

Policy Network Analysis in Poverty Alleviation Policies in Indramayu Regency

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Abstract : Policy networks play an important role in improving the effectiveness of poverty reduction policies, as they involve interaction and collaboration between local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, academics, and the community. This study aims to analyze the structure of policy networks and their influence on the effectiveness of poverty reduction programs in Indramayu Regency. The study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method, and data is collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies. The results show that limited collaboration between actors, uneven distribution of resources and information, variations in the capacity of non-governmental actors, and weak coordination and communication mechanisms are the main obstacles affecting the effectiveness and sustainability of the program. This study concludes that strengthening policy networks through collaborative forums, increasing actor capacity, sustainable coordination mechanisms, simplifying regulations, and collective learning can improve the effectiveness of poverty reduction policies. These findings contribute theoretically to the study of policy networks and provide practical recommendations for the governance of poverty reduction programs at the regional level.

Keywords: policy networks, poverty alleviation, collaboration, Indramayu Regency

1. Introduction

Poverty is a multidimensional problem that is not only related to limited income but also concerns access to education, health care, employment, and social and political participation (Sen, 1999; World Bank, 2020). In the context of regional development, poverty alleviation requires a collaborative approach involving various stakeholders, including local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, and local communities (Maulana, 2025; Panjaitan, 2018). The complexity of this problem cannot be resolved through fragmented sectoral approaches but requires coordinated and sustainable policy integration (Marsh & Stoker, 2019).

In public policy studies, the policy network approach offers a relevant analytical framework for understanding the interactions between actors in the process of policy formulation and implementation (Rhodes, 1997). Policy networks are understood as relatively stable patterns of relationships between governmental and non-governmental actors who are interdependent in the exchange of resources, information, and legitimacy (Rhodes, 1997; Marsh & Stoker, 2019). Through these networks, the policy process becomes more inclusive and adaptive to evolving social dynamics (Ilhami, 2023a).

Strengthening policy networks has been shown to contribute to the effectiveness of public policies, particularly on cross-sectoral issues such as poverty (Ilhami, 2023b). Collaboration between actors enables resource synergy and increased institutional capacity, resulting in more responsive and targeted policies (Widyawati et al., 2025). Furthermore, public-private partnerships can be a strategic instrument for expanding financing and innovation in poverty alleviation programs (Sukandi, 2024).

At the local level, participatory and accountable governance is a crucial prerequisite for effective poverty management policies (Ilhami, 2023a). Decentralization provides local governments with the opportunity to design more contextual policies tailored to the needs of local communities (Kartini, 2025). However, coordination challenges, resource

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constraints, and capacity differences between actors often hinder policy implementation (Amaruddin, 2024).

Indramayu Regency, as a region with a highly complex poverty problem, requires optimal cross-sectoral coordination. Policy fragmentation and weak communication between stakeholders have the potential to hamper the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs (Panjaitan, 2018). Previous studies have shown that a weak policy network structure can lead to program duplication, budget inefficiency, and low impact of social interventions (Maulana, 2025). Therefore, strengthening coordination mechanisms and improving the quality of relationships between actors is an urgent need in regional poverty governance (Widyawati et al., 2025).

Beyond structural aspects, regional leadership also plays a strategic role in building solid policy networks. Visionary and collaborative leadership can facilitate cross-sector dialogue and create spaces for inclusive participation (Kartini, 2025). This aligns with the view that modern governance emphasizes the principle of network governance, in which the government acts as both coordinator and facilitator of collaboration between actors (Rhodes, 1997; Marsh & Stoker, 2019).

A network-based approach is also relevant to the global agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the first goal on poverty eradication (United Nations, 2015). Implementing the SDGs requires multi-stakeholder partnerships as a form of collective responsibility in development (Panjaitan, 2018). Therefore, policy network analysis is crucial for evaluating the extent to which intersectoral relationships can effectively and sustainably promote the achievement of poverty alleviation targets.

This study aims to analyze the structure and effectiveness of policy networks in supporting poverty management policies in Indramayu Regency. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of policy network studies in the context of local governance in Indonesia (Ilhami, 2023b; Rhodes, 1997). Practically, the research findings are expected to provide strategic recommendations for strengthening cross-sector collaboration to improve the effectiveness of regional poverty alleviation programs (Widyawati et al., 2025; World Bank, 2020).

By emphasizing the importance of coordination, collaboration, and leadership within policy networks, this study confirms that poverty alleviation depends not only on budget size but also on the quality of interactions between the involved actors. The synergy built within a strong policy network is believed to be capable of producing more innovative, inclusive, and sustainable solutions to address poverty at the regional level (Sen, 1999; United Nations, 2015).

2. Literature review

1. Policy Network

Policy networks are a concept that emphasizes that public policy is formed through interactions between various interdependent actors, including government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, academics, and the public. Rhodes (1997) states that policy networks encompass relatively stable patterns of relationships between these actors, where information, resources, and influence are distributed to support the policy-making and implementation process. Marsh and Rhodes (1992) add that network characteristics, such as membership structure, intensity of interaction, distribution of power, and stability of relationships, determine the network's ability to facilitate policy coordination, collaboration, and innovation.

In the context of poverty alleviation policies, policy networks enable information exchange, program coordination, and cross-sector collaboration, so that poverty alleviation programs can be more responsive, efficient, and sustainable.

2. Poverty Alleviation Policy

Poverty alleviation policies aim to reduce poverty through social, economic, and community empowerment programs. The quality of poverty alleviation policies is greatly influenced by the government's ability to integrate various strategic actors. Indicators of success include program effectiveness, equitable benefit distribution, community engagement, and the sustainability of interventions (Sabatier, 2007; Howlett, 2014).

Collaboration between actors within policy networks is key, given the complex and multidimensional nature of poverty. Ansell and Gash (2008) emphasize that synergy between stakeholders, trust, open communication, and participatory decision-making mechanisms are crucial for the success of poverty alleviation programs. In other words, effective policy networks support coordination, program innovation, and policy adaptation to community needs.

3. Research methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The qualitative approach was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of the structure of policy networks, interaction patterns between actors, and the effectiveness of collaboration in poverty alleviation policies in Indramayu Regency. The case study approach allows for contextual analysis that focuses on policy dynamics at the regional level. The research location is Indramayu Regency, with a focus on the policy networks involved in poverty alleviation programs, including social services, NGOs, the private sector, and community groups involved in program implementation.

4. Research result

The results of the field research obtained Empirical Problem Identification include,

Interaction between stakeholders in poverty alleviation policy networks remains limited. Local governments, NGOs, the private sector, and communities tend to work separately, resulting in suboptimal information exchange, program coordination, and cross-sector collaboration. This situation hinders the achievement of effective synergy in poverty alleviation programs.

Access to information and the distribution of resources related to poverty alleviation programs are unequal. Local governments dominate decision-making, while NGOs, the private sector, and communities have limited access to participate in policy planning and evaluation processes.

The technical, managerial, and resource capacities of non-governmental actors, including NGOs and the private sector, vary. This impacts their ability to participate strategically in policy networks, thus limiting their contribution to program effectiveness and policy innovation.

Coordination between actors within policy networks remains ad hoc or limited to formal meetings. Weak routine communication and the lack of ongoing coordination mechanisms hinder collective learning and program innovation, resulting in suboptimal implementation of poverty alleviation policies.

The above problems have a direct impact on the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs, as seen from the low level of program integration, limited innovation, lack of responsiveness of policies to community needs, and minimal sustainability of interventions.

Discussion

Research findings indicate that the effectiveness of poverty alleviation in Indramayu Regency is significantly influenced by the quality of the existing policy network. One key issue is limited collaboration between actors, with local governments, NGOs, the private sector, and communities tending to work separately. Rhodes (1997) emphasized that effective policy networks require intensive interaction between actors and balanced information distribution. When interaction between actors is limited, program coordination and innovation are less than optimal, thus reducing the impact of policies on poverty alleviation. The Indramayu Regency Government needs to establish or strengthen a policy network forum involving all stakeholders, including social services, NGOs, the private sector, academics, and beneficiary communities. This forum serves as a space for coordination, consultation, and regular dialogue to enable more effective information exchange, program alignment, and cross-sector collaboration.

Furthermore, unequal distribution of resources and access to information influences the strategic role of non-governmental actors. Marsh and Rhodes (1992) assert that the distribution of power within networks determines the level of participation, legitimacy, and accountability of policies. The dominance of local governments reduces the contribution of NGOs, the private sector, and communities to program planning and evaluation processes, resulting in low policy relevance and innovation. The technical, managerial, and resource capacities of non-governmental actors, such as NGOs and the private sector, need to be enhanced through training, mentoring, and assistance. Ansell and Gash (2008) emphasize that actors with adequate capacity are able to participate strategically, contribute to program innovation, and increase the effectiveness of poverty reduction policies.

Variations in the capacity of non-governmental actors are also important factors. Ansell and Gash (2008) emphasize that effective collaboration requires actors with the technical capacity, resources, and analytical skills to participate strategically. This limited capacity leads to symbolic non-governmental participation, thus limiting the quality of poverty alleviation policy implementation. Collaborative mechanisms must be established in a formal, transparent, and sustainable manner. Each policy stage—planning, implementation, and evaluation—must involve all network actors with clear coordination channels. This will encourage innovation, accountability, and sustainability of poverty alleviation programs.

Furthermore, weak coordination and communication mechanisms within the network hamper collective learning and program innovation. Ad hoc meetings and irregular communication lead to suboptimal program integration. An inclusive, participatory, and sustainable network structure is needed for more effective information exchange and cross-sector collaboration, enabling poverty alleviation programs to be more responsive and sustainable. Regulations supporting the participation of non-governmental actors need to be strengthened to expand collaboration and enhance the network's legitimacy. Simplifying bureaucracy will facilitate NGOs, the private sector, and communities to contribute optimally to program planning and evaluation.

Overall, these findings confirm that policy networks play a strategic role in the effectiveness of poverty alleviation policies. Strong networks enable better coordination, equitable information distribution, program innovation, and policies that adapt to community needs. This analysis reinforces the theory of Rhodes, Marsh & Rhodes, and Ansell & Gash, which states that the quality of public policy is highly dependent on the effectiveness of policy networks and synergy between actors. Regular meetings, program evaluations, and exchange of best practices between actors need to be institutionalized. This collective learning strengthens policy networks, improves coordination, and encourages more responsive, innovative, and sustainable poverty alleviation programs.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that policy networks play a strategic role in the effectiveness of poverty alleviation policies in Indramayu Regency. Empirical findings indicate that limited collaboration between actors, uneven distribution of resources and information, variations in the capacity of non-governmental actors, and weak coordination and communication mechanisms are the main obstacles that affect the effectiveness, innovation, and sustainability of poverty alleviation programs. The results of the study confirm that strengthening policy networks through collaborative forums, increasing actor capacity, sustainable coordination mechanisms, simplifying regulations, and institutionalizing collective learning can increase the effectiveness of poverty alleviation. With inclusive, participatory, and collaborative networks, coordination between actors is more effective, program innovation increases, and policies become more responsive to community needs. This study provides theoretical contributions to the study of policy networks as well as practical recommendations for improving the governance of poverty alleviation programs in Indramayu Regency.

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