

Poverty and Public Policy: Local Government Efforts to Reduce Extreme Poverty

Suranto Eko Widodo*¹, Ratna Wulandari²

¹Department of Government Studies, STISIP Bina Marta Martapura, Indonesia

²Civil Servant of Regional Development Planning, Research and Development Agency of East Ogan Komering Ulu Regency, Indonesia

*Email Co-Authors: eko.binamarta@gmail.com

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Abstract: This study investigates the local government's endeavors in combating extreme poverty within the context of Poverty and Public Policy. Through a comprehensive analysis of local government initiatives, methodologies, and outcomes, this research aims to provide insights into effective strategies for poverty reduction at the grassroots level. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, including qualitative interviews, policy analysis, and statistical modeling, the study examines the efficacy of various poverty alleviation programs implemented by local governments. Findings from this research highlight the significance of coordinated efforts between local governments, community stakeholders, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in addressing extreme poverty. Moreover, the study underscores the importance of context-specific interventions tailored to the unique socio-economic landscape of each locality. Recommendations include the enhancement of community participation in policy formulation, the implementation of targeted poverty reduction programs, and the provision of comprehensive social assistance schemes. This research contributes to the body of knowledge on poverty alleviation by shedding light on the role of local governments in addressing extreme poverty. By elucidating effective strategies and policy frameworks, this study aims to inform policymakers, practitioners, and scholars alike, thus facilitating evidence-based decision-making and fostering sustainable poverty reduction efforts.

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INTRODUCTION

Poverty is still one of the main problems for developing countries (Alkire & Santos, 2014; Fosu, 2017), including Indonesia (Luckyardi et al., 2022; Sugiharti et al., 2022; Yusuf & Sumner, 2015). Poverty reduction efforts continue to be carried out by the Government and have been implemented since the 1970s until now but have not been able to solve the problem of poverty in Indonesia (Saleem & Donaldson, 2016; Taruno, 2019). Referring to data from the Central Statistics Agency, the dynamics of the poverty rate in Indonesia had dropped to single digits for the first time in Indonesian history where in 2019 the poverty rate in Indonesia reached 9.87%. However, this figure crept up again in September 2020, poverty in Indonesia was recorded at 10.19%.

The dynamics of poverty rates in Indonesia is caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In March 2021, Indonesia's poor population was 10.14%, this figure only decreased by 0.05% compared to September 2020. In this period, the number of poor Indonesians decreased by 0.05% from 27.55 million in September 2020 to 27.54 million. This figure tends to increase when compared to March 2020, which is 4.2%. The dynamics of poverty

rates that occur nationally also occur at the provincial and Regency / city levels. East Ogan Komering Ulu (OKU) Regency as one of the Regencys in South Sumatra Province is also not free from the problem of poverty. Based on BPS data, the poverty rate in East OKU in 2021 increased compared to the previous year.

Table 1. Development of Poor People in East OKU Regency

Year	Number of poor people	Percentage of population poor
2017	72 810	11,00
2018	70 650	10,57
2019	70 400	10,42
2020	71 100	10,43
2021	72 890	10,60

Source: *Pocketbook of data and social indicators of South Sumatra Province*

Table 1 shows data that the poverty rate in East OKU Regency has remained steady at 10.6% in 2021, compared to 10.43% in 2019 and 2020. The current number of poor people in the Regency is 72,890. The rate has remained around 10%, indicating significant challenges in reducing poverty in the region. Factors contributing to the persistent poverty rate in East OKU include the local economy, social, and infrastructure aspects. To address this issue, the government and stakeholders should develop policies and programs focusing on improving the welfare of the people. Measures such as improving access to education, skills training, job creation, and infrastructure development can be effective solutions. Collaborative efforts from various parties are needed to achieve significant progress in reducing poverty levels in the region (Lawelai & Nurmandi, 2023).

Poverty is a complex issue affecting individuals and households across various dimensions, including income, health, education, access to goods and services, location, geographical conditions, gender, and environmental conditions (Bradshaw et al., 2017; Leichenko & Silva, 2014). To effectively reduce poverty, all parties, including the poor, must be involved in the development process. A holistic approach, including financial assistance, health and education services, economic empowerment, and sustainable environmental management, is necessary (Fatimah et al., 2020; Thacker et al., 2019). This holistic approach ensures comprehensive and sustainable solutions, improving the welfare of the wider community and fostering a sense of ownership in the development process.

Poverty is a social and economic condition where individuals or groups cannot maintain a dignified life due to unmet basic needs and differences in treatment (Akinola, 2019; Petrelli et al., 2019). It manifests in various forms, such as lack of access to food, clean water, housing, education, and healthcare. Poverty deepens social and economic disparities, marginalizing individuals and groups (Bessell, 2015; Rodríguez-Pose & Hardy, 2015). It also impacts psychological and emotional aspects, causing stress, anxiety, and feelings of helplessness. To overcome poverty, a comprehensive approach involving government, civil society, private sector, and international institutions is needed. Strategic measures like social assistance, skills training, infrastructure development, and inclusive policies are essential.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to address poverty by building on the successes of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges worldwide (Dugarova & Gülasan, 2017; Lomazzi et al., 2014). The SDGs consist of 17 goals and 169 targets, spanning 2015 to 2030, and aim to eradicate poverty, which is a multifaceted issue that impacts individuals and communities globally (Giribabu, 2019; Komarulzaman et al., 2023). Poverty persists as a significant challenge for most nations, particularly in developing countries, and its ramifications are far-reaching, affecting access to basic necessities like food, shelter, education, and healthcare.

To effectively address poverty, efforts must extend beyond conventional economic measures and consider social and environmental factors (Silvander & Peels, 2016). Holistic approaches, including interventions aimed at enhancing education, healthcare, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and socio-economic empowerment, are essential for sustainable poverty reduction (Idike et al., 2021). The SDGs provide a comprehensive framework for concerted action towards poverty eradication, allowing nations to progress towards a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

The SDGs are universally adopted objectives that aim to promote inclusive, equitable, and environmentally sustainable development (Gupta & Vegelin, 2016). Local governments play a crucial role in achieving these goals by being policy makers and implementers at the grassroots level (Guha & Chakrabarti, 2019). They have advantages such as proximity to citizens, authority, budgetary autonomy, and the ability to innovate. This proximity allows for tailored interventions to address specific challenges effectively. Local governments also have the capacity for innovation, enabling the exploration and implementation of novel approaches to sustainable development.

The Central Government mandates local governments to advance sustainable development across economic, social, and environmental dimensions (Ioppolo et al., 2016). This mandate includes fostering inclusive economic growth, promoting social equity and cohesion, and safeguarding environmental integrity (Wu et al., 2020). By aligning their policies, plans, and actions with the SDGs, local governments contribute to a sustainable and equitable future for their constituents. Strategic partnerships with civil society, private sector actors, and international organizations amplify their impact and leverage additional resources. Participatory governance mechanisms that engage citizens in decision-making processes enhance transparency, accountability, and ownership of development efforts, fostering a sense of collective responsibility towards the achievement of the SDGs.

Poverty is a multidimensional issue that requires comprehensive policy formulation that considers various links between other policies aimed at alleviating it. Policy choices are influenced by inputs, which can come from the policy environment that causes problems, such as people's aspirations and demands that have not been accommodated by the policy system. Policy inputs act as important information flows for policy makers to formulate solutions to address poverty. This paper focuses on the East OKU Regency Government's policies in overcoming poverty, highlighting the importance

of considering inputs from the policy environment and the challenges faced by the government in addressing poverty.

Policy inputs can come from various sources, such as people's aspirations and demands that have not been accommodated by the policy system. These inputs act as important information flows for policy makers to formulate solutions to address poverty. This paper aims to examine the East OKU Regency Government's policies in addressing poverty and addressing the challenges it presents.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is descriptive with a quantitative approach tailored to the research variables to focus on emerging issues related to extreme poverty reduction efforts at the local government level. This approach requires the presentation of findings in the form of numbers, tables, graphs, and diagrams. This study aims to systematically analyze the strategies and initiatives implemented by local governments to alleviate extreme poverty in their regions.

