
THE URGENCY OF SOCIAL RESOURCE EMPOWERMENT POLICIES TO REDUCE POVERTY INEQUALITY: THE INDONESIA-TIMOR LESTE BORDER INVESTIGATIONS

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Abstract: *Reducing the poverty gap in border regions is proven to bring structural and cultural obstacles. The poverty problem permeates social life in the two border regions between Indonesia and Timor-Leste. It is essential to conduct a research on Indonesian and Timor Leste governments' policies in solving poverty problem in the border regions and the policies' influence on enhancing the social welfare of the community. The current study evaluates poverty reduction initiatives in the border region between Indonesia and Timor-Leste. The research employs qualitative methods to collect data, including observation, interviews, recording, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) procedures. Observations are used to collect data on border region residents' behaviors. Several informants were interviewed after being picked by snowball sampling. Information on poverty rates and per capita income is obtained using documentation techniques, while FGD method was used to collect extensive data on the implementation of poverty reduction strategies and their effect on the community. The findings suggest that neither centralized nor decentralized poverty reduction strategies will be successful until the community is involved and the surrounding culture is altered. Incorporating cultural and local knowledge into poverty reduction initiatives is the best way to alter the social structure. Thus, this study should be used as a basis of poverty reduction policymaking.*

Keywords: *Policy Inequality; Poverty Alleviation; Border Areas*

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Introduction

The government's disregard for development in border regions has resulted in social gaps. Due to centralized development policies, social disparity in Indonesia's and its neighbouring country's border regions is connected with complex security circumstances such as illegal trade, border area conflicts, population distribution, limited natural resources, and unequal economic activity (Daryanto, 2003; Solihin et al., 2021; Tahu, 2019). His divide gives birth to a comparatively high level of socio-political complexity, including the issue of poverty, in the border region between Indonesia and Timor-Leste. Belu District in Figures (2016) reports that the impoverished population in East Nusa Tenggara and Timor Leste's border regions exceeds 10 percent, above the national average of 9 percent (Kabupaten Belu Dalam Angka, 2016). Women whose population larger than men have not been a concern in the current poverty reduction policy-making (Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection & Melati Eight Tiga Foundation, 2016). As a consequence, women suffer restricted access to the economy, education, and health (Yaneri & Deswanti, 2021). Muryani and Esquivias (2021) underlined that poverty reduction policies need a comprehensive approach. Brady (2019) reaffirmed the notion by noting that it is vital to include stakeholders from diverse structural and cultural interest groups in formulating poverty reduction policies.

So far, the majority of research on inequality in poverty reduction policies in border regions has focused on three primary themes. First is dynamic interactions in border communities as the border communities are increasingly interconnected due to each community's urgent economic needs and possible intensive relationships as a result of the governments' limited intervention (Feijó, 2015; Prasojo, 2012). The second strand of research focuses on looking at both governments' key roles in reducing the poverty gap (Dewi & Yustikaningrum, 2018). The third theme is that the prevalence of poverty in border regions as a result of internal and external variables, such as the geographical position of both regions and the roles of customs and traditions (Sibirian, 2009; Sudi & Rini, 2018). Considering these three patterns, it appears that the most ideal economic intervention would be to highlight people's opinions by tabulating issues on a micro scale and backing it with government's policies at a national level. Ocusing on the community being accountable for the slow per capita development and opinion is not justifiable due to the fact that the community is positioned as a passive subject when voicing the problems encountered.

This research intends to supplement the shortcomings of prior studies, which do not account for initiatives to eliminate poverty disparities in border areas between two countries. In addition, the purpose of this research is to assess the difficulties and efficacy of poverty reduction policies in the border regions of Indonesia and Timor-Leste, as well as to examine the types of inequality that exist in the border regions. The findings can offer a more comprehensive understanding of the types of obstacles and the effectiveness of poverty reduction policies in border areas, and the policy disparity in border areas.

This study is built on the premise that poverty reduction in border regions depends on the construction of policymakers' perspectives that prioritize community needs. Poverty

alleviation policies that are not aligned with community needs are deemed ineffective and a waste of resources.

Literature Review

Policy Inequality

Government policies are systemic and measurable solution for poverty reduction (Murdiyana & Mulyana, 2017). The World Bank evaluates four policy-related causes of inequality. First is opportunity inequality, which is shown in the plight of children from impoverished families impacted by the places where they were born or their parents' education. Second is labor market inequality, where highly competent people earn more, while others get limited opportunities to enhance their abilities. The third one is wealth concentration, where the elite's ownership of financial assets, such as real estate and stocks, contribute to existing and future inequality. The fourth one is inequality in facing crisis (kemenkeu.go.id, 2015). The poverty alleviation programs are created to prevent policy gaps, including target and data used to establish the targets, participation of local governments, general public, and program beneficiaries, as well as the program implementation at the government and community levels (Yulianto, 2019).

The process of anticipating government policy inequalities in poverty reduction may be implemented in many phases: 1) Acquisition of excellent governance (Good Governance) and Clean Governance; 2) Development of the people's economy; and 3) Synergistic and integrated interaction between the government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in community training and mentoring programs (Murdiyana & Mulyana, 2017). The following five steps must be taken to anticipate policy imbalances: Agenda Setting, Policy Formulation, Policy Adoption/Legacy, Policy Implementation, Policy Evaluation (Dunn, 2003).

Poverty Alleviation Policy

The causes of structural and social poverty include disparate development results, institutional structures, and development strategies (Yulianto, 2019). Good government policies may alter the impoverished circumstances of its citizens, raise their earnings, and enhance communal fairness. Conversely, poor government policies will result in a regime's financial collapse and the spread of poverty (Foxley, 2004). Policies aimed at alleviating poverty should be based on the ratio between the population and the average income. The community structure is also crucial to the effectiveness of the national poverty reduction program (May, 2010). The community's reaction to the policymaking process is an externality of the policymaking process, which may have both beneficial and detrimental effects. A policy is deemed beneficial if it addresses public issues and improves the welfare of the community. In contrast, a policy is deemed negative if it seeks to exclude a certain group while benefiting another group (Yuda, 2016).

There are two approaches to reduce poverty possible losses caused by associated parties. First is presenting the qualities and dimensions of building partnership,

strategies for implementing the partnership, the individuals participating, the duration and location of the partnership, and the method for its implementation. The second model is an objective-based partnership framework for partnerships. The approach focuses on policy, public services, infrastructure, capacity building, and economic growth. Efforts to alleviate poverty may be characterized as economic development goals. Evaluate the effectiveness of partnerships, ones should utilize the dimensions of equality, social inclusion, and empowerment as metrics (Rasdi & Kurniawan, 2019). Another model to enhance the welfare of the society is asymmetric policy model, which implementing distinct programs for different regencies/cities depending on their separate problems. Positive discrimination policy model to accomplish justice and equality, because distinct tribes, languages, geographies, characteristics, cultures, and backgrounds necessitate different policies to achieve the same objective (Saryana, 2020).

Border Area

The border areas are fundamental manifestation of a country's territory. Problems in border regions tend to complicated dimensions (Bangun, 2017). A border is the line that divides one country from another or, in the case of internal entities, one province or municipality from another. Borders function to contain individuals inside their own territory, restrict, control, and regulate their interactions (Martinez, 1994). Border communities are both de facto members of one sovereign political entity (nation state) and community members (family or ethnicity) that reside on the territory of a neighboring country. Consequently, the link between people and border areas of the two nations is essential (Bangun, 2017).

Border communities have a unique human milieu created by their physical distance from the center of nation and ongoing exposures to transnational processes (Martinez, 1994). Disparities in race, class, culture, and the degree of cross-border and interethnic interaction exist in every border resident. Consequently, despite the fact that all borders have functional commonalities resulting from cross-border exchanges, the border residents nevertheless maintain different identities depending on their particular local contexts (Martinez, 1994).

Methodology

This study focuses on poverty alleviation within the national borders between Indonesia and Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. The policy comparison study must examine both areas' regional settings with their diverse policy creation and implementation processes. The comparative study of poverty alleviation measures gains its impetus when residents in both nations have similar sociocultural traits.

This study employs a qualitative methodology using various approaches. Observations were conducted using a participatory approach, where the researcher extensively engaged in the field, the study process, and both countries' citizen forums. The selection of research subjects is based on the subject's authority over the program and

comprehension as social activists targeted by the poverty alleviation program. Consequently, the researcher expected to collect data pertaining the comparative poverty reduction. The informants were selected individually and collectively on the ground of their direct individual or collective involvements in socialization and implementation of poverty reduction policies. The researcher conducted interviews with respondents and Focus Group Discussions with informants and essential stakeholders such as the Regent of Belu, the District Head, the Head of Social Service, the Head of Bappeda, local people, and NGOs in both countries. The informants from Belu District residents consist of the Mayor of Belu city, Head of Badan Pembangunan Daerah (BAPPEDA), Head of Dinas Sosial, some village chiefs, local dan social activists from NGO CIS Timor, while the informants from Bobonaro District including Muncipiu Administrador (Head of District), Xefe Do Suco (Village Heads), Director of Ministerio Solidaridade E Social (Head of Social Service), Planu Nasional Dezensvolvimento (PNDS) (Head of National Planning Agency), local residents, and social activists.

This study started with a literature review to identify problems related to poverty reduction policies, followed by field observation. The researcher traced the process of field observations using a snowball technique. Initially, the researcher visited prominent community members before turning to other actors. The researcher then solicited recommendations from important informants, who nominated additional informants deemed significant roles in influence and character. The snowball technique helps ensure that the acquired statistics adequately and comprehensively describe the inhabitants in border regions. The researcher then did a document study to gather textual data pertinent to this investigation. The researcher used books, journals focusing on community conditions and poverty within national borders, and materials related to policy experiences in national borders across the globe to support the findings.

The data were analyzed by sorting particular data to derive generalizations. The unit of analysis in the study focused on the micro and meso levels. At the micro level, the researcher examined individual participants and interviewed them to understand their perspectives. Afterward, the researcher examined the poverty alleviation paradigm in each country's community at the meso level.

Results

In-depth field research reveals three interconnected and supportive pieces of evidence: a comparison of different state's policies in reducing poverty and the sociocultural transformations of border communities.

Different Portraits of State Policy Inequality in Alleviating Poverty

Different models and forms of management

In Indonesia, the poverty reduction policies in important areas are administered centrally under the National Team for the Acceleration of Poverty Reduction (TNP2K), which

integrates coordinating and relevant ministries' work programs, through cooperation with the Committee for the Acceleration of Priority Infrastructure Provision (KPPIP), the National Border Management Agency (BNPP), the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), community, and business actors. Several national poverty reduction programs are still implemented in Belu district, including the National Social Security System (SJSN), the Integrated Social Protection System, and the Family Hope Program (PKH), Healthy Indonesia Program (KIS), Smart Indonesia Program (KIP), Prosperous Rice (Rastra), Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT), Village Fund Program, Agrarian Reform and Social Forestry Program (RAPS), as well as APBN-funded Pre-employment Program (National Team for the Acceleration of Poverty Reduction (TNP2K), 2021).

The Indonesian government provided a health assistance for the community namely Health Operational Aid (BOK). The government through APBN and APBD also provided funding for building physical and health facilities using Physical and Non-physical DAK fund. Unfortunately, the government's allocation of APBD and APBN funding, particularly in the health sector, is often uncertain. The annual proportion of healthcare funding varies from 10 to 30 percent. The provision of health fund is always available annually although the amount of available fund is quite tiny.

The ratio of healthcare workers to the population is not yet proportional. The number of health facilitators (doctors, midwives, and nurses) is still quite low in terms of quantity. The majority of doctors on duty are general practitioners. There are around nine dentists in Belu district, which is a rather small amount. Belu district has Puskesmas facilities, 14 sub-districts. Thus, one or two sub-districts have more than one Puskesmas. Kakuluk Mesak sub-district which have three health facilities. Each Puskesmas (health centers) is equipped with two ambulances for transportation purposes. Each Puskesmas employs one to two physicians and one midwife. The Health Office (Dinas Kesehatan) is directly responsible for coordinating the placement of doctors and other medical personnels (TNP2K, 2021).

Timor Leste: Policy centered on regional districts

The Bobonaro district of Timor Leste is among districts that adopt pre-deconcentration policies in preparation for decentralization, therefore the municipality and village bureaucracies have implemented several programs and initiatives. Other at the national and local levels. In addition, several NGOs, as well as international organizations or agencies help run the programs implementation help from other. Several schemes, including irrigation enhancement, warehouse construction, and seed distribution to farmer organizations, distribution of hand tractors to disadvantaged agricultural sector groups, as well as training for farmer groups to create mini-markets in various locations around the district have been organized. The Ministry of Social Affairs' subsidy program is one of the most useful initiatives for underprivileged populations in the area.

This subsidy is for senior citizens and veterans. In addition, the subsidy is also allocated for the families of Timor Leste martyrs and heroes, orphans, and disabled groups, as well as scholarships for students. Moreover, health and education aid is provided in the form of free access to health services and education, as a political policy to facilitate

low-income families (RTM) with access to education and health. Government made a policy to make public schools and healthcare in Bobonaro area of Timor-Leste free of charge. Mothers, children, and toddlers are prioritized in health programs due to the government's plan to give better access to health care services for vulnerable RTM groups (Bidani, Benu. Richter, 2003; Feijó, 2015; World Bank, 2018).

The policies accomplish the intended goals using both centralized and decentralized approaches. Centralization and decentralization constitute a policy continuum. Centralization concentrates all power on a few managers or those at the top of an organization's hierarchy, while decentralization delegates responsibility, power, and resources (financial, human, etc.) from the central government to local governments (Nuradhawati, 2019; Waris, 2012).

The execution of the aforementioned policies at the Regional Apparatus Operations (OPD) level in Indonesia tends to be plagued by difficulties. The decentralization program intended to serve as a framework for local administration in Indonesia is not functioning as intended. The central government's attempts to regulate policies for national borders diminish the local Belu District government's roles and reduce the area's potential. On the other hand, the poverty reduction programs at the local level in East Timor have been accelerated through partnerships with national and international non-governmental organizations.

Non-governmental organizations and international organizations seeking to alleviate poverty have attempted to establish programs such as saving and loan cooperatives (KSP). One example is Lanamona Credit Union, which has recruited 1,678 vulnerable groups and impoverished families (RTM) in the Bobonaro District as saving and loan cooperative group members. Table 1 displays the statistics of Lanamona Credit Union (saving and loan cooperative) members in Bobonaro District:

Table 1: Lanamona Credit Union Memberships in Bobonaro District

Member Category	Gender	
	Man	Woman
Founding members	1	39
New members	2	17
Inactive members	3	3
Active members	678	382
Resigned members	618	
Integrated active members	1.678	

Source: Union Credito Imprestimo Lanamona

Socio-Cultural Changes That Hinder Development

Between Maintaining Tradition and Continuing Life

Communities within the national borders of Indonesia and Timor-Leste have adhered to conventions and traditions. The states' rules may divide communities based on their

territories, but the communities within the borders may still hold similar traditional values and customs. *Gotong royong* (mutual aid), a jargon popularized by the Indonesian government, has become an integral part of people's lives in both areas. Family ties are one of the links that bind people within national borders together. Family bonds have been a linchpin of cooperative heritage, although these communities are divided by territory and territorial borders.

Moreover, the inhabitants of the border territories stated that blood ties exist despite the physical division. Culturally and socially, the national border communities' strong blood ties eliminate the stigma associated with "citizens of the exodus from East Timor" so the residents can assimilate into the cultural unity of "Eastern people" of Melanesian ethnicity.

The social solidarity of border communities in both countries has taken root and knows no state boundaries. Culture and tradition are reflected in "Belu" (lit: friendship) term. Our research informants stated that the communities within the national borders primarily work in farming and animal husbandry, which are practiced traditionally using *belu* and the spirit of togetherness. The communities still follow the customary laws, so initiatives approved by local elders tend to be successfully implemented (Focus Group Discussion August 1, 2020).

These communities' blood ties and traditional customs indirectly changed the communities' way of life. The national borders in the two regions are also still very underdeveloped and isolated, lacking infrastructure and facilities, except for the Motaain cross-border post in Silawan Village, Belu District. Access to border regions, such as in the border regions of Asulait and Fatumea, is difficult. This lack of accessibility hinders the development of the economy, which in turn causes the residents' low-income and poor households. To improve their economic situation, residents and refugees in Belu District and Bonobaro District often engaged in illegal activities, such as gasoline, food, cattle smuggling, and gambling. Smