizing the unexpected expenditure (BTT) item from the revised 2021 APBD for extreme poverty alleviation measures. Following consultations between Banyumas Regency and the Ministry of Home Affairs, it has been confirmed that the use of BTT for the intended purpose is permissible (Sejati, 2021a).

After obtaining the necessary approval, the Banyumas government calculated the budget needed to implement the extreme poverty alleviation program in Banyumas and allocated IDR 10 billion for this initiative, which would be distributed through a non-cash assistance scheme (Nugroho, 2021; Radarbanyumas.co.id, 2021; Sejati, 2021b, 2021a).

Banyumas Regency chose specific non-cash assistance projects: the construction of house floors and clean water facilities. These choices were made since non-cement flooring and limited access to clean water are indicators of extreme poverty. Given these circumstances, it was a logical decision for the government to allocate resources for non-cash assistance in the form of infrastructure development for the extremely poor residents. This approach also reduces the risk of fund misuse with cash assistance.

Direct cash assistance provided to the poor during the pandemic has a profound impact on their lives. Many studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of direct cash transfers, facilitated through village funds that are financed by local governments, in ensuring the survival of the poor population throughout the COVID-19 crisis (Ali &

Khan, 2022; Amrullah et al., 2020; Engka et al., 2021; Iping, 2020; Kurniawan, 2020; Maun, 2020; Pramanik, 2020; Sukmana, 2021). Conditional cash transfers have also been shown as an effective strategy to support residents in meeting their health and education needs. transfers are provided with specific conditions, such as regular health check-ups for mothers and as mandatory children. as well attendance, aimed to improve program outcomes (Afzal et al., 2019). However, the management of cash transfers is susceptible to potential misuse and social envy, as highlighted in numerous studies (Arumdani et al., 2021; Febriaty & Mistia, 2021; Herdiana et al., 2021; Masambe et al., 2021; Suparman et al., 2021; Yunita & Agustang, 2021). Thus, the implementation of poverty alleviation programs is an ongoing social learning process requiring continuous improvement. governments must strive to enhance their program management capabilities and work towards achieving the desired program goals.

The regional governments have also gained experience in the distribution of non-cash assistance. Past implementations of programs like Rastra and Non-Cash Food Assistance Non-Tunai/BPNT) (Bantuan Pangan encountered significant challenges, such as inaccuracies in identifying target recipients, issues with rice rationing and distribution, as well as concerns regarding rice quality (Nabila et al., 2021; Rachman et al., 2018) and supervision (Kharismawati & Rosdiana, 2018). From the perspective of demand and supply theory, implementing a non-cash food assistance policy can have the consequence of increasing prices due to a surge in demand (Hafizah et al., 2019).

However, other studies have revealed that the non-cash assistance supports the productive behavior of beneficiaries and increases program transparency and accountability improved control, monitoring, and irregularity reduction (Fadlurrohim et al., 2019). For instance, a study conducted in Mojokerto Regency the demonstrated that **BPNT** program significantly assisted beneficiary groups in reducing their daily expenses (Agustina & Megawati, 2022). The implementation of the BPNT program has contributed to a more equitable distribution of household income, as evidenced by a decrease in the Gini coefficient value (Taufigo, 2018).

Providing non-cash assistance is a strategic approach aimed at alleviating the financial burden on impoverished households. The critics of noncash assistance argue that poverty alleviation measured by poverty reduction indicators and basic needs fulfillment is pseudo-poverty reduction since it is not caused by an increase in residents' real income (Habibullah, 2019). Similar challenges with assistance to individuals in extreme poverty are also observed in the United States. Evidence suggests that more than half of households misclassified as being in poverty actually have income above the poverty line based on administrative data, and many possess assets and belongings commonly owned by middle-class households (Meyer et al., 2021).

B. A Synergy of Central and Regional Government Budget for Extreme Poverty Reduction Program

Reducing extreme poverty is a shared responsibility of both regional and central governments. Banyumas Regency government has quickly responded by allocating IDR10 billion through a budget amendment to address the extreme poverty issue through a non-cash assistance program.

Based on observation of online news articles, it is evident that the Banyumas Regency government actively sought the involvement of provincial and central authorities in tackling the issue of extreme poverty. One article reported that the Office of Social and Community Empowerment and Village of Banyumas Regency proposed to the Central Java Provincial Government that 46,818 poor residents in Banyumas receive cash social assistance from the central government. This demonstrates the local government's recognition of the constraints posed by their limited budgetary resources in effectively tackling the issue within the region, prompting them to seek assistance from higherlevel authorities.

The synergy between local, provincial, and central governments in addressing extreme poverty is evident through their coordinated efforts in program financing. The Banyumas

Regency government prioritized non-cash assistance (infrastructure and other facilities), while provincial and central governments were encouraged to focus on providing cash social assistance. The amount of cash assistance to extremely poor households was substantial, as it was intended to be provided periodically over an extended period. The large budget was considered an obligation by the central government. This shows that the local government has transferred the risk of financing cash social assistance to the central government. During times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of policies and political accountability remains largely centered at the national level (Buthe et al., 2020).

The global impact of COVID-19 potentially drove approximately 60 million people into extreme poverty in 2020. If the pandemic caused an increase Gini index by 2% in all countries, more than 90 million were predicted to be in extreme poverty by 2020 (Lakner et al., 2022). According to a report from the United Nations' World Food Program (WFP), the COVID-19 pandemic was projected to double the global population experiencing acute hunger by 2020 (Paulsson, 2020). Given the global impact of the pandemic, poverty alleviation should be recognized as a global public initiative (Quiggin, 2022). Therefore, observing policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on rural poverty rates becomes a concern across nations. China places utmost importance on implementing prompt policy responses, as it has set a target of eradicating extreme poverty by the end of 2020 (Luo et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the social sector, as indicated by an increase in poverty and unemployment rates. Consequently, a synergy between central and regional governments during times of crisis is paramount. Taiwan's experience in navigating the COVID-19 crisis underscores the vital role of integrated interdepartmental system, encompassing both central and regional governments, alongside intersectoral collaboration and citizen engagement, as essential factors for achieving effective epidemic control (Hsieh et al., 2021).

IV. Conclusion

This study on extreme poverty and regional budget policy responses in online news media revealed that the regional government's management of extreme poverty through budget relatively satisfactory. policies was Unexpected Expenditure (BTT) was considered the most flexible budget item that can be readily reallocated for the extreme poverty reduction program. The Banyumas Regency government demonstrated a cautious approach to utilizing the BTT by seeking confirmation from the Ministry of Home Affairs regarding the initiative. The budget policy response to address the issue of extreme poverty was implemented through the utilization of a non-cash assistance scheme. The regional aovernment proposed that the government manages the cash assistance for the affected residents, indicating their intention to shift the responsibility of substantial aid financing to the central government.

study recommends that government strengthen risk management in poverty alleviation programs, for instance, by allocating a dedicated budget that can be readily utilized to address extreme poverty during unforeseen circumstances. Furthermore, the study recommends adopting transparent and accountable budget management practices, strict monitoring accompanied by supervision of aid implementation by various stakeholders. Online news media play a crucial role that extends beyond simply reporting on government initiatives for the residents. Ideally, they should have the privilege to monitor and evaluate program implementation. In the context of extreme poverty reduction programs, the monitoring and evaluation conducted by online news media can encompass various aspects, such as the provision of assistance as well as the public's response to such assistance.

Table 1. Online News Articles of Extreme Poverty in Banyumas Regency and the Corresponding Regional Budget Management

No.	Online News Website	Content	Publication Date
1	TNP2K https://www.tnp2k.go.id/articles/jawa-tengah-siap-penuhi- target-pengurangan-kemiskinan-ekstrem (accessed on July 28, 2022)	Five regencies in Central Java were reported to have residents living in extreme poverty levels based on the main social welfare indicators: head of household education, head of household employment, basic infrastructure, and access to finance and sources of financing.	September 30, 2021
2	Jatengprov.go.id https://jatengprov.go.id/publik/wapres-optimistis-akhir- tahun-jateng-mampu-tuntaskan-kemiskinan-ekstrem/ (accessed on January 26, 2023)	The Vice President is Optimistic that Central Java will be able to end extreme poverty at the end of the year.	October 07, 2021
3	detikNews https://news.detik.com/berita-jawa-tengah/d-5756732/ wapres-minta-5-daerah-di-jateng-ini-bebas-kemiskinan- ekstrem-akhir-tahun (accessed on January 26, 2023)	Vice President Calls for 5 Central Java Regions to Achieve Extreme Poverty-Free Status by Year's End	October 07, 2021
4	Republika https://news.republika.co.id/berita/r0lgro436/wapres- targetkan-kemiskinan-ekstrem-di-jateng-tuntas (accessed on January 26, 2023)	Vice President Sets Target: Complete Eradication of Extreme Poverty in Central Java	October 07, 2021
5	Kementerian Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia https://www.setneg.go.id/baca/index/ wapres_apresiasi_upaya_pemprov_jateng_tangani_kemiskinan (accessed on January 26, 2023)	Vice President Commends Central Java Provincial Government's Poverty Alleviation Efforts	October 07, 2021
6	Rejogja https://rejogja.republika.co.id/berita//r0lh6a328/ini-prioritas- pengananan-kemiskinan-ekstrem-di-jateng? (accessed on July 28, 2022)	Five Regencies Face Extreme Poverty: Banyumas, Banjarnegara, Kebumen, Pemalang, and Brebes	October 07, 2021
7	TribunBanyumas.com https://banyumas.tribunnews.com/2021/10/12/banyumas- masuk-daerah-alami-kemiskinan-ekstrem-bupati-wujud- perhatian-khusus-pemerintah-pusat (accessed on January 26, 2023)	Banyumas Regent: Designation of Extreme Poverty Area Brings Special Attention from Central Government.	October 12, 2021
8	Radar Banyumas https://radarbanyumas.disway.id/read/17485/pemkab- banyumas-lirik-anggaran-btt-rp-84-miliar-untuk-entaskan- kemiskinan-ekstrem-target-tuntas-di-2024 (accessed on July 28, 2022)	Banyumas Regency Government Proposes BTT Budget of IDR 84 Billion to Eradicate Extreme Poverty by 2024	October 14, 2021
9	SerayuNews https://serayunews.com/miris-109-ribu-jiwa-di-kabupaten- banyumas-masuk-kategori-miskin-ekstrem/ (accessed on January 26, 2023)	109 thousand People in Banyumas Regency Classified as Extremely Poor	October 12, 2021
10	TribunBanyumas.com https://banyumas.tribunnews.com/2021/10/27/dana-btt-boleh-untuk-atasi-kemiskinan-esktrem-pemkab-banyumas-pastikan-tak-berikan-bantuan-tunai (accessed on July 28, 2022)	BTT Funds Approved for Addressing Extreme Poverty, Banyumas Regency Ensures Non-Cash Assistance Only	October 27, 2021
11	TribunJateng.com https://jateng.tribunnews.com/2021/10/27/tangani-kemiskinan-ekstrem-pemkab-banyumas-bantu-pembangunan-lantai-rumah-dan-fasiltas-air-bersih (accessed on July 28, 2022)	Banyumas Regency Government Supports Construction of House Floors and Clean Water Facilities in Tackling Extreme Poverty	October 27, 2021
12	Radar Banyumas https://radarbanyumas.co.id/tangani-kemiskinan-ekstrem-gunakan-btt-sebesar-rp-10-miliar-bupati-husein-no-dalam-form-uang/ (accessed on July 28, 2022)	Regent Husein: IDR 10 billion from BTT Funds Allocated to Address Extreme Poverty Using Non-Cash Assistance	October 27, 2021
13	GATRAcom https://www.gatra.com/news-527066-ekonomi-tangani- kemiskinan-ekstrem-banyumas-use-btt-sebesar-rp10- miliar.html (accessed on July 28, 2022)	Banyumas Regency Utilizes IDR 10 billion of BTT Funds in Tackling Extreme Poverty	October 28, 2021
14	AntaraJateng https://jateng.antaranews.com/berita/418293/46818-warga-miskin-di-banyumas-diusulkan-dapat-bantuan-rp300000 (accessed on July 28, 2022)	46,818 impoverished residents in Banyumas proposed to receive IDR 300,000 assistance each	November 26, 2021

No.	Online News Website	Content	Publication Date
15	VOI https://voi.id/berita/108147/atasi-kemiskinan- ekstrem-46-818-warga-banyumas-disulkan-dapat-bantuan- dari-pemerintah (accessed on July 28, 2022)	To Overcome Extreme Poverty, 46,818 Banyumas Residents Proposed to Receive Government Assistance.	November 26, 2021

Source: Ministry of Finance (2021)

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