Using a descriptive method, this study systematically examines various aspects of poverty and public policy interventions. Through quantitative analysis, this research seeks to measure the level of poverty, identify its determinants, and assess the effectiveness of existing public policies in mitigating extreme poverty. By utilizing numerical data, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic landscape and the specific challenges faced by the poor.

In addition, the use of tables, graphs, and diagrams facilitates visual representation of the data, enhancing understanding and interpretation for both domestic and international audiences. These visual aids serve as valuable tools for presenting complex statistical information, trends, and patterns related to poverty and public policy initiatives. In addition, it also helps to illustrate the spatial distribution of poverty, resource allocation, and the impact of interventions across different geographic areas.

Through a descriptive method with a quantitative approach, this research seeks to shed light on the multi-faceted nature of extreme poverty and the efficacy of local government efforts in addressing this pressing social issue. By presenting the findings in a clear and comprehensible manner, this study aims to contribute to the discourse on poverty alleviation strategies, thereby informing policy makers, practitioners, and researchers around the world.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The East OKU Regency Government has been focusing on poverty alleviation since 2017-2021. Poverty is defined as an individual's inability to meet basic needs, including food and other necessities. It is a complex issue encompassing economic, social, cultural, and political aspects. To address poverty, the government has implemented strategies and sustainable programs, including increasing access to education and job training for low-income communities, which will improve their standard of living. Infrastructure development is also being prioritized to enhance accessibility and connectivity between regions, particularly in remote areas. The government and related parties are also

focusing on community empowerment, aiming to increase the capacity of communities to manage local resources and develop their economic potential. This approach aims to reduce dependence on social assistance and promote economic independence.

In the period from 2017 to 2021, East OKU Regency experienced significant changes in the number of poor people. The data shows that the percentage of poor people experienced a gradual decline from 11.00 percent in 2017 to 10.60 percent in 2021, as illustrated in Table 1. This change reflects the poverty reduction efforts undertaken in the region.

The poor and non-poor are differentiated based on the poverty line, which is the value of a person's basic needs to fulfill essential food and non-food needs for one month. This poverty line is influenced by inflation and increases every year. In East OKU Regency, the poverty line also increased from IDR 343,601 in 2020 to IDR 362,446 in 2021. This change also occurred in other districts/cities in South Sumatra Province, where the poverty line uniformly increased in 2021.

Not only did it increase, but the poverty line of East OKU Regency was always below the poverty line of South Sumatra Province throughout this period. The comparison of the poverty line between East OKU Regency and South Sumatra Province shows this pattern consistently. This indicates that the poverty rate in East OKU Regency is relatively lower than the poverty rate at the provincial level.

The approach to poverty using the expenditure or consumption dimension is often referred to as absolute poverty. This approach defines a person or household as poor if they are unable to fulfill a minimum consumption level consisting of essential food and non-food needs. This approach provides a clearer picture of the poverty condition and allows for the formulation of more appropriate policies in its reduction.

