

Poverty in Ende: Anomalies of Community Empowerment and Social Assistance Programs

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the problem of poverty in Ende Regency, which has stagnated from year to year. There are a number of poverty alleviation programs that are accepted by the community, namely the Village Fund Program, the Family Hope Program (PKH), the Smart Indonesia Card and the Healthy Indonesia Card, the Red Wine Program, KUBE, Self-Help Housing Stimulant Assistance (BPSP), and PUAP assistance through Gapoktan. Meanwhile, on the other hand, there are so many funds distributed to villages through village funds with the same goal, namely to empower the community. However, the reality shows that data on the percentage of poor people has stagnated from 2018 to 2022. Departing from this problem, this research examines the poverty factor in Ende Regency. The theories relevant to dissecting the problem of poverty are the neoliberal theory of Thomas Hobbes and the theory of social democracy of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels as well as the structural-dependence theory of Andre Gunder Frank. This study uses a qualitative approach. Determination of data sources was done purposively and interviews were conducted by snowball. Meanwhile, to test the validity or correctness of facts is done by means of triangulation (testing it by using several combined methods). The results of this study concluded that, poverty alleviation programs are more social assistance than empowerment, poverty alleviation creates community dependency and program recipients seek to treat poverty so that they continue to receive assistance.

ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini mengkaji tentang permasalahan kemiskinan di Kabupaten Ende yang mengalami stagnasi dari tahun ke tahun. Ada sejumlah program penanggulangan kemiskinan yang diterima masyarakat yakni Program Dana Desa, Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH), Kartu Indonesia Pintar dan Kartu Indonesia Sehat, Program Anggur Merah, KUBE, Bantuan Stimulan Perumahan Swadaya (BPSP), dan bantuan PUAP melalui Gapoktan. Sementara di lain pihak, ada begitu banyak dana yang didistribusikan ke desa-desa melalui dana desa dengan tujuan serupa yakni untuk memberdayakan masyarakat. Namun kenyataan memperlihatkan bahwa data tentang persentase penduduk miskin mengalami stagnasi sejak tahun 2018 hingga tahun 2022. Berangkat dari persoalan tersebut maka penelitian ini mengkaji faktor kemiskinan di Kabupaten Ende. Teori yang relevan untuk membedah masalah kemiskinan ini adalah teori neoliberal Thomas Hobbes dan teori demokrasi sosial Karl Marx dan Frederick Engels serta teori ketergantungan-struktural Andre Gunder Frank. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif. Penentuan sumber data dilakukan secara purposive dan wawancara dilakukan secara snowball. Sementara untuk menguji validitas atau kebenaran fakta dilakukan dengan cara triangulasi (mengujinya dengan melakukan beberapa metode gabungan). Hasil penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa, program penanggulangan kemiskinan lebih bersifat bantuan sosial ketimbang pemberdayaan,

penanggulangan kemiskinan menciptakan ketergantungan masyarakat dan penerima program berupaya merawat kemiskinan agar terus menerima bantuan.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Poverty, in addition to unemployment and inequality, is a classic problem that is still being faced by most of the nation-states today. Various indicators and parameters for measuring poverty levels and calculating the number of poor people have long been formulated and developed by experts in the fields of economics and other social sciences. Therefore, an understanding of the concept of poverty, the problems of poverty, its causes and indicators of poverty is important for people who wish to study it. Suharto (2010: 131) explains that poverty is a social problem that is always present in society, especially in developing countries including Indonesia. This is not only because the problem of poverty has existed for a long time and is still present in our midst today, but also because now its symptoms are increasing in line with the multidimensional crisis currently being faced by the Indonesian nation (Surharto, 2010).

There are three theoretical approaches that explain poverty, namely neo-liberal theory, social democracy theory, and classical dependency theory. Neo-liberal theory states that poverty is an individual problem caused by the weaknesses and or choices of the individual concerned. Poverty will disappear by itself if market forces are expanded as much as possible and economic growth is driven as high as possible. According to Edi Soeharto, the poverty alleviation strategy in this condition must be residual, temporary and only involve families of self-help groups or religious institutions. The state will intervene if these institutions are unable to carry out their duties. For example the application of social security programs in Indonesia is an example of the influence of this theory (Suparjan, 2003).

In contrast to the views of the neo-liberal theory above, the view of social democracy theory states that poverty is not an individual problem, but a structural one. Poverty is caused by injustice and inequality in society due to blocked access of certain groups to various social resources. This theory is based on the principles of mixed economics and Keynesian-style demand management economics which emerged as a response to the economic depression of the 1920-1930s (Surharto, 2010). Social democratic supporters argue that equality is an important prerequisite for achieving independence and freedom. The achievement of freedom is only possible if everyone has or is able to access resources such as education, good health, sufficient income. Thus, efforts to reduce poverty must be institutional in nature. Social assistance programs, social security adopted by America, Western Europe, Japan are examples of poverty alleviation strategies that originate from the theory of social democracy (Jamaludin, 2016) .

In his very influential book, Andre Gundle Frank stated that capitalism, both global and national is a factor that has produced underdevelopment in the past and which continues to develop underdevelopment in the present (Fakih, 2003). This means that underdevelopment and poverty (economic) is not a natural condition that comes from a society. Nor is it because the community

lacks capital. Underdevelopment is a process or rather historical dialectic involving economic, political and socio-cultural factors that occur as a result of the expansion of the global capitalist system (Jamaludin, 2016) . Thus it can be said that the fact of underdevelopment that occurs in peripheral countries is a direct result of the development of central countries.

The reality of poverty that continues to occur from time to time, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, and even poverty which has become a tragedy that befalls humanity, has encouraged many parties to contribute to the fight against poverty. The Indonesian government under the leadership of President Ir. Joko Widodo, has determined that the percentage of poor people in 2017-2019, which reached 9%, will be reduced to 7% by the end of 2024 (economy.kompas.com, 2023).

Poverty conditions have also occurred in Ende Regency from 2018 to 2022. This can be seen from the percentage of poverty data for the last four years (2018-2022). Where in 2018 the poverty rate was 24.20%, and fell in 2019 to 23.18%, then increased to 23.36% in 2020. In 2021 it increased again to 24.13%, then decreased to 23.00 % in 2022 (<https://endekab.bps.go.id> , 2023). There are a number of poverty alleviation programs that are accepted by the community, namely the Village Fund Program, the Family Hope Program (PKH), Smart Indonesia Cards and Healthy Indonesia Cards, the Red Wine Program, KUBE, Self-Help Housing Stimulant Assistance (BPSP), and PUAP assistance through Gapoktan (Kemkominfo RI , 2011) . The entire program referred to has its own mechanism with different goals and objectives. There are programs intended for the general public such as village funds, but most of the programs directly touch the poor and vulnerable components of the community who have education and elderly dependents as well as organized 'certain' community groups. The Ende Regency Government together with the community must work hard to reduce the poverty percentage, but on the other hand it raises the question whether the Ende Regency Government has done something wrong, resulting in an increase in the poverty percentage? This question was asked, bearing in mind that there are so many programs and funds that have been disbursed with the aim of empowering the community's economy. Meanwhile, on the other hand, there are so many funds distributed to villages through village funds with the same goal, namely to empower the community. Even so, the reality shows that data on the percentage of poor people has increased from 2018 to 2022.

There have been several previous studies conducted by researchers and scholars on topics and issues regarding poverty on the island of Flores, East Nusa Tenggara Province. Based on the results of a review of previous research, the research conducted by Hubertus Ubur (2012) concerning Poverty Alleviation Efforts Through a Process Approach (Case Study of the Wudi Community in East Nusa Tenggara). This research aims to answer the question why poverty still exists, in general there have been many ideas and efforts that have been made to solve the problem of poverty. The results of this study indicate that the process approach is carried out so that poverty alleviation programs are not only in the form of "projects", so that they are not impressed as momentary activities to spend the available budget (Ubur, 2011). In addition, research conducted by Emilianus Yakob Sese Tolo (2016) entitled Accumulation Through Deprivation and Poverty in Flores. This research uses a political economy approach to explain the problem of poverty in Flores. The research results explain that poverty in Flores is caused by accumulation through plunder which is related to three main things, namely the long history of colonialism, agrarian inequality, and the depoliticization of the masses. The long occupation has led to changes in governmental and agrarian structures for the sake of accumulation through dispossession. Agrarian inequality facilitates the process of accumulation through deprivation (Tolo, 2016). Furthermore, research was conducted by Frederic Winston Nalle, Sirilius Seran, Fransiskus Bria (2022) regarding Analysis of Determinants of Poverty in East Nusa Tenggara Province. The results of data analysis show that both partially and simultaneously, the variables economic growth, human development index and population have a significant influence on the number of poor people in NTT Province (Nalle, 13).

These studies are quite relevant to the topic of this research, because they both examine the problem of poverty. This study uses three theoretical approaches that explain poverty, namely neo-liberal theory, social democracy theory, and classical dependency theory. The research has theoretical and practical implications and contributions in relation to approaches and models of poverty alleviation programs in Indonesia, specifically in Ende District. That dependence appears in the relationship between society and government. Community dependence on government programs is still very high. There is a dialectical relationship that can be seen, namely programs that are expected to create self-reliance but actually make people unable to be independent. This condition occurs when the methodology and approach to poverty alleviation programs tend to be biased towards the poor and development programs unconsciously create community dependence.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This type of research is descriptive qualitative. Sugiyono (2011: 24) says that to understand complex social interactions can only be described by qualitative research by conducting interviews with certain social groups, which is based on the philosophy of post positivism which does not accept only one truth, which is commonly used to research an object in natural conditions, (as opposed to an experiment). Generally, determination of data sources in qualitative research is done purposively and interviews are conducted by snowball. Meanwhile, to test the validity or correctness of facts is done by means of triangulation (testing it by using several combined methods). Then qualitative data analysis is usually inductive/qualitative in nature and the results emphasize meaning rather than generalization (Sugiyono, 2015). In this study also used the scientific steps recommended by Sugiyono above, starting from determining informants, interview techniques, observation and documentation to analyzing and discussing them to get a final conclusion. Therefore, the final conclusions regarding program implementation and various poverty alleviation efforts in Ende Regency are the result of interpretation (interpretation) of research data that has been processed. Then to test the truth of these data triangulation will be carried out or testing the truth between the data from interviews and data obtained from observations, namely observations of people's behavior and all their activities in implementing the intended poverty alleviation programs.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Poverty Reduction Program Facts

Poverty alleviation programs are generally carried out with the hope that the problems of poverty will be resolved soon and the community can release the chain of dependency that has been wrapped around it so far. Meanwhile, a number of poverty alleviation programs carried out in the research target villages were generally not enough to bring significant results. Based on the results of interviews with a number of informants, it was found that all the programs provided and in the nature of assistance were highly and always coveted by the community at times to come. There are even people who are very angry and have arguments with the village head/lurah or village/kelurahan officials if various assistance programs for the poor are not distributed equally among other village communities.

The community in general thinks that various poverty alleviation programs are blessings that must be accepted and shared fairly by the village/kelurahan government or the government in general. There is also a view that any assistance that comes from the government is a right for everyone, so it is not appropriate if there is a policy that sorts recipients of aid based on certain criteria. For example, in relation to the distribution of rice for the poor, certain village heads must make a local policy that is signed by all the community and the BPD so that the distribution of Raskin rice is regulated for all village communities. This is done to reduce protests within the poor community

itself, as happened in one of the target villages in this study where the community was not willing to raise solidarity funds for a particular activity or did not want to do community service because they did not receive an allotment of prosperous rice (Rasta).

Another finding that also occurred in almost all research target villages/sub-districts was that most of the aid recipients felt very helped and were very grateful for the government's attention while hoping that the aid would not end soon, if necessary it would be passed on to their children and grandchildren. The image of people's dependency seems to be very visible when asked about their response to the social assistance programs given to them. The most obvious thing to find is that the majority of people are always actively checking the presence of prosperous rice and PKH assistance which they have been confirmed to regularly receive periodically. This dependency phenomenon not only occurs in social assistance program schemes but is also found in other empowerment programs which are conceptually believed not to create dependency, however, field facts show that in community economic empowerment programs in the agricultural, livestock and fishing sectors, most of the target groups depends on the support received without paying attention to aspects of independent development.

In various program documents, it was found that the independence of social assistance recipient communities was not targeted to be created immediately when they received assistance. However, at least, recipients of social assistance programs or programs that are empowering can activate their other potentials to maintain the sustainability of their lives in the future when social assistance programs are withdrawn.

This research also explores the mechanism of implementation of the poverty alleviation program which is expected to create self-sufficiency in the target community. Based on research findings, it is known that program assistants, be it the family hope program, village fund program, red wine program or other programs, show that the program implementation mechanism always starts with socialization efforts, whether limited to explaining the rules or about expectations in running the program. meant. In the socialization process, the tendency for participants to attend and sign the attendance list was with the hope that one day they would be part of the beneficiaries. There is no other, more substantial motive, for example to understand program mechanisms, especially to encourage the independence of the target community.

After socialization, program beneficiaries are generally required to complete various administrative requirements and other requirements related to program needs. For example, a family card, identity card, proof of tax payment or proof of membership in a business group through a business proposal. The next mechanism is disbursement or delivery of social assistance programs to beneficiaries, which are usually carried out collectively or individually. The implementation of the program is then fully left up to the participants.

This research also found that there were several programs that rarely carried out routine coordination with the local village or kelurahan government, for example starting from data collection, program implementation, explanation and even up to monitoring which was separate from the village/kelurahan government's main task. There are even village/kelurahan governments that do not have real data on the existence of poverty alleviation programs in the village because these programs often come directly to the target parties. The synergy of program assistants with the village/kelurahan government is sometimes difficult because the arguments for the companion are assigned from the top level government, not by the village/kelurahan government.

This problem then has an impact on strengthening the mentality of 'aji mumpung' among the community because they feel that any assistance given is under less strict/very lax control and supervision, making it possible not to need to roll out aid. The village government also argues that when each program does not coordinate directly with the village government or involves the village government as an inherent supervisor in the village, then these programs are allowed to just

evaporate without any clear control and sustainability. This condition then strengthens the mentality/character of the dependency of the target community on the government, especially towards any poverty alleviation program which is believed to be coming continuously even though its governance does not bring any change in itself.

Looking at other phenomena in this dependency indicator, this study found that there is a poverty alleviation program approach model that is social assistance rather than empowering. The poverty alleviation program scheme revealed by the interviewees was more dominant in the nuances of assistance intended to enable the poor to access basic education and health needs. Even though there are empowering programs such as red wine or economic development programs and agricultural businesses, the mentoring and empowerment mechanisms do not work as expected. Business management and group organization are not carried out in a sustainable manner, so most of the business groups that are formed are in a condition similar to 'living reluctantly or unwillingly'.

The weakening of the practice of empowerment and sustainability schemes in every poverty alleviation program in villages/kelurahans allows the community to continue to seek other forms of assistance that are certain to be received from the government or from different sources. There are even people who are believed to have failed to manage poverty alleviation programs in the previous program and also received poverty alleviation programs from other sectors/fields of government apparatus. This is where the weak point of the community's dependence on government programs tends to spoil the community and then makes the community continue to care for poverty in order to get government assistance.

The phenomenon of society's tendency to care for poverty is revealed in the results of this research. Based on the narratives of a number of informants, it is known that the current conditions of poverty seem to be being maintained with the intention of receiving attention and assistance from the state/government. Most of the interviewees felt very objectionable if their names were removed or not included in the list of beneficiaries of the aid program, so they tried to meet the proposed criteria in such a way. Even when data collection was carried out by officers, all data relating to economic conditions, income and resources owned was reported to a minimum.

This condition has been maintained from generation to generation and there has been almost no progress in the economic field, so that the poverty alleviation programs offered by the government so far have seemed useless. From a number of sources contacted, only a small number of sources attempted to develop and make good use of the assistance and strive so that in the lives of the next generation the poverty conditions experienced by these families were immediately improved. This condition is not commonly found in most of the program's target communities. Some have launched a red wine program, some have developed a good agricultural economic business, but in a relatively very small amount.

2. Poverty Reduction Program Anomalies

Poverty alleviation programs as described above are generally more oriented towards social assistance programs rather than community empowerment. In this study it was found that village/kelurahan communities were more likely to recognize and experience social assistance programs such as the Healthy Indonesia Card program, the Smart Indonesia Card Program and other Family Hope Programs. National social assistance programs are currently still a priority for the government. On the other hand, programs that are empowering in nature are still felt by a small portion of the poor because the targets of some programs lead to organized groups, with criteria that do not reach the poor directly.

The fact is that poverty alleviation programs of this kind are in principle present in the living space of the poor to simply facilitate the access of the poor to basic social services such as education and health. The assumption is that through the ease of access it enjoys in the field of basic needs, the

chain of poverty will also be broken. This assumption turned out to be inversely proportional to what was found in the conditions of the poor in this study. The tendency of the poor to be complacent in enjoying social assistance without any effort to change the conditions of poverty they experience.

The fact that this kind of poverty alleviation program does not only take place during the current administration. It has been a long time since the Indonesian government has poured out a number of budgets for poverty alleviation programs that are social assistance/residual in nature. The hope is that the chain of poverty will soon be broken and thus in the next generation the poor will rise from the downturn of life, from dependence to independence.

The aspirations of changing the level of welfare for the poor through social assistance programs are still far from expectations because the poor enjoy assistance and always hope that assistance will always be there every year. Even other people whose living conditions are much better tend to be jealous, and hope that such assistance will also be distributed fairly among all members of society.

The mechanism for providing social assistance individually or individually is part of the state's view and approach that the problem of poverty is an individual problem as adhered to in the Neo Liberal Theory. According to the arguments of the proponents of this theory, poverty is an individual problem caused by the weaknesses and/or choices of the individual concerned. Poverty will disappear by itself if market forces are expanded as much as possible and economic growth is driven as high as possible. According to Edi Soeharto, the poverty alleviation strategy in this condition must be residual, temporary and only involve families of self-help groups or religious institutions. The state will intervene if these institutions are unable to carry out their duties. For example the application of social security programs in Indonesia is an example of the influence of this theory (Surharto, 2010). Through an individual approach, it is hoped that poverty alleviation targets can be more affordable and touch basic needs targets as the main problem of poverty.

In addition to finding many poverty alleviation programs based on social assistance programs, this research also found several poverty alleviation programs based on empowerment approaches. Several programs that used the empowerment approach were found to tend to have problems starting from the process of forming groups, recruiting members, group management, business management to the problem of less than optimal assistance. Many groups, such as red wine, women's savings and loans, PUAP, and recipients of assistance intended for group development, have the same fate. Until now, the number of groups that still exist and are engaged in productive economic and agricultural businesses can be counted on the fingers. .

When the poverty alleviation program is left to the government and village communities to handle it independently through the village fund program, what happens is that the community uses most of it for physical development. The physical face of the village continues to change, but the face of village poverty has not necessarily changed. This is because most of the village funds' physical programs are not/have not been able to raise the issue of poverty itself, namely the weakening of initiative, creativity and work ethic which so far have been spoiled by programs that are assistance in nature.

3. Poverty Alleviation Program and Community Dependency Image

In various cases in developing countries, including in Indonesia, patterns of poverty alleviation that are packaged in various government assistance programs tend to use strategies for meeting basic needs *that* are residual in nature rather than other long-term strategies, such as community empowerment (*people*) . *center*) and several other strategies that trigger community creativity and initiative (Lismana et al., 2023; Pratiwi et al., 2022) . In many cases, beneficiaries tend to be positioned as passive parties or mere beneficiaries. On the other hand, a program approach with a strategy of meeting their own basic needs is even seen by some policy makers as the most effective strategy for reducing poverty because the indicators for achieving targets are easy to measure, even

though these achievements are more pseudo and temporary or temporary (Sanjaya, 2022 ; Wisnutama, 2023) . It is also not uncommon for a number of aid programs to be politicized in such a way for short-term political purposes because the existence of the poor is considered to be the majority group. Therefore, not a few such government assistance programs have actually given rise to new and complicated problems, especially the problem of acute dependence among target communities on assistance from the government (Okuputra & Nasikh, 2022; Susanti et al., 2023) .

