

Social Assistance And The Problematics Of Community Poverty Alleviation In West Aceh Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the role of social assistance in poverty alleviation efforts in West Aceh Regency and to identify the social problems arising from the implementation of social assistance programs within the community. The research problems in this study are how social assistance contributes to poverty alleviation in West Aceh Regency and what social problems emerge in the implementation of social assistance programs in West Aceh Regency. This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach through a library research method. The data collection techniques used in this study include literature review, documentation, and analysis of various scientific journals, academic articles, news reports, and government documents relevant to social assistance and poverty alleviation. The data analysis techniques were carried out through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This study uses Karl Marx's theory of structural poverty as the main analytical framework. The results of the study indicate that social assistance plays an important role in helping poor communities fulfill their basic needs through programs such as Direct Cash Assistance (BLT), the Family Hope Program (PKH), food assistance, livable housing assistance, and assistance for the poor through the Baitul Mal of West Aceh Regency. These social assistance programs help improve community welfare, maintain the economic stability of poor families, and support the fulfillment of educational and healthcare needs within the community. However, in its implementation, various social problems were still found, such as inaccurate targeting of beneficiaries, weak validity of poverty data, delays in aid distribution, social jealousy among the community, and misuse of social assistance, including the involvement of aid recipients in online gambling practices. In addition, poverty in West Aceh Regency is also influenced by social and economic inequalities, causing poor communities to continue experiencing limited access to social welfare and economic resources equally.

Keyword : Social Assistance, Poverty, Poverty Alleviation, Karl Marx, West Aceh, Sociology of Development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Overt poverty remains one of the major social problems that continues to be the primary focus of development in Indonesia. Poverty is not only related to low income levels but also includes limited access to education, healthcare, employment, and social welfare. In the study of the Sociology of Development, poverty is viewed as a multidimensional issue influenced by social inequality and unequal distribution of resources within society. Therefore, the government continues to implement various development policies and social assistance programs as efforts to reduce poverty rates among the community (Putra, Maulana, & Zulhimi, 2024).

The Indonesian government has implemented various social assistance programs such as *Direct Cash Assistance* (BLT), *the Family Hope Program* (PKH), food assistance, and village funds as forms of social protection for poor communities. Social assistance is expected to help communities fulfill their basic needs and improve social welfare. Social assistance programs have also become one of the regional development instruments in efforts to alleviate poverty and reduce social inequality within society (Dira & Ichsan, 2025).

Ideally, social assistance should be able to create equitable social welfare and reach beneficiaries accurately. However, in its implementation, various social problems are still found, such as inaccurate targeting of beneficiaries, weak validity of poverty data, delays in aid distribution, and the emergence of social jealousy within society. Inaccurate beneficiary data has become one of the factors causing poverty alleviation programs to remain ineffective in several regions in Aceh (Deviana, 2025).

Aceh Province remains one of the regions with the highest poverty rates in Indonesia. The high poverty rate in Aceh is influenced by various factors, including limited infrastructure, low access to education and employment, and unequal regional development. These conditions cause poor communities to experience difficulties in fulfilling their basic needs and obtaining equal access to social welfare (Soufyan et al., 2025).

West Aceh Regency is one of the regions in Aceh Province that still faces poverty-related issues. The West Aceh Regency Government has implemented various poverty alleviation programs through social assistance, Aceh Special Autonomy Funds, food assistance, and community empowerment programs. Based on research data regarding the implementation of poverty alleviation policies through the Aceh Special Autonomy Fund (DOKA), the poverty rate in West Aceh Regency decreased from 17.25% in 2020 to 15.68% in 2023. Nevertheless, these poverty alleviation efforts are still considered less than optimal due to various obstacles found in their implementation (Islami, 2025).

The phenomenon of social assistance distribution in West Aceh Regency has also become a public concern because various problems are still found in the aid distribution process. Research on the distribution of BLT social assistance funds in Meureubo District, West Aceh Regency, showed that the process of determining aid recipients was carried out through community data collection stages by village officials. However, in practice, there were still changes in beneficiary data and mismatches in social assistance recipients, resulting in social problems within the community (Arba'iyah et al., 2022).

In addition, various studies indicate that social assistance has not been fully capable of solving poverty problems comprehensively. Social assistance programs indeed help poor communities fulfill

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their basic needs; however, in practice, problems related to coordination, transparency, and equal distribution of aid are still frequently found. These conditions have caused the objectives of social assistance programs in poverty alleviation to remain suboptimal (Kurniawan et al., 2024).

From the perspective of Karl Marx, poverty is viewed as a consequence of unequal social structures and unequal distribution of resources within society. Karl Marx explained that poor communities occupy a weak position because they lack access to economic resources and social welfare. Poverty is not merely caused by individual factors but is also influenced by social structures and economic systems that create inequality within society. In this context, social assistance is viewed as a form of state intervention aimed at reducing social inequality and helping poor communities gain access to welfare. However, if the distribution of assistance is not carried out fairly and equally, social inequality will continue to exist within society (Ramazan & Safrida, 2022).

Based on these problems, this research is important to analyze social assistance and the problems of community poverty alleviation in West Aceh Regency. This study is expected to provide an overview of how social assistance programs are implemented in poverty alleviation efforts and the various social problems that arise during their implementation within the community of West Aceh.

1.2 Research Problem

Based on the background above, the research problems in this study are:

1. How does social assistance contribute to community poverty alleviation efforts in West Aceh Regency?
2. What social problems emerge in the implementation of social assistance programs in West Aceh Regency?

1.3 Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to analyze the role of social assistance in community poverty alleviation efforts in West Aceh Regency and to identify the social problems that emerge in the implementation of social assistance programs in West Aceh Regency.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on social assistance and the problems of community poverty alleviation in West Aceh Regency. The discussion is limited to government social assistance programs such as *Direct Cash Assistance* (BLT), *the Family Hope Program* (PKH), food assistance, and other social assistance programs related to the welfare of poor communities. This study employs a library research method by analyzing various scientific journals, research articles, government documents, and previous studies relevant to social assistance and poverty alleviation

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach to explain in depth the social phenomenon regarding social assistance and the problems of community poverty alleviation in West Aceh Regency. According to Sugiyono (2021), qualitative research methods are used

to understand social phenomena based on natural conditions by emphasizing meaning, process, and interpretation toward a social problem. The descriptive approach in this study was used to describe the conditions of social assistance, the implementation of poverty alleviation programs, and various social problems emerging within the community of West Aceh Regency.

The research data were obtained through library research or literature studies, which are understood as a series of scientific activities including the processes of collecting, reading, recording, and processing various literature sources relevant to the research topic (Zed, 2014). The primary data sources in this study consisted of books, scientific journals, academic articles, news reports, government documents, and research reports discussing themes related to social assistance, poverty, poverty alleviation, and social inequality within the community of West Aceh Regency.

The selection of the literature study method was based on the consideration that the issue of social assistance and poverty alleviation in West Aceh has been widely studied from various social, economic, and community development perspectives, allowing comprehensive analysis to be conducted by reviewing and integrating the findings of previous studies. In addition, this method enabled the researcher to identify patterns, social problems, inequalities in the distribution of social assistance, and the relevance of Karl Marx's structural poverty theory in explaining the social phenomena occurring within the community of West Aceh Regency.

The data analysis technique was carried out through content analysis using the structural poverty theory of Karl Marx as the main analytical framework. According to Karl Marx, poverty and social inequality arise due to differences in interests between groups possessing economic power and poor communities that have limited access to economic resources and social welfare. The analysis was conducted by categorizing data based on main themes such as social assistance, social inequality, aid distribution, community welfare, structural poverty, and social problems faced by poor communities.

Furthermore, the categorized data were analyzed interpretatively to identify the relationship between social assistance, social structures, economic inequality, and the problems of poverty alleviation in West Aceh Regency. The results of this analysis are expected to provide a deeper understanding of how social assistance contributes to poverty alleviation, how social inequality affects the effectiveness of social assistance programs, and how Karl Marx's structural poverty theory explains the phenomena of poverty and social welfare within the community of West Aceh Regency.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Poverty Conditions and Social Assistance in West Aceh

Poverty remains a social issue that continues to be one of the main development problems in Aceh Province, including in West Aceh Regency. Based on the findings of various studies, the high poverty rate in Aceh is influenced by unequal income distribution, low quality of education, high unemployment rates, and the lack of optimal regional development equity. These conditions cause poor

communities to experience limited access to education, healthcare, employment, and social welfare, making it difficult for them to escape the cycle of structural poverty (Soufyan et al., 2025).

West Aceh Regency is one of the regions that still faces poverty-related issues despite the implementation of various social assistance programs by the government. Research regarding the implementation of poverty alleviation policies through the Aceh Special Autonomy Fund (DOKA) showed that the government has implemented various interventions such as educational assistance, healthcare assistance, productive economic assistance, and social assistance for poor communities. These programs contributed to the decline in the poverty rate from 17.25% in 2020 to 15.68% in 2023. However, the implementation still faces various obstacles such as weak transparency, overlapping programs among institutions, and low community participation in the policy-making process (Islami, 2025).

Research findings regarding the implementation of good governance principles in poverty alleviation in West Aceh Regency indicate that transparency, accountability, participation, and equity significantly influence the success of social assistance programs. The study explained that accurate social assistance distribution can improve the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs and help communities gain more equitable access to social welfare. However, weak supervision and inaccurate beneficiary data remain obstacles in the implementation of social assistance programs in West Aceh (Utami, Ibrahim, & Adnan, 2024).

In addition to government assistance programs, poverty alleviation efforts in West Aceh have also been carried out through the innovation of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program “Makin Mesra,” involving cooperation between the local government and private companies. The program has contributed to increasing community economic activities and reducing unemployment rates. However, the implementation still faces problems such as limited human resources, slow distribution of funds, and inaccurate beneficiary data, causing the program benefits to be unevenly felt by poor communities (Ikhsan et al., 2024).

Research on the distribution of BLT social assistance funds in Meureubo District, West Aceh Regency, showed that the aid distribution process was conducted through stages of collecting data on poor communities by village officials. Although the village government had conducted beneficiary selection processes, in practice there were still changes in beneficiary data and mismatches in social assistance recipients. These conditions created social jealousy and conflicts within the community because the assistance was considered not to have been distributed fairly and equally (Arba'iyah et al., 2022).

Other social assistance programs, such as *the Family Hope Program* (PKH), have also shown positive impacts on the welfare of poor communities in West Aceh. Research by Husna and Maifizar (2023) showed that PKH helped poor communities fulfill their educational and healthcare needs. The assistance helped communities meet their daily living needs and reduced the economic burden on poor households (Husna & Maifizar, 2023). Another study regarding the impact of *the Family Hope Program* (PKH) on family welfare in Padang Seurahet Village, West Aceh Regency, showed that social assistance

helped improve community welfare through household consumption assistance and educational expenses for children. The PKH program was also considered to gradually reduce poverty rates in West Aceh communities (Muliana, Mursyidin, & Siregar, 2021).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, social assistance became one of the government's main instruments in maintaining the economic stability of poor communities. Research by Abizal, Maimun, and Yulindawati (2022) showed that the *Family Hope Program* (PKH) in Tangan-Tangan District, Southwest Aceh Regency, was fairly effective because it was able to improve the living standards of poor communities during the pandemic. However, the study also found obstacles in the form of weak coordination between village officials and aid recipients (Abizal, Maimun, & Yulindawati, 2022).

In addition to cash and food assistance, the West Aceh Regency Government through the *Regency Baitul Mal Institution* (BMK) also distributed assistance for poor communities in 2026 to 8,969 beneficiaries, with a total assistance amounting to Rp6,409,950,000. The program demonstrated the local government's commitment to poverty alleviation and improving community welfare through the management of zakat, infaq, and waqf funds. The assistance was not only directed toward consumptive cash assistance but was also designed to support the construction of housing for the poor, educational scholarships, and business capital assistance for poor communities. The West Aceh Government emphasized that social assistance is expected to encourage productive communities to become economically independent so that the number of beneficiaries can gradually decrease over time. This program also demonstrates collaboration between the local government, Baitul Mal, and the community in building a social welfare system based on local solidarity and Islamic philanthropy in West Aceh (West Aceh Regency Government, 2026).

In addition, the government also distributed food assistance in the form of rice to poor communities in West Aceh. The program aimed to maintain community welfare stability and reduce the economic burden on poor communities. The local government emphasized that accurate targeting is an important factor in the success of food assistance programs so that assistance is truly received by those in need (Bahri, 2025). Another social phenomenon emerging in the implementation of social assistance in West Aceh Regency is the involvement of some aid recipients in online gambling practices. The West Aceh Regency Government through the Social Affairs Office emphasized that recipients of social assistance or the *Family Hope Program* (PKH) proven to be involved in online gambling would be removed from the list of social assistance recipients. This policy was implemented based on instructions from the President of the Republic of Indonesia and the Minister of Social Affairs as an effort to strengthen supervision over the use of government social assistance. The government cooperated with the *Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis Center* (PPATK) to track the flow of social assistance funds through Family Card (KK) numbers and recipients' bank account transactions. This measure was intended to ensure that social assistance is truly used to fulfill the living needs of poor communities and not used for online gambling activities that could worsen the economic condition of beneficiary families (Bahri, 2025).

The involvement of social assistance recipients in online gambling practices also indicates more complex social problems within poor communities. Besides causing misuse of government assistance, online gambling also triggers household conflicts, family breakdowns, and increasing socio-economic problems within society. The West Aceh Government considers that eradicating online gambling requires cross-sector cooperation among the government, law enforcement agencies, financial institutions, community leaders, and religious institutions in order to maintain overall social stability within society (Bahri, 2025).

Various studies also indicate that social assistance has not been fully capable of solving poverty problems comprehensively. Research by Putri, Abral, and Amri (2025) showed that social assistance does not significantly influence poverty reduction if it is not accompanied by economic development and improvement in the quality of community human resources. Consumptive social assistance is considered unable to create sustainable economic independence among poor communities (Putri, Abral, & Amri, 2025).

Research by Paramita and Salam (2025) also showed that educational levels significantly influence poverty reduction, while social assistance has not provided optimal impacts if not accompanied by improvements in education quality and employment opportunities. These conditions indicate that poverty alleviation requires broader policies and cannot rely solely on government social assistance (Paramita & Salam, 2025).

In addition to economic issues, poverty in West Aceh is also influenced by limited access of vulnerable groups to social welfare. Research regarding the implementation of social rehabilitation programs for poor persons with disabilities in West Aceh Regency showed that people with disabilities face a higher risk of poverty due to limited access to education, employment, and social services. Although social rehabilitation programs help persons with disabilities obtain social assistance, the coverage of assistance remains very limited and has not yet reached all communities in need (Munawarah & Afriandi, 2025). Research regarding the effectiveness of livable housing programs in Southwest Aceh also showed that social assistance in the form of housing development helped poor communities obtain proper housing. However, the study found that the accuracy of beneficiary targeting remained a major issue in the implementation of government social assistance programs (Idris, Mukhrijal, & Rasanjani, 2023).

On the other hand, research regarding the social assistance management information system in Kuala Batee District, Southwest Aceh Regency, showed that conventional management of social assistance data caused the verification process to be slow and less transparent. Ineffective data collection systems caused errors in beneficiary data and hindered the distribution process of assistance to poor communities (Gunawan, Fitriliana, & Mulya, 2024).

Research on socio-economic analysis in Southwest Aceh also indicated that poverty is influenced by factors such as education, unemployment, population growth, and low wages. High unemployment rates and low educational levels make it difficult for communities to obtain employment and improve their family economic conditions (Al Zikri & Juliansyah, 2024). Besides the government and

private sector, local political parties also play a role in poverty alleviation in West Aceh. Research by Amanda, Herawati, and Afrizal (2023) showed that local political parties act as facilitators and policymakers in community welfare programs. However, their implementation still faces obstacles such as internal conflicts and social inequality within society (Amanda, Herawati, & Afrizal, 2023).

3.2 Analysis of Social Assistance from Karl Marx's Perspective

From the perspective of Karl Marx, poverty is not merely caused by individual weaknesses but is the result of social structures and economic systems that create inequality within society. Karl Marx explained that poor communities occupy weak positions because they lack access to means of production, economic resources, education, and social welfare. Therefore, poverty is viewed as a form of structural inequality produced by unjust social systems.

Based on the findings of various studies, these conditions can be seen in the poverty phenomenon in West Aceh, which is still influenced by unequal distribution of social assistance, low educational quality, high unemployment, and limited public access to economic development. Although the government has distributed various social assistance programs, poor communities still experience difficulties in obtaining equitable welfare because the economic structure of society is still dominated by groups possessing greater capital and economic power (Soufyan et al., 2025).

According to Karl Marx, the state within a capitalist system often functions as a tool to maintain social stability so that class conflict does not openly emerge. In the context of social assistance in West Aceh, government assistance programs can be viewed as a form of state intervention aimed at reducing social inequality among poor communities. Social assistance such as BLT, PKH, food assistance, assistance for the poor through Baitul Mal, and social rehabilitation assistance indeed help communities fulfill their daily needs, but these forms of assistance have not fundamentally transformed the economic structure of poor communities (West Aceh Regency Government, 2026).

Consumptive social assistance causes communities to remain dependent on government assistance without possessing strong economic independence. This condition aligns with Karl Marx's perspective regarding the dependency of the proletariat class on structures of economic power. Poor communities remain in subordinate positions because they do not have control over economic resources and means of production that could independently improve their welfare (Putri, Abrial, & Amri, 2025). The phenomenon of inaccurate targeting of social assistance also demonstrates inequality in welfare distribution within society. According to Karl Marx's theory, unfair distribution of resources will create social conflict and jealousy among communities. This can be seen in various studies showing public protests regarding social assistance recipients who were considered inconsistent with actual economic conditions (Arba'iyah et al., 2022).

Furthermore, weak transparency and invalid beneficiary data indicate that bureaucratic structures in the distribution of social assistance have not functioned fairly and effectively. Karl Marx viewed power structures within society as often benefiting certain groups while marginalizing poor

communities. This condition can be seen in the fact that some poor communities still do not receive social assistance, while some people considered economically capable continue to receive government assistance (Deviana, 2025).

The phenomenon of social assistance recipients being involved in online gambling can also be analyzed through Karl Marx's perspective. According to Marx, prolonged economic pressure and social inequality can cause poor communities to experience social alienation and lose control over their own lives. Online gambling can be understood as a form of social escape resulting from economic pressure, low welfare, and weak social control within society. These conditions indicate that poverty not only affects economic issues but also creates social disorganization within poor communities. Therefore, poverty alleviation must not only be carried out through consumptive social assistance but also through moral development, economic empowerment, social education, and strengthening social control so that poor communities can overcome various social problems resulting from structural inequality (Bahri, 2025).

The social assistance program of the West Aceh Regency Baitul Mal, which provides not only consumptive assistance but also business capital assistance, housing development for poor communities, and educational assistance, demonstrates the government's efforts to create economic empowerment for poor communities. From Karl Marx's perspective, these measures can be viewed as efforts to reduce structural inequality through improving poor communities' access to economic resources and social welfare. However, if economic empowerment programs are not implemented sustainably and equitably, poor communities will continue to remain trapped in structural poverty and social dependency on government assistance (West Aceh Regency Government, 2026).

Based on this analysis, poverty alleviation in West Aceh cannot rely solely on temporary and consumptive social assistance. From Karl Marx's perspective, social change must be achieved through equitable distribution of economic resources, improved access to education and employment, and economic empowerment of poor communities so that they can escape the structural inequalities that have persisted for a long time.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature review and discussion that have been conducted, it can be concluded that social assistance plays an important role in efforts to alleviate community poverty in West Aceh Regency. Various social assistance programs such as *Direct Cash Assistance* (BLT), the *Family Hope Program* (PKH), food assistance, livable housing assistance, social rehabilitation assistance, and assistance for the poor through the Baitul Mal of West Aceh Regency demonstrate the government's commitment to helping poor communities fulfill their basic needs and improve social welfare. These programs have provided positive impacts on fulfilling educational, healthcare, household consumption, and economic stability needs among poor communities in West Aceh.

However, in its implementation, various social problems are still found, causing social assistance programs to not operate optimally. The problems that emerge include inaccurate targeting of

beneficiaries, weak validity of poverty data, delays in aid distribution, low transparency in social assistance management, and the emergence of social jealousy within the community. In addition, the phenomenon of social assistance recipients being involved in online gambling practices indicates that poverty is not only related to economic problems but is also associated with social issues and weak social control within society.

From the perspective of Karl Marx, poverty in West Aceh represents a form of structural inequality influenced by social and economic systems that have not been able to provide equal access to welfare for poor communities. The social assistance provided by the government essentially serves as a form of state intervention aimed at reducing social inequality and maintaining social stability. However, consumptive social assistance has not been fully capable of fundamentally transforming the economic structure of poor communities, causing communities to remain dependent on government assistance.

Therefore, poverty alleviation in West Aceh Regency cannot rely solely on temporary social assistance programs but also requires more equitable development policies, improvements in the quality of education, job creation, economic empowerment of poor communities, as well as strengthened supervision and validity of social assistance beneficiary data. Thus, social assistance programs are expected not only to help communities fulfill their short-term living needs but also to create sustainable economic independence and social welfare for the community.

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