

## Poverty And Data Accuracy As Public Administration Issues: A Study On Social Policy In Banyumas Regency

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### Abstract

This article explores the issue of poverty in Banyumas Regency within the framework of public administration, with a particular emphasis on the accuracy and consistency of poverty data as a foundation for formulating social policies. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach with purposive sampling techniques, the study uncovers discrepancies in poverty indicators and measurement approaches across local government units. These data inconsistencies significantly impact the accuracy of targeting social programs, thereby hindering the effectiveness of public policy implementation. Furthermore, the findings reveal that the problem is not merely technical but also indicative of weak data governance and poor inter-institution coordination. Therefore, the integration of data systems and harmonization of poverty indicators among institutions are crucial for supporting targeted, equitable, and data-driven policymaking.

**Keywords:** data accuracy, poverty, public administration, social policy.

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most complex issues faced by developing countries is poverty. Indonesia is among the nations significantly affected by this challenge. Numerous poverty alleviation programs have been implemented; however, key challenges persist, particularly in the initial stages of identifying and classifying poor populations. Inconsistencies in poverty data arise due to the use of different approaches and indicators by various government institutions. This issue is not merely technical in nature, but closely related to governance practices. When government units such as regional statistical institution, social empowerment units, and family welfare program administrators employ different standards in defining poverty, it leads to fragmentation in decision making and policy implementation.

According to statistical data from March 2024, the number of people living in poverty in Indonesia reached 25.22 million, or 9.03% of the total population. This figure represents a decrease of 0.33 percentage points compared to March 2023. At the regional level, the poverty rate in Banyumas

Regency stood at 11.95% in 2024, with approximately 207.8 thousand people categorized as poor. This rate is higher than the national average, indicating that poverty remains a significant issue in the region that requires special attention. The variation in data and indicators used by various local institutions further complicates efforts to effectively alleviate poverty.

The Family Development Index serves as a benchmark for family development programs, based on three main dimensions: harmony, self-reliance, and happiness. These dimensions are used to reflect the roles and functions of families within society. In recent years, the national trend has shown a consistent increase: from 53.93 in 2020 to 54.01 in 2021, rising further to 56.07 in 2022, and reaching 61.43 in 2023. This upward trend indicates that family development efforts are progressing, particularly in the dimension of harmony. This dimension assesses the stability and peace within the family, which forms the foundation of family well-being. The 2023 achievement in the harmony dimension shows high scores in several essential aspects, which have generally improved over the past four years. The score of 61.43 in 2023 places Indonesian families in the "developing family" category. Meanwhile, the Family Development Index for Banyumas Regency recorded a total score of 62.29, comprising scores of 61.49 for harmony, 54.05 for self reliance, and 71.33 for happiness.

In 2023, the number of Indonesian families targeted as beneficiaries of the Food Social Assistance program reached 211,099,000, while the actual number of recipients amounted to 206,205,500 families. This indicates that the realization of program beneficiaries covered approximately 97.68% of the total national target. From a budgetary perspective, the planned national allocation for the Food Social Assistance program amounted to IDR 89.491 trillion, with actual spending reaching IDR 87.371 trillion. This corresponds to a budget absorption rate of approximately 97.63%, suggesting that the implementation of the program at the national level was highly efficient and effective. These achievements reflect the government's strong commitment to addressing food insecurity and providing social protection for vulnerable families across all provinces in Indonesia.

Concerns about data accuracy, inclusion and exclusion errors, and regional disparities in aid distribution continue to surface. Moreover, the centralized approach in managing the program overlook localized challenges that require context specific interventions. These problems indicate the need for a deeper examination of the targeting mechanisms and institutional coordination in order to ensure that social assistance truly reaches and empowers the intended beneficiaries.

In light of these conditions, addressing poverty in Banyumas Regency it demands a systemic reform in data governance and institutional synergy. The persistence of fragmented data practices and uncoordinated measurement standards reflects deeper administrative challenges that must be critically examined. Strengthening the integrity of poverty data and fostering collaboration among

relevant stakeholders are key to ensuring that public policies are not only well-intentioned but also well-informed and impactful. This study is therefore positioned to contribute valuable insights into how public administration practices can be refined to produce more accurate, equitable, and accountable social interventions at the local level.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Indonesia's development is now understood as a multidimensional process. While it was previously centered solely on economic growth figures, the current perspective has shifted to also consider poverty rates, inequality, and unemployment. According to Saleh (2013: 220), development is expected to bring about tangible improvements through changes in social structure, institutional reform, mental attitudes, economic growth, reduction in income inequality, and ultimately, the eradication of poverty.

Discussions on poverty seem to be never-ending. Poverty is multidimensional and complex; thus, it cannot be understood from a single perspective. Khan et al. (2014: 70) argue that "Poverty is not only a state of survival but also a course of action with many dimensions and complication." This condition is often marked by deprivation, vulnerability, and powerlessness. Mac Cárthaigh (2014: 459) states, "That poverty involves unmet need and that needs are necessary conditions for end states. Poverty is a narrower notion than (the absence of) wellbeing." This highlights the link between needs and poverty, where needs refer to the conditions required to have or do no less than others, while poverty refers to the lack of means to do or become something. Ultimately, the underlying idea behind both needs and poverty is the pursuit of wellbeing.

According to Asra and Santos (2001:2), poverty is multidimensional in nature, and each country has its own unique characteristics. The use of poverty measurement methods varies across countries, depending on their specific contexts and conditions. A country should focus on developing a poverty line that aligns with its own perspective, rather than merely prioritizing whether the measurement is internationally accepted or applicable. A poverty measure can serve as an important tool in policymaking concerning the living conditions of the poor. As Ravallion stated (in Badrudin, 2012: 595), "A credible measure of poverty can be a powerful instrument for focusing the attention of policy makers on the living conditions of the poor."

There are two key challenges in measuring poverty. The first is identifying the poor among the total population, and the second is constructing a poverty index using information gathered from the poor themselves. This was emphasized by Sen (1976: 219), who stated, "In the measurement of poverty two distinct problems must be faced viz, identifying the poor among the total population and

constructing an index of poverty using the available information on the poor.” Poverty is considered a specific case of welfare measurement, defined as a situation in which there is a lack of freedom to meet essential needs (Boltvinik, 1998: 18). Two important points emerge from this view: first, poverty is inherently associated with deprivation; and second, this deprivation is linked to basic human needs. However, not all types of needs can be included within the definition of poverty.

According to Basu (2001:4), poverty is closely linked to marginalization, and both significantly influence the measurement of economic well-being. The process of globalization has, in some cases, indirectly excluded or even harmed segments of the population, particularly those who are marginalized. Misturelli and Heffernan (2010:54) state that a poor person is someone who experiences deprivation and vulnerability, not only in terms of material assets but also in various factors that make life unlivable. In their view, the poor are portrayed as individuals who have lost the material means to survive. The lack of access to education, knowledge, and rights is also seen as part of this loss of material means essential for survival.

Setiawan (2000:11) identifies several indicators of increasing vulnerability to poverty that can serve as a basis for sound poverty measurement. These include: (i) human capital, which comprises access to social and economic infrastructure, access to education, and access to health services; (ii) employment, which involves loss of stable jobs, declining secure wages, and reduced income; (iii) social capital, including personal safety in public spaces, household reciprocity, and community relationships; (iv) household relationships, which encompass divorce, domestic violence, household stability, women's inability to balance dual responsibilities, and community participation; and (v) housing, which includes freedom from eviction threats, deterioration of living conditions, and high population density.

In the realm of public administration, data management is a fundamental aspect of the policymaking process, particularly for data driven policies. However, a common issue that arises is the lack of synchronization of data among bureaucratic units. This reflects a significant challenge in the rational utilization of information within public organizations.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore how poverty measurement is conducted by various government units in Banyumas Regency. Data were collected through interviews with purposively selected informants, as well as document analysis of institution reports and datasets. The research informants consist of key officials and practitioners from relevant local government institutions, including the Head of Social Statistics, Subdistrict Statistics Coordinators, the Head of Social

Empowerment and Poverty Reduction, Heads of Social Empowerment and Poverty Reduction Sections, the Head of Family Planning and Welfare, Family Planning Counselors, and the Head of Institutional Empowerment and Village Administration. The research focuses on three main institutional functions involved in poverty data administration: statistical management, social services, and community empowerment. The study was conducted in 2015, and the institutional structure described reflects the conditions at that time. Data validity was strengthened through triangulation and reverification with the informants.

The researcher employed the interactive data analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014:12). In qualitative research, continuous data cross checking is essential to obtain valid and credible information. The interactive analysis model consists of four components: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. These components do not operate in isolation; instead, they are interconnected and recur continuously throughout the research process. This ongoing interplay between components is what characterizes the interactive analysis model.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Differences in Perspectives on Poverty**

Tambaknegara Each government unit applies different criteria in defining poverty. Some focus on household expenditure, while others use ownership of basic assets such as access to clean water, sanitation, and education. As a result, discrepancies arise in the classification of poor households. Banyumas Regency is a region with a diverse population background, encompassing a wide range of economic and social statuses. In general, poverty is understood as a condition in which individuals face difficulties in fulfilling their basic needs, such as food, shelter, and clothing.

The perspective on poverty extends beyond merely food, shelter, and clothing. Limited access to social well being due to psychosocial barriers is also considered a form of poverty. The complexity of poverty issues necessitates a multidimensional approach to its measurement. Health and education both of which are fundamental rights for all are equally important indicators of poverty as food, housing, and clothing. Furthermore, asset ownership, both physical and human, is highly relevant in understanding poverty, especially in the context of an increasingly modern era.

There are three institutions in Banyumas Regency that each hold unique perspectives on poverty. These include the regional statistics institution, the implementing unit for social empowerment, and the institution managing family welfare programs. Each employs distinct poverty measurement standards: some rely on monetary approaches and household characteristics. Macro data,

also known as aggregated data, differs from micro data, which contains individual-level information. One institution views poverty based on a person's ability to attain social well-being, while another adopts a classification system based on five levels of family welfare. In general, poverty is no longer solely seen through a monetary lens. It also includes nutritional poverty, as reflected in child stunting, and educational poverty, as evident in widespread illiteracy. A broader view of poverty encompasses the lack of basic capabilities such as income, health, security, and fundamental freedoms like freedom of expression.

Differences in the interpretation of poverty among various institutions continue to result in cases where a household is considered poor by one institution but not by another. This discrepancy directly affects the accuracy of social protection program targeting and leads to inefficient use of resources. The lack of synchronization in data across institutions involved in identifying poor households not only causes administrative confusion but also undermines the effectiveness of targeting social protection programs. When each institution employs different indicators and data systems, the accuracy of identifying eligible beneficiaries is compromised. In some cases, households that are actually eligible for assistance are excluded because they are not registered in the database of a particular institution. Conversely, some households that are no longer classified as poor remain listed as beneficiaries due to outdated data that are not integrated across institutions. Such situations continue to recur despite the implementation of new social protection programs.

### **Bureaucratic Fragmentation**

One of the main causes of data inconsistencies regarding poor households is the high degree of bureaucratic fragmentation among government institutions mandated to address poverty reduction. These institutions operate with different information systems, poverty indicators, as well as verification and validation mechanisms, without adequate integration either horizontally (across central institution) or vertically (between central and local governments). For example, there is often a dualism of databases, where some institutions rely on the Integrated Social Welfare Data, while others use their own internal systems such as census data, rapid surveys, or sector-specific applications. These differences result in discrepancies in the number and names of households listed as beneficiaries in various social protection programs.

Another contributing factor is the issue of authority. Each institution tends to perceive itself as having exclusive authority over data management and program implementation. This perception often leads to resistance against integration efforts and fosters sectoral egos, as institutions prioritize showcasing their own achievements even when data duplication or contradictions occur in practice.



Bureaucratic fragmentation gives rise to policy incoherence, resulting in social protection programs being implemented in silos without interconnection, when in fact, they should operate in synergy. Consequently, the allocation of assistance fails to comprehensively target the households most in need.

Furthermore, the absence of a shared system in the data collection process leads to administrative and budget inefficiencies, as efforts are frequently duplicated and consume significant resources. The lack of accountability exacerbates the situation, making it difficult to determine who is responsible for data errors. When problems occur in the field, no institution takes clear responsibility, as each claims to only be involved in a portion of the overall process. Bureaucratic fragmentation in this context illustrates institutional disintegration, which reflects the weakness of collaborative governance systems within the public sector.

### **A Social Equity Perspective in Public Administration**

Based on the critical findings regarding bureaucratic fragmentation and inaccurate poverty data in Banyumas Regency, it is evident that the principle of social equity has been undermined in the implementation of public policies. Social equity in public administration refers to the government's responsibility to ensure that all citizens have fair access to public services, social resources, and protection from structural vulnerabilities. However, the findings of this study indicate that poor communities who should be prioritized are frequently excluded from beneficiary lists due to weak coordination and data integration across government units.

From the perspective of social equity in public administration, the bureaucratic fragmentation and inaccuracies in poverty data in Banyumas Regency indicate a violation of equity principles in the implementation of public policy. Social equity in public administration involves the state's commitment to ensuring that all citizens have fair access to public services, social resources, and protection from structural vulnerabilities. However, the findings of this study reveal that poor households—who should be prioritized—are frequently excluded from the list of beneficiaries due to weak coordination and lack of data integration among government institutions.

This condition illustrates that injustice does not always stem from ill intent, but rather from systemic weaknesses. Misdirected social programs represent a failure of the state to fulfill its citizens' basic rights, while also creating new forms of inequality among individuals who should be treated equally. In several villages, there were cases where poor households received no assistance at all, while more affluent households benefited from multiple social programs. This disparity highlights the presence of structural flaws within social policy design and implementation.

## DISCUSSION

### Differing Perspectives on Poverty

Differences in perspectives on the concept of poverty whether administrative, political, or social often become the root causes of discrepancies in measurement indicators and policy decisions. In public administration practice, each institution may adopt a different definition of who qualifies as poor, depending on policy objectives, budgetary constraints, and political pressures. As Henry (2017) notes, “Different officials sometimes define what they want to measure differently, and definitions often have an impact on institution fortunes for good or ill” (Henry, 2017:207). These definitional inconsistencies can significantly influence the formulation and outcomes of public policy.

Divergent perspectives on poverty not only influence the identification of program beneficiaries, but can also be exploited to serve organizational interestsv for example, by inflating the number of recipients to secure greater budget allocations. Furthermore, Lindblom (in Shafritz & Hyde, 2017) emphasizes that in complex situations such as poverty, overly narrow approaches are likely to fail in addressing real societal needs. An incremental approach is thus considered more appropriate, since fully rational and comprehensive decision-making is nearly impossible in the face of multidimensional and intricate issues.

Henry (2017) highlights that errors in defining measurement criteria frequently lead to a displacement of goals, where programs end up pursuing misguided indicators. He illustrates this with an analogy: “Displacing Goals... the performance of furniture factories was measured in the tonnes of furniture shipped. As a result, Poland now has the heaviest furniture on the planet” (Henry, 2017, p. 207). This example aptly captures how reliance on simplistic indicators such as income level or asset ownership alone can result in social protection programs failing to effectively reach those who are most vulnerable.

### Bureaucratic Fragmentation

It is essential to compare Banyumas Regency’s with that of countries that have successfully integrated poverty data across government institutions. Brazil, for instance, has been widely recognized for its Cadastro Único (Single Registry for Social Programs), a unified database that consolidates data on low income families across multiple ministries and institutions. This integrated system enables accurate targeting, reduces data duplication, and facilitates real-time coordination between national and local governments. Through this registry, Brazil has effectively implemented flagship programs such as Bolsa Família and Auxílio Brasil, ensuring that aid reaches the intended beneficiaries.



Integration of poverty data is not merely a technical reform, but also requires strong political commitment, legal frameworks, and institutional collaboration. Lessons from Brazil suggest that establishing a unified data platform, supported by clear governance mechanisms and citizen participation, can significantly improve the accuracy and equity of social protection policies. Such insights offer valuable guidance for Indonesia particularly at the sub national level such as Banyumas Regency in designing and managing a more integrated and accountable poverty data system.

While bureaucratic fragmentation and data inconsistency have been clearly identified as barriers to effective poverty reduction, it is essential to explore practical and context-sensitive solutions. One promising approach is the implementation of a shared digital platform that enables real-time data synchronization among institutions involved in poverty alleviation. The One Data Policy promoted by the Indonesian government can serve as a normative and technical foundation for this initiative. In the case of Banyumas Regency, this could involve the development of a centralized database accessible by the regional statistical office, social service units, and family planning institutions, supported by regular inter institutions coordination meetings and standardized data collection protocols. Such a model would not only reduce duplication and misidentification but also strengthen accountability in public service delivery.

An important yet often overlooked dimension of poverty data governance is the role of community participation, particularly involving the poor themselves in the process of data verification and validation. Community based targeting mechanisms, such as participatory rural appraisal or community forums, can serve as complementary tools to improve the legitimacy and responsiveness of poverty data. Involving local residents in confirming household eligibility lists can help correct bureaucratic biases, reduce inclusion and exclusion errors, and foster a sense of ownership in public policy outcomes. In Banyumas, integrating feedback loops from neighbourhood head, local volunteers, or community health workers into the data update process may enhance both data accuracy and citizen trust.

Bureaucratic fragmentation constitutes one of the root causes of inaccuracies in poverty data. This fragmentation refers to a condition in which various governmental units operate independently, each with its own systems, procedures, and indicators, without sufficient coordination or integration. As a result, the implementation of social protection programs becomes overlapping, inefficient, and frequently mistargeted. Theoretically, bureaucratic fragmentation has been discussed in Lindblom's classic essay "The Science of 'Muddling Through'", in which he argues that decision-making processes in public administration tend to be decentralized and incremental. Rather than following a fully rational

model, public decision-making often evolves through small, pragmatic adjustments, which if uncoordinated can reinforce institutional silos and policy misalignment.

“Even partisanship and narrowness, to use pejorative terms, will sometimes be assets to rational decision-making, for they can doubly insure that what one agency neglects, another will not; they specialize personnel to distinct points of view... But a high degree of administrative coordination occurs as each agency adjusts its policies to the concerns of the other agencies in the process of fragmented decision-making I have just described (Lindblom, dalam Shafritz & Hyde, 2017, p. 187)”.

Lindblom reiterates that although bureaucratic fragmentation poses risks of inefficiency and coordination failure, it may also enable the diversification of perspectives and specialization of functions across institution. However, these potential advantages can only be realized if there is a strong mechanism for inter institution coordination and policy alignment. In the context of Banyumas Regency, such ideal conditions have not yet been achieved. Institution responsible for data collection and the distribution of poverty alleviation programs tend to operate in silos, using their own systems and indicators without comprehensive policy harmonization. This condition undermines program effectiveness and increases the risk of mistargeting.

Administratively, this condition reflects the concept of bounded rationality, which refers to the limitations of public institutions in making decisions due to constraints in information, time, and coordination (Simon, 1947). Local governments are often caught in a dilemma between maintaining sectoral autonomy and addressing the need for broader cross-functional policy integration. Within a Weberian framework, an ideal bureaucracy is characterized by formal rationality, a clear hierarchical structure, and well-defined divisions of labor. However, in practice as criticized by Herbert A. Simon and Charles E. Lindblom decision making in the public sector is often incremental and fragmented. Lindblom (1959) referred to this pattern as fragmented incrementalism, where policies evolve through small, disjointed steps without comprehensive coordination. This leads to program ineffectiveness, particularly in the absence of strong coordination mechanisms and integrated data systems.

Bureaucratic fragmentation is not merely a technical obstacle; it directly affects the effectiveness of public service delivery and the distribution of social protection programs. When various institution perform overlapping functions without adequate coordination, structural inefficiencies emerge, weakening overall governmental performance. Henry (2017) explains that:

“Six federal agencies... [and uncounted] state and local agencies, as well as for-profit and nonprofit agencies directly provide services. This array of programs [is] too fragmented and overly complex—for clients to navigate, [and] for program operators to administer effectively... The complexity and variation in eligibility rules and other requirements among programs contribute to time-consuming and duplicative administrative processes that add to overall costs (Henry, 2017:299)”.

This explanation reinforces the notion that the complexity caused by bureaucratic fragmentation not only complicates policy implementation but also hinders public access to services they are rightfully entitled to. Fragmentation, in this context, is not merely a managerial challenge it is also a matter of social justice.

### **A Social Equity Perspective in Public Administration**

In the theoretical framework of public administration, there is an emphasis on the importance of a fair and systematic structure in the delivery of public services. As stated, “Poor communities in highly fragmented metropolises receive fewer services that they need than do poor communities in centralized metropolises” (Henry, 2017:303). This statement highlights how fragmentation directly affects the reduction of service access for the most vulnerable groups. In other words, without inclusive policy design and a coordinated system that prioritizes marginalized populations, the principle of social equity will not be realized in public administration.

Charles E. Lindblom, in *The Science of “Muddling Through”*, also emphasized the importance of adjusting public policies to be more responsive to the real needs of society: “a high degree of administrative coordination occurs as each institution adjusts its policies to the concerns of the other institution in the process of fragmented decision-making...” (Shafritz & Hyde, 2017, p. 187). However, when such adjustments do not occur, or when institution fail to coordinate effectively, policy outcomes no longer reflect the principle of equity, but instead perpetuate inequity. Furthermore, Simon (1947) stressed that decision-making in bureaucratic systems often operates within the constraints of limited information and rationality what he terms bounded rationality which contributes to the failure of designing policies that are truly responsive to the broader public needs.

### **CONCLUSION**

Poverty in Banyumas Regency is not merely an economic issue, but also a matter of data governance and inter institution coordination within government institutions. The inconsistency in poverty data caused by differences in indicators, methodologies, and institutional perspectives has resulted in serious bureaucratic fragmentation. This condition hampers the accurate identification of poor populations, ultimately leading to the mistargeting of social assistance programs and negatively affecting the effectiveness of public policy.

Bureaucratic fragmentation is reflected in the absence of a unified and integrated system for managing poverty data. Each institution tends to operate in a sectoral manner, using different databases and indicators, and often resists system integration. This situation not only leads to budget inefficiencies

and duplication of administrative processes, but also undermines the principle of social equity in public administration. Communities that should be prioritized are frequently overlooked, while individuals who no longer meet the eligibility criteria continue to receive assistance due to weaknesses in inter-institution verification mechanisms.

Another finding reveals that decision-making in social policy is still not fully based on verified data. The inconsistency of data across government units weakens institutional capacity to design policies that are responsive, inclusive, and well-targeted. This condition reflects a failure to uphold the principles of good governance, particularly in terms of transparency, accountability, and efficiency.

The recommended action is the urgent need for a comprehensive reform of poverty data management systems. Local governments, in collaboration with the central government, must develop a coordination framework that enables data integration across institutions, using standardized indicators and a multidimensional approach. Furthermore, collaborative and continuous mechanisms for data verification and validation are needed, along with the strengthening of human resource capacity in data management.

By doing so, social policies can more accurately and fairly address the needs of poor communities, ensuring effectiveness and sustainability while also reflecting the state's commitment to promoting the welfare of all citizens. The core solution lies in building a unified, integrated, and participatory poverty data system that bridges institutional and empowers local actors. Only through such systemic reform can social policies in regions like Banyumas become truly inclusive, accurate, and impactful.

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