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POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN SPECIAL AUTONOMY SYSTEMS: DYNAMICS AND CHALLENGES OF ASYMMETRIC DECENTRALIZATION

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Abstract

This study compares the implementation of asymmetric decentralization in Indonesia and its effect on poverty alleviation. The method used in this study is a comparative case study (CCS), where the researchers compare two regions that implement an asymmetrical decentralization system: the Special Region of Yogyakarta and Papua, with different outcomes. From the data collected in the field, researchers found various challenges in implementing asymmetric decentralization, especially in poverty alleviation efforts. In the case of Papua, there are several challenges, including the effective allocation of budget and the strengthening of human resources. In contrast, in Yogyakarta, the focus of implementing legal asymmetry is enhancing culture and governance. Hence, poverty alleviation initiatives must also consider these central aspects. This research can contribute to developing development studies and public policies on poverty alleviation. The researcher provides an in-depth analysis of two exceptional cases applying asymmetrical decentralization in their activities.

Keywords: Poverty Alleviation, asymmetric decentralization, comparative case study

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membandingkan penerapan desentralisasi asimetris di Indonesia dan pengaruhnya terhadap pengentasan kemiskinan. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah comparative case study (CCS), dimana peneliti membandingkan dua wilayah yang menerapkan sistem desentralisasi asimetris yaitu Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta dan Papua dengan outcome yang berbeda. Dari hasil pengumpulan data di lapangan peneliti menemukan bahwa masih terdapat berbagai tantangan dalam penerapan desentralisasi asimetris, khususnya dalam upaya pengentasan kemiskinan. Pada kasus di Papua terdapat berbagai tantangan seperti efektivitas alokasi

anggaran dan penguatan SDM, sementara pada kasus di Yogyakarta tujuan penerapan asimetris yang diamanahkan undang-undang lebih pada penguatan budaya dan tata pelaksanaan pemerintahan sehingga kegiatan pengentasan kemiskinan juga harus memperhatikan aspek utama tersebut. Penelitian ini kemudian dapat berkontribusi pada pengembangan studi pembangunan maupun kebijakan publik yang berfokus pada pengentasan kemiskinan, dimana peneliti memperlihatkan analisis mendalam tentang dua kasus Istimewa dengan penerapan desentralisasi asimetris dalam pelaksanaan kegiatannya.

Kata Kunci : pengentasan kemiskinan, desentralisasi asimetris, studi kasus komparatif

I. INTRODUCTION

Decentralization is an ideal institutional framework for realizing participatory, transparent, and efficient governance (Chaudhary, 2020; Iek & Blesia, 2019; Soberón et al., 2020). Previous studies have shown how decentralization presents positive values such as innovation and independence, deliberative policymaking, and increased regional income (Barreto & Souza, 2013; Guo et al., 2020; Wakarmamu & Indrayono, 2019). Along with its development, there are several models in decentralization, one of which is the asymmetrical decentralization system. In contrast to symmetrical decentralization, which refers to the equal distribution of authority and responsibilities among all regions or levels of government, asymmetric decentralization grants some additional autonomy and privileges to specific regions. Asymmetric decentralization is a particular form of decentralization applied to accommodate the unique needs and characteristics of several regions or regions in a country (Efriandi et al., 2019; Nugroho et al., 2021). The main goal of asymmetric decentralization is to recognize diversity in a society or region and preserve an area's specific cultural and historical identity (Efriandi et al., 2019; Young, 2019).

In its development, there are various debates about the implementation of asymmetric decentralization in Indonesia, ranging from discussions on regional funding

with an asymmetric system to analysis of multi-level governance in handling problems in various sectors (Efriandi et al., 2019; Nugroho et al., 2021). Some literature focuses on the benefits of asymmetrical decentralization on cultural strengthening in each region (Din & Abubakar, 2021; Guillot et al., 2015; Purwono et al., 2019). Others analyzed the comparison of its application in several countries (Shair-Rosenfield et al., 2014), and some saw the system's benefits on poverty alleviation (Nguyen et al., 2021; Yuliandri et al., 2021).

In Indonesia, at least four regions adhere to an asymmetrical decentralization system: Aceh, Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Papua. Each region is sheltered in a regulation (law) that regulates the provisions and application of asymmetric decentralization in each region. As previously explained, most studies believe that asymmetrical decentralization can help solve the problem of poverty through the privilege of funding mechanisms provided by the central government. However, this problem has yet to be optimally resolved through an asymmetric mechanism in Indonesia's application. Research from Yuliandri et al. (2021) shows that asymmetrical decentralization has not significantly impacted solving the problem of poverty in Aceh. The study shows several problems in using special autonomy funds, such as areas for improvement in planning

and supervision and local bureaucratic inefficiencies (Yuliandri et al., 2021).

In another instance, in the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY), the issue of poverty remains a significant challenge that needs to be effectively addressed despite benefiting from the advantages of asymmetric decentralization. According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta still has the highest poverty rate among Java's provinces. In the most recent data released in 2022-2023, the poverty rate in Yogyakarta has decreased by 0.89% compared to the previous period. The rate of reduction in the poverty rate has reached 0.45% (BPS Yogyakarta, 2022). However, the percentage of poverty rate in Yogyakarta remains relatively high. This research shows the impact of DIY asymmetric decentralization on reducing poverty rates in the province.

The same incident occurred in Papua Province, one of Indonesia's most underprivileged provinces, which possesses diverse resources (Obidzinski et al., 2012; Shirley et al., 2018; Sofian et al., 2021). However, the reality explains that various potentials and resources have yet to be fully utilized. Problems in the development of potential and resources in Papua still occur today, so it is necessary to accelerate development to support the development of these potentials and resources (Rusim et al., 2019; Suparmi et al., 2018). This obstacle is compounded by the high poverty rate in Papua Province despite its significant potential (Fauzi et al., 2019).

There have been several previous studies that connect asymmetric decentralization to poverty. However, they have yet to comprehensively show the development of local government policy planning (with an asymmetric system) in solving poverty problems in the regions and compare two regions that are the same with the system (asymmetrical). The researchers

will present the policies implemented by the governments of Yogyakarta and Papua to address poverty in their regions, detailing the execution and the challenges encountered in implementing these policies. This research will address the issues of local bureaucratic efficiency and the planning and implementation of policies in regions with an asymmetrical decentralization system, building upon the research conducted by Yuliandri et al. (2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Poverty Alleviation

Research and theories on poverty alleviation play a crucial role in understanding this complex issue and in exploring solutions related to education, regulation, health, and infrastructure as the main components involved in efforts to reduce poverty (Bartlett et al., 2014; Khan et al., 2022; Lorenzo, 2021). In this section, the authors will review several literature and theoretical studies that reflect the relevance of education, regulation, health, and infrastructure in poverty alleviation. Literature and theoretical studies on poverty alleviation highlight the issue's complexity and underscore the importance of education, regulation, health, and infrastructure as critical components (Apriliana et al., 2022; Iek & Blesia, 2019). Education provides a foundation for increasing individual productivity, reasonable regulations and public policies support social justice, optimal health improves the quality of life, and adequate infrastructure provides economic opportunities (Căne, 2021; Juhandi & Enre, 2020). In this context, poverty alleviation efforts involve various aspects of people's lives, and an understanding of this literature and theory is fundamental to designing effective and sustainable policies.

Studies on poverty reduction consistently emphasize the crucial role of education as a fundamental element in

poverty alleviation efforts (Cock et al., 2022; Nerenberg, 2021). Good quality education provides individuals with the ability to understand, develop skills, and improve access to better job opportunities. The concept of human capital, as explained in economic theory, emphasizes that investing in education can lead to increased individual productivity, ultimately helping to alleviate poverty (Monim et al., 2021). The lifecycle theory states that education provides long-term benefits through increased income and quality of life (Bainbridge et al., 2011; Jonk & Iren, 2021).

2. Poverty Alleviation Regulations and Policies

The studies on poverty alleviation also emphasize the role of regulations and public policies in poverty alleviation. Economic theory suggests that governments play a crucial role in regulating markets, protecting fundamental human rights, and ensuring a more equitable distribution of wealth and resources (Memon et al., 2020; Sari & Rahman, 2021). This context focuses on various aspects, such as the protection of workers' rights, fair tax policies, and inflation control. Human development theory identifies the importance of government involvement in ensuring equitable access to education and health services for more vulnerable society groups (Barrientos & Malerba, 2020; Carrasco et al., 2017; Timisela et al., 2020).

Health is a central factor in efforts to overcome poverty. Previous studies showed that healthy individuals tend to be more productive and able to work, which can then increase income and reduce poverty levels (Apriliana et al., 2022; van Eeden et al., 2020). As developed by Amartya Sen, the theory of human capability emphasizes the significance of health as one of the various "capabilities" individuals must possess to achieve higher well-being (Habiyaemye et

al., 2020; Yu & Peng, 2022). Therefore, investment in affordable and quality health services is crucial in poverty alleviation efforts.

Good infrastructure, including transportation networks and electricity access, is vital in poverty alleviation efforts (Fauzi et al., 2023; Satpute & Kumar, 2020). Literature studies have indicated that regions with well-developed infrastructure experience higher economic growth and lower poverty rates. The economic growth theory emphasizes the importance of infrastructure as one of the main factors contributing to inclusive economic development (Jokhu & Kutay, 2020; Ssenyonjo et al., 2021).

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach using comparative case studies (CCS). CCS involves comparing cases with similar outcomes but differing impacts or with similar impacts but differing outcomes (Fauzi & Kusumasari, 2020). Qualitative research explores and understands meaning in a number of individuals or groups of people stemming from social problems (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research was chosen to explore the phenomenon through descriptions and data on Asymmetric Decentralization. The case study approach was selected to analyze the collected data more deeply. In Creswell's definition, as cited in Assyakurrohim et al. (2022), a case study is a type of research where researchers delve into a specific phenomenon (case) within a particular time and activity (such as a program, event, process, institution, or social group) and gather detailed and in-depth information using various data collection methods over a specific period. This research will be conducted in the Special Region Province of Yogyakarta, one of the areas that is given Asymmetric Decentralization.

The research focuses on the Provincial Government of the Special Region of Yogyakarta and the Provincial Government of Papua. Data will be gathered through interviews with relevant agencies in these provinces and with Asymmetric Decentralization experts from Gadjah Mada University. Key informants from related agencies who will contribute to this study include the Head of the Social Protection and Security Division of the DIY Social Service, the Head of the People's Welfare Sub-Division of the DIY Regional Development Planning Agency, and representatives from the Community Welfare section of the Central Statistics Agency. In addition, the researchers collected secondary data such as laws and regulations, data from the official website of the Special Region Government of Yogyakarta and Papua, and literature studies that supported this research. This study addresses the question raised in previous research regarding how the special autonomy system alleviates poverty (Chapkanski et al., 2022; Din & Abubakar, 2021; Yuliandri et al., 2021). Besides Aceh, this issue has yet to be explored in Yogyakarta and Papua.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

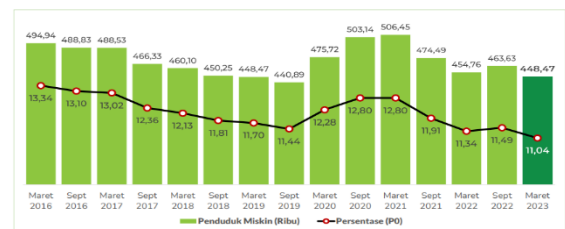
1. Poverty Alleviation Endeavour in Yogyakarta

The Yogyakarta Provincial Government has taken several strategic steps to reduce the poverty rate in its region. The Special Region of Yogyakarta, a province rich in culture and history, plays a vital role in maintaining social and cultural diversity and facing the challenges of poverty. In this narrative, the researchers will explain the various policies of the Yogyakarta government that have been implemented. One of the main priorities in poverty alleviation efforts is to increase education access for all Yogyakarta residents. The provincial government has implemented various educational initiatives to ensure that

children from underprivileged families can access high-quality education. These include providing financial aid, scholarships, and school books to underprivileged families. The data shows a significant increase in literacy rates in the province. One of the educational assistance programs owned by the Yogyakarta Special Region Government is the Regional Education Guarantee, as stated in Yogyakarta Mayor Regulation No. 18/2021.

Graph 1.

Number and Percentage of Poor Population, March 2016–March 2023



Source: BPS DIY Provice, 2023

The provincial government has also introduced various social assistance programs, including cash assistance to low-income families. Data shows that thousands of families in Yogyakarta have benefited from this program. This cash assistance fulfills essential needs such as education, healthcare, and daily necessities. The program has offered substantial financial aid to families combating poverty. Poverty alleviation includes developing the local economy. The provincial government has supported economic sectors such as handicrafts, local agriculture, and tourism. In this case, skills training and mentoring are provided to community groups that seek to increase their income. Data shows that several local economic development initiatives have succeeded in improving the population's living standards.

The Yogyakarta government has also focused on women's empowerment as part of the poverty alleviation strategy. Skills training programs, entrepreneurship

education, and financial support are provided to women to enable them to contribute to the economy for their families and communities. Data shows that women's empowerment efforts have had a positive impact in reducing poverty levels. Although there has been significant progress in poverty alleviation, the government still faces some challenges. Economic inequality, limited access to essential services in remote areas, and environmental issues are still obstacles that must be addressed.

The future of poverty alleviation attempts in Yogyakarta includes further steps to improve access to education, health, and economic opportunities. The collaboration among governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local communities is crucial for addressing these intricate challenges. The government's policy in alleviating poverty reflects its commitment to improving the welfare of the province's residents. The data underscore the necessity of persisting and broadening these initiatives to reach the mutual objective of alleviating poverty in Yogyakarta and enhancing the livelihood of its inhabitants.

2. Poverty Alleviation Endeavour in Papua

Undeniably, the government (both central and regional) is actively pursuing development in Papua to alleviate poverty, and this effort has started to yield significant results (Fauzi et al., 2019, 2023; Wibawa et al., 2021). Even recently, the government of Indonesia passed the Law on New Autonomous Regions (DOB), adding three provinces to Papua: South Papua, Central Papua, and Central Highlands Papua. The formation of the three New Autonomous Regions is expected to accelerate development in Papua and reduce the gap in the area. Research from the study by Fauzi et al. (2023) indicated that when these policies are carefully planned and effectively

implemented, they can unlock the diverse potentials in Papua, directly impacting the alleviation of poverty in the region.

Historically, the poverty rate in Papua has consistently been above the Indonesian national average. Nevertheless, various steps have been taken by the central government, local governments, international institutions, and NGOs to overcome this problem. According to the 2020 data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the poverty rate in Papua was around 27.73%, significantly higher than the national average of approximately 9.78%. This figure illustrates that nearly one-third of the population in Papua lives below the poverty line. Moreover, the poverty rate varies across different districts and cities in Papua, with certain regions experiencing higher poverty rates than others.

According to information from the previous Papua Provincial Government, the Government of Indonesia has implemented several programs to decrease poverty in Papua, including the Prosperous Papua Card Program (PPP). This initiative offers financial aid to families living below the poverty line. Data released by the Ministry of Social Affairs shows that in 2020, more than 1.3 million families in Papua benefited from the PPP program. This assistance includes support for basic needs such as education and health.

The Papua Provincial Government has also initiated the "Prosperous Papua" program to reduce poverty levels in the region. The program includes some strategic measures aimed at improving the Papuan people's education, health, and economic sectors. These programs often collaborate with the central government and international institutions to achieve poverty alleviation goals. In addition, according to other sources, he mentioned that efforts to reduce poverty in Papua also involve investing in education and improving access to health services.

According to BPS data, the literacy rate in Papua is still below the national average. Therefore, the government continues to build schools and improve access to education in the region. In addition, health infrastructure also continues to be developed to increase Papuan people's access to quality health services. The provincial government allocates resources to improve Papuans' access to quality health services. These efforts include projects to build and expand health facilities, provide adequate medicines, and train medical personnel. This ensures that Papuans have better access to quality health services.

An essential step in poverty alleviation is developing the Papua local economy. Agriculture, fisheries, and tourism are identified as economic potential that can help reduce poverty rates. Data shows several local economic development projects have been launched, including training and mentoring for local farmers and fishermen. Despite many efforts, poverty alleviation in Papua still faces some challenges. Issues such as limited infrastructure in remote areas, unequal access to essential services, and social tensions remain significant constraints. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an additional economic impact and complicated the situation.

Most informants from the Papua Regional Government explained that efforts to alleviate poverty in Papua will continue to focus on improving education, increasing access to healthcare, and creating economic opportunities. The collaboration between the government, NGOs, and local communities will be vital to overcoming this complex challenge. Although poverty alleviation in Papua is a significant challenge, the efforts made so far demonstrate a solid commitment to addressing this issue. These efforts highlight the importance of continuing and expanding initiatives to reduce poverty and improve the well-being of the people in

Papua. Additionally, the government of Papua is dedicated to tackling the region's specific challenges, including social conflicts, gender inequality, and environmental problems. In this context, the government aims to ensure that efforts to alleviate poverty not only concentrate on economic aspects but also consider the social and environmental aspects crucial for the well-being of the Papuan people.

3. Special Autonomy and Poverty Alleviation Efforts

Asymmetrical decentralization and special autonomy in the two provinces that are the focus of this research make an essential contribution to poverty alleviation efforts in the two provinces. The Special Fund (Yogyakarta) or the Special Autonomy Fund (Papua) provides stimulus for every program/policy related to poverty alleviation. In Yogyakarta, all sources agree that the special fund is not aimed at alleviating poverty but at enhancing culture and its potential. Even so, it is undeniable that every policy or program that utilizes these funds also intersects with poverty alleviation. Based on information from the informant at the Yogyakarta Provincial Social Service and the Yogyakarta Special Region Planning and Development Agency, activities such as strengthening culture-based Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are focused on specific areas with high levels of poverty. According to the data provided by the Government of Yogyakarta, they support at least 523 People's Business Loans.

Special autonomy in the context of poverty reduction refers to the steps local governments take to gain additional authority or greater privileges in managing resources and developing the economy in their area. In some situations, regions granted special autonomy are given more leeway in determining budget allocations, setting local regulations, and implementing special

programs to address poverty. This particular autonomy has the potential to be an efficient tool in poverty reduction efforts because it allows local governments to design solutions based on the conditions and needs that exist in their region. However, special autonomy management must be accompanied by effective governance, transparency, and strict accountability to ensure efficient and effective use of provided resources for poverty reduction programs.

To alleviate poverty within the framework of special autonomy, local governments need to obtain these privileges and prioritize them. They can leverage the flexibility to allocate funds carefully to programs such as education, skills training, health services, and local economic development initiatives. In addition, they can design policies that address poverty issues that are particularly prevalent in their region, including identifying weak groups that require special attention. Therefore, special autonomy can be a powerful tool in alleviating poverty if used carefully and directed to improve the welfare of local communities.

IV. CONCLUSION

The special autonomy system undeniably provides added value to a region so that it can be more flexible in making policies and programs related to poverty alleviation and maximizing all the potential in its region. The Central Government can also allocate extra funds to regions with an asymmetrical system (Special Autonomy) to support previous policies or activities. The problem is that each region with asymmetrical decentralization has a robust culture and challenges in solving problems amid that culture. In the Special Region of Yogyakarta, all activities funded by special autonomy funds must align with the region's efforts to empower tradition and culture. Local governments in these regions should be

innovative in using their funds to reduce poverty in their areas.

In addition, it is essential to develop increased community capacity and activity in special autonomous regions, such as at least two provinces, as examined in this study. The public's awareness of the utilization and the development of economic potential must be improved. Judging from the two cases studied, this is one of the main problems. This study answers the question raised in previous research about the positive impact of the special autonomy system on poverty alleviation efforts. However, there are still areas that require improvement. Further research could investigate the relationship between socio-cultural strengthening efforts and poverty alleviation. This study offers critical insights into this relationship, particularly in the case of Yogyakarta.

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