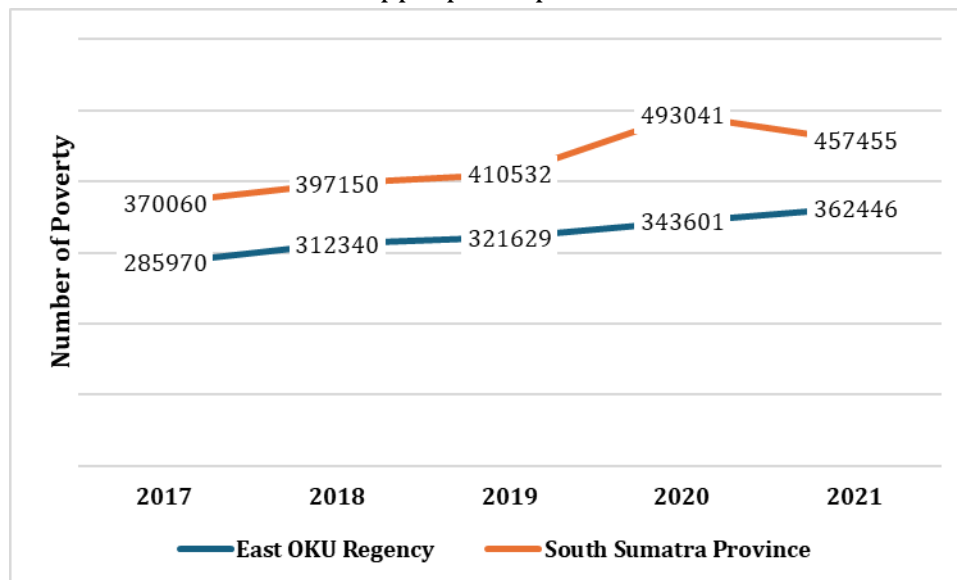


Figure 1. Line of Poverty in East OKU Regency and South Sumatra Province

The table shows the number of poor people in East OKU Regency and South Sumatra Province from 2017 to 2021. Both regions experienced fluctuations in the number of poor people over the past five years. In 2017, East OKU Regency had 285,970 poor people, while South Sumatra Province had 370,060. However, from year to year, there has been

an increase in the number of poor people in both regions. In 2020, South Sumatra Province experienced a significant spike in the number of poor people, reaching 493,041, while East OKU Regency experienced a lesser increase. In 2021, South Sumatra Province experienced a decrease to 457,455, while East OKU Regency saw an increase to 362,446, indicating that fluctuations in the number of poor people are more significant in South Sumatra Province.

Figure 2 shows that although South Sumatra Province had a higher number of poor people than East OKU Regency at the beginning of the period, fluctuations in the number of poor people tended to be more significant in South Sumatra Province. This may be due to different economic, social, and policy factors in each region. Therefore, the planning and implementation of poverty reduction programs should be adjusted to the local conditions of each region to achieve optimal results.

The Poverty Depth Index (P1) in East OKU Regency has shown a decline from 2017 to 2020, with a slight increase in 2021. The index began at 1.90, indicating a significant level of poverty depth. However, it gradually declined to 1.60 in 2018, 1.51 in 2019, and its lowest point in 2020 at 1.02. This indicates a significant improvement in poverty conditions in the region. In 2021, the P1 value rose to 1.30, indicating a positive direction in efforts to reduce poverty depth. The decline in the P1 index indicates that the average expenditure of the poor tends to approach or exceed the poverty line, indicating an increase in welfare for the poor.

This study is important not only for the decline in the P1 value but also for its implications for expenditure inequality among the poor. As poverty depth decreases, expenditure inequality among the poor narrows, indicating a positive structural change in the economic distribution in East OKU Regency. This study provides a deeper understanding of poverty eradication policies and programs in East OKU Regency, enabling the government and stakeholders to focus their efforts more efficiently and effectively combat poverty and improve population welfare.

Table 2. Poverty Line, Poverty Depth Index, and Poverty Severity Index in East OKU Regency

Indicator	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Poverty Line (Rp)	285970	312340	321629	343601	362446
Poverty depth index (P1)	1,90	1,60	1,51	1,02	1,30
Poverty Severity Index (P2)	0,51	0,37	0,32	0,14	0,23

Source: *Handbook of Social Data and Indicators of South Sumatra Province, 2017-2021*

The Poverty Severity Index (P2) is used to determine the distribution of expenditure among the poor. Similar to P1, the value of P2 is also getting lower. In 2017, the P2 figure for East OKU District increased to 0.51 compared to the previous year which was only 0.34. This figure decreased again to 0.37 in 2018 and decreased again to 0.32 in 2019, 0.14 in 2020, and 0.23 in 2021. This shows that the expenditure inequality of the poor in East OKU Regency is getting lower, as shown in Table 2.

In addition to the general decline in the poverty rate in East OKU Regency, the extreme poverty rate also experienced the same trend. Based on the presentation of the Head of the Central Bureau of Statistics of East OKU Regency at the Public Consultation

Forum for the Initial Draft of the RKPD of East OKU Regency Year 2024 on February 7, 2023, it was stated that the extreme poverty rate decreased from 0.99% in 2021 to 0.60% in 2022 or a decrease of 0.39 points from 6.81 thousand people to 4.16 thousand people or a decrease of 2.65 thousand people.

Table 3. Data on Extreme Poverty in OKU Timur Regency

Year	Percentage of extreme poverty (%)	Number of Extreme Poor (thousand)
2021	0,99	6,81
2022	0,60	4,16

Source: *Presentation of the Head of the Central Bureau of Statistics of East OKU Regency, 2023*

The Indonesian government has set a target to reduce extreme poverty to zero percent by 2024, six years faster than the international target. To achieve this, a definition of extreme poverty needs to be agreed upon. The World Bank's definition of extreme poverty is based on purchasing power parity below US\$1.9 per day. This terminology aligns with the SDGs and makes it more feasible to eradicate extreme poverty.

Extreme poverty alleviation efforts involve special interventions, focusing on reducing the expenditure burden of the poor and vulnerable through social protection programs and subsidies. Empowerment efforts aim to increase the productivity of poor and vulnerable groups, increasing economic capacity or income. Acceleration efforts are carried out in areas with extreme poverty pockets. The Poverty Reduction Coordination Team plays a strategic role in coordinating policy formulation, planning, implementation, and monitoring of poverty reduction implementation at the regional level. The government aims to eradicate extreme poverty by focusing on programs targeting extreme poor families whose numbers are far below the poverty line of the Central Bureau of Statistics.

Poverty Reduction Policy of East OKU Regency

The Indonesian government has set a poverty reduction target of 7% in the 2020-2024 RPJMN, guided by the Long-Term Development Plan and Regional Long-Term Development Plan. The target aims to reduce the burden of public expenditure through social assistance programs like Family Hope Program, Food Assistance Program (Rastra and Non-Cash Food), Smart Indonesia Program, and College Smart Indonesia Program. The government also encourages social security improvements through the Healthy Indonesia Program or National Health Insurance, and energy subsidy policy reforms. Additionally, the government aims to encourage income increase through empowering micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), developing the local economy, and expanding access to jobs.

The Government of East OKU Regency is implementing a strategy to reduce poverty and unemployment. The Regional Medium-Term Development Plan aims to reduce emissions by 0.61 percent annually, aiming to reduce poverty to 9.82 percent by 2026. The strategy includes three pathways: Pro-Growth, which focuses on accelerating economic growth through investment, exports, and business, and Pro-Employment, which focuses on job creation and a flexible labor market. The Pro-Poor Strategy aims to improve community capacity, expand access to basic services, and revitalize economic

sectors. By implementing these strategies holistically, East OKU Regency can achieve its poverty and unemployment reduction targets.

Poverty reduction policies in Indonesia are overseen by the National Team for the Acceleration of Poverty Reduction, led by the Vice President. This team consists of government, community, and business stakeholders (Asmarianti & Sabrina, 2023). At the provincial level, the Provincial Poverty Reduction Coordination Team coordinates poverty reduction activities, while at the district/city level, the District/City Poverty Reduction Coordination Team prepares an Annual Action Plan and Poverty Reduction Report annually. Coordination between government levels ensures the effectiveness of policies and programs, with the Provincial and District/City Poverty Reduction Coordination Teams preparing annual action plans and reports. The Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 53/2020 serves as the legal basis for poverty reduction activities at these levels.

The East OKU Regency Poverty Reduction Coordination Team, established by the East OKU Regent Number 364 of 2021, aims to reduce poverty in the region. The team comprises two working groups: Integrated Social Assistance Program Management Group for households, families, or individuals, and Community Empowerment Program Management Group for strengthening micro and small enterprises. The management of these efforts is crucial for achieving poverty reduction in East OKU Regency.

The Regional Poverty Reduction Coordination Team of East OKU Regency is implementing poverty reduction policies, which are a duplication of central government programs. This shift in local governance is expected to increase the urgency of poverty reduction efforts and improve the quality of services to the poor. Local governments will respond to and implement poverty issues effectively without relying on central government instructions. With increased regional authority, regional governments and the Regional House of Representatives have a significant responsibility to make strategic decisions for poverty reduction and improve community service quality.

Policy efforts to reduce poverty in East OKU Regency require innovation and the involvement of various organizations, communities, and NGOs. Civil society plays a crucial role in poverty reduction policies, driven by donor agencies, CSR business actors, and industry. The citizen forum aims to promote regional agreements that benefit marginalized communities and involve the poor in formulating regional budget policies. The study also highlights potentials that could interfere with the benefits of impact programs for the real poor, highlighting the need for more involvement from the government and NGOs in poverty reduction efforts.

The coordination of poverty reduction programs in East OKU Regency, as mandated by Presidential Regulation No. 13/2009, has been successful in reducing the poverty rate. The East OKU Regency Poverty Reduction Coordination Team has implemented numerous poverty reduction activities and programs, aiming to reach the target poverty rate of 9.82% in line with the Medium-Term Development Plan for 2021-2026. However, this target is still too small compared to the potential of East OKU Regency in reducing poverty.

The government of East OKU Regency faces challenges in the implementation of poverty reduction programs. These include a lack of coordination between local government organizations, a lack of coordination between local government organizations and the District TKPK secretariat, and the absence of a Regional Government Policy in determining poverty indicators. Additionally, problems in the implementation of poverty reduction programs include being partial, not integrated, and comprehensive, as the database is not valid based on actual conditions in the field.

There is also no specific and accurate poverty reduction instrument to analyze poverty conditions in accordance with the dimensions of poverty problems in each region. The perspective on poverty is economically oriented and oriented towards macroeconomic growth, focusing more on the economic aspect. In reality, poverty is a multidimensional problem, and poverty reduction programs must prioritize other aspects holistically.

Poverty reduction programs with a top-down planning pattern position the poor as objects rather than active actors in the process. To accelerate the reduction of poverty in East OKU Regency, there must be unity of movement between all elements and government institutions, making the Regional Poverty Reduction Strategy a reference in the implementation of regional poverty reduction programs.

CONCLUSION

The poverty reduction program in East OKU Regency has shown remarkable success in reducing the number of poor people in the region. In particular, there has been a significant decrease from 0.99% in 2021 to 0.60% in 2022, which represents a decrease of 2.65 thousand people. This achievement is inseparable from the establishment of a Poverty Reduction Coordination Team consisting of two different working groups, namely the Integrated Social Assistance Program management group, which focuses on providing assistance to households, families, or individuals, and the Community Empowerment Program management group, which is dedicated to promoting the growth of micro and small businesses.

The alignment of the supporting documents of the Poverty Reduction Policy in East OKU Regency with the poverty reduction policies and strategies in Indonesia, as outlined in Presidential Regulation No. 15/2010, has been ensured. In addition, the emphasis on poverty and unemployment reduction in the National Medium-Term Development Plan 2020-2024 and the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan 2021-2026 underscores the government's commitment to addressing these pressing issues.

However, there are still some challenges in the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Policy in East OKU Regency, especially in terms of coordination and equitable implementation of poverty reduction programs. To accelerate progress in poverty reduction, innovative policies and broader involvement of various stakeholders, including the government, the community, and non-governmental organizations, are needed. In addition, the involvement of civil society, influenced by donor agencies, corporate social responsibility initiatives, and industry players, plays a crucial role in the success of poverty reduction efforts.

This research makes a significant contribution to existing knowledge by providing insights into the effectiveness of local government poverty reduction initiatives. The findings underscore the importance of coordinated efforts and community involvement in fighting poverty at the grassroots level. Practically, this research highlights the need for innovative approaches and broader stakeholder engagement to overcome challenges and accelerate progress in poverty reduction.

The theoretical implications of this study emphasize the importance of aligning local policies with national poverty reduction strategies and the critical role of community empowerment in sustainable development efforts. Going forward, future research should address the limitations identified, such as the need for more comprehensive data collection and evaluation methodologies. Recommendations for future research include exploring the long-term impact of poverty reduction programs and investigating the role of technology and digital innovation in improving the effectiveness of poverty reduction efforts.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates the effectiveness of well-targeted poverty reduction policies in East OKU Regency, while acknowledging the challenges faced in their implementation. By encouraging collaboration and innovation, policymakers can overcome these obstacles and move towards more inclusive and sustainable development. These findings underscore the importance of evidence-based policymaking and the need for ongoing research to effectively inform and guide poverty reduction initiatives.

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