In relation to the research findings on poverty alleviation programs and assistance in Ende District, particularly in the research target villages/sub-districts, it can be analyzed referring to the arguments of supporters of the neoclassical theory that poverty is an individual problem caused by individual weaknesses and/or choices. which weakness will disappear by itself if market forces are expanded as much as possible and economic growth is accelerated as high as possible. In this case the state will intervene if these institutions are unable to carry out their duties. For example the application of social security programs in Indonesia is an example of the influence of this theory (Surharto, 2010).

Based on findings in the field, almost all beneficiary communities in a number of research target villages hoped that the same assistance would continue to be allocated for the following year. Several poverty alleviation programs rolled out by several agencies in Ende District, such as PKH, KUBE, housing assistance and so on, so far as the research team has observed, have not had a significant impact on changing living standards and improving welfare. Likewise, the documentation data from the target village shows that the number of poor people is still the majority of the population in that village. This is reinforced by evidence in the field that revolving funds, which were originally designed to provide access to sufficient business capital for the community, were misused by beneficiaries for other consumptive needs. In addition, people are getting worse off because they are stuck in debt, especially debt that comes from the revolving fund loan itself.

The fact of this research reflects that the aid which is actually a form of government intervention to provide social security to the poor so that they can quickly get out of poverty, but in reality actually exacerbates poverty among the poor. It is even more interesting that BLT and Rastra funds are starting to shift the perspective of the poor, who generally think that assistance is inherited from parents to children. The case of the refusal to sign the minutes of rasstra distribution by one of the Lurah/Kades in Ende Regency for the reason that the Raskin recipient family was no longer classified as poor is a phenomenon that needs to be seen as evidence that the assistance from the Ende Regency Government did not take into account aspects of empowerment but rather only as a target of national programme.

In essence, the programs and assistance offered by the Government of Ende Regency to the community are national programs which are part of the poverty alleviation strategy. However, the facts of research in the field show that almost all program target communities tend to view that cash or in-kind assistance is a blessing and a form of generosity from the Government. Therefore, the assistance received tends to be misused by program target communities for other things that are non-productive. Meanwhile, the living conditions of the people themselves have not changed for the better and have even experienced setbacks due to being entangled in bad debts. As an example, the ketinting assistance in one of the target villages was used as expected, only in the first four months. After that, the fishermen who received the assistance resold the fishing gear provided by the Government to other parties without feeling guilty, the same is true for livestock assistance and so on.

The fact of misuse of such assistance reflects that among the program's target communities there is actually a growing perception that assistance, especially cash, is a grant from the Government whose return is not mandatory. This is exacerbated by the lack of assistance from the Government

as the aid provider, where the facts on the ground also show that in general the assistants only provide explanations when the assistance is handed over. After that, for various reasons, officers rarely went out into the field, either to monitor or simply carry out evaluations and provide direction to the communities receiving aid. As a result, the revolving funds have become stagnant, such as the Red Wine and Gapoktan funds, so that other people who need these funds cannot access them. Communities receiving Red Wine funds generally seem to have low awareness of returning/repaying loan funds to the Government because so far there has been no strict sanction from the Government.

The various research findings above can be studied from the perspective of social democratic theory that poverty is not an individual problem, but rather a structural problem caused by injustice and inequality in society due to blocked access of certain groups to various social resources (Surharto, 2010). This is also the case with the fact that this research can be said to be a structural problem if the amount of assistance provided by the Government has the effect of actually triggering absolute poverty among the recipient communities themselves. The rolling out of various aid programs to poor people with low levels of education without sufficient assistance is clearly far from the principle of empowerment, as well as being a closing valve for the target communities of these programs. This means that poor and low-educated communities who receive assistance must be given sufficient capacity, especially in accessing and managing various community resources, starting from sources of information and knowledge related to the use of local potential-based aid funds to efforts to maintain sustainability. . In such conditions of limited knowledge, the community will tend to assume that the aid is more of a grant from the government, so that they continue to hope to receive similar assistance in the following year. At this point, the program's target community is even more dependent on assistance and at the same time their ability to identify and access various resources available in the community is getting lower. In this context, poverty alleviation assistance has actually changed its face to become an opiate that kills the creative power of the poor, which has a very destructive effect on efforts to create self-sufficiency and prosperity.

To elevate the people of Ende Regency who are trapped in a situation of dependency, one of the development strategies and approaches that need to be used is social development. This development approach seeks to link the chain of economic development on the one hand with social development on the other. In this case the development approach requires that economic development goes hand in hand with social development, especially touching on aspects of behavior, awareness and the people's perspective of themselves as the party most responsible for their lives and lives (Fadhli & Nazila, 2023) . Communities need to have awareness of their potential, capacity and resources, which are at least urgently needed in an effort to improve welfare. In other words, economic development must have an effect on improving the social welfare of society as a whole, including improving the way people view themselves as complete, potential and dignified human beings.

In the context of beneficiary communities in a number of villages, the target is that the assistance provided is more of a social assistance in nature because it has not shown any change in attitude and awareness of the purpose of the assistance itself. People still tend to use assistance for other purposes that are short-term and consumptive, so that poverty is still a daily life situation that continues to be experienced until the end of this research. In connection with efforts to free people from poverty and dependency, the right step and strategy is through empowerment. The poor in all research target villages must be positioned as parties who must take the initiative, not as passive parties and waiting for assistance from the Government. Ife and Tesoriero (2008: 130) explain that empowerment aims to increase the empowerment of those who are disadvantaged by structural inequalities, so that empowerment itself becomes a process of helping disadvantaged groups or individuals to compete more effectively with other interests, namely by helping them to learn and

use skills in lobbying, using the media, taking political action, understanding how to use the system and so on and taking advantage of the potential around them (Ife, 2003). In this case empowerment is an effort to make a person or group of people who are targeted by the program become stronger and independent in accessing useful resources for improving living welfare.

In this regard, (Mudiyono, 2005) the village community must be assisted, assisted and facilitated to carry out an analysis, starting from finding the problems faced to finding solutions to problems using or based on the resources they have and creating activities with their own abilities. Likewise, the target community for the assistance program must be assisted by a companion, especially in utilizing funds to manage the potential available around the poor so that they are able to increase their income and standard of living (Juliani, 2020; Santoso et al., 2023) . In short, the community is given the widest possible opportunity to decide what they want, their initiatives form the basis of village development programs and plans. The role of other parties is still there, but no longer as executors or activity planners but only as facilitators who support local initiatives.

The interesting thing about the pattern of assistance carried out in the poverty alleviation program in Ende Regency is that the facilitators actually misguided in carrying out their duties and functions as assistants. Facts on the ground show that program assistants position themselves more as surveyors and aid distributors because after assistance is received by the community, assistance is no longer carried out. Therefore, one aspect that must be addressed in this regard is optimizing the role of assistants so that they can help the community, especially in analyzing various problems or potentials that exist around poor communities while at the same time stimulating community initiatives to manage and utilize this potential in improving living standards.

4. Treating Poverty: Yearning for Help

Conditions of poverty that occur among families receiving welfare assistance are treated in such a way with the aim that they are still confirmed as recipients of social assistance. Families receiving social assistance feel a kind of "right" to receive social assistance. Because they want to continue to receive social assistance, efforts to change their living conditions are not carried out by exploiting their potential.

Efforts to continue treating poverty are carried out because this group feels that meeting their basic needs in terms of food, health, education and even housing receives assistance from the government (Setiawan & Raya, 2023; Suyanto, 2022) . The development strategy by providing assistance has received criticism because this strategy actually sees that the government tends to place aid recipients as passive parties. Because they are seen as passive parties, aid recipients are expected to just accept the services provided by the government (Hurapea, 2003).

The government is seen as a generous party so that it distributes "material wealth" to recipients of social assistance without requiring social assistance recipients to develop the assistance. Such a development strategy is called *a charity strategy* , or social works. As a social work, the government is seen as a savior who saves beneficiary families from their downturn throughout the year and even in the years to come (Sofian et al., 2022) .

The government is seen as a savior, because this strategy is carried out from year to year. In addition, this assistance is given to the same family from year to year without any demands or obligations that require them to change their circumstances. Because there is no demand to change their living conditions, this strategy has created or gave rise to the idea that poverty is a fortune to get help. Because poverty is seen as a lucky thing, luck is still maintained from time to time as an expression of longing for help. Therefore, rather than losing aid, it is better that poverty is treated, preserved.

Poverty that is treated for sustainability is not because the recipients of assistance lack potential that can be utilized to change conditions of powerlessness to conditions of empowerment. Treated poverty is actually a condition that occurs as a result of aid strategies that have created dependency (Idris, 2023; Sofian et al., 2022) . The aid strategy which ultimately results in underdevelopment reminds us of what Paul Baran said about the relationship between lagging countries and developed countries. Baran's opinion is seen as different from Marx's opinion, where Marx argued that aid given to pre-capitalist or underdeveloped countries would awaken underdeveloped countries from their downturn (Jamaludin, 2016) . In this case, Marx saw that the assistance received by underdeveloped countries would empower them. In contrast to Marx's opinion, Baran said that the assistance received by underdeveloped countries would prevent poor countries from developing, so that they would remain in a poor condition and experience dependence on developed countries. According to Baran, countries receiving aid will suffer from cretinism, causing them to remain stunted (Budiman, 1994).

Based on Baran's thinking above, the social assistance given to families receiving social assistance is not really something that helps them get out of their slump. The aid has kept them in a helpless condition. Not only that, this assistance has given rise to a new mentality to continue to care for poverty in order to get assistance from year to year. This mentality gave birth to the view that the poverty experienced is no longer a problem that must be alleviated, but a normal or normal thing that must be treated.

IV. CONCLUSION

Referring to the findings of the research results, it can be concluded that the factors causing the increase in the percentage of poverty in Ende Regency originate from the implementation of poverty alleviation programs which are more social assistance in nature than empowerment. In general, there are two types of poverty alleviation programs disbursed by the government, namely programs that are social assistance as part of social protection and security and programs that are empowering the community. Even so, the two programs are more directed at programs that are social assistance because programs that are empowering cannot empower the community because of the approach, perspective and response of the community who see it as part of government assistance to the community. Views and responses like this then make poverty alleviation programs create community dependency.

The main objective of providing social assistance programs by the government is to meet the basic social needs of the poor so that they can cut the chain of poverty they experience. This goal was not grandiose to achieve because it was found that a new family was born from a pair of recipients of social assistance in the past, which eventually added to the list of poverty in their village because they were also registered as poor families. Even receiving/giving social assistance from the government must be distributed fairly to all people. If not, the village government will face a dead end in mobilizing community participation to carry out the village development agenda as a whole. The noble aim of the government's social assistance program then makes the people who receive the program strive to treat poverty so that they continue to receive assistance.

The community's response to the poverty alleviation program gave birth to a new character of society which is called moral hazard or *aji mumpung* where the community surrenders their life problems to the accountability of the government. Because there is a social security/assistance program, people are busy making themselves 'as if' poor, with the intention of getting assistance and protection from the state. If the state does not pay attention then the state is considered negligent, or not present in the poverty that befell it.

Thus it can be said that there has been an anomalous dialectical relationship between the community and the government. Where programs that are expected to create self-reliance actually

make people unable to be independent. This condition occurs when the methodology and approach of poverty alleviation programs tends to be biased towards the poor and development programs unconsciously give rise to community dependency. Therefore, there is a need for an empowerment approach, namely a process in which members of a society increase their individual and institutional capacity in mobilizing and managing resources to produce sustainable and equitable improvements in the quality of life according to their own aspirations.

This research has limitations, namely related to the methodology used which is still limited to qualitative methods. This qualitative research is very dependent on the role of the researcher as a research instrument, so the quality of the research depends on the experience of the researcher. The researcher's interpretation of the meaning implied in the research data collected through interviews, observation and documentation tends to be biased. In addition, this research has not reviewed comprehensively related to alternative options and strategies in tackling the problem of poverty with an empowerment approach. Thus, it is hoped that there will be further research using mixed or combined methods that can cover all aspects that allow the problem of poverty to occur. Apart from that, it is hoped that there will be further research on models for overcoming poverty problems using an empowerment approach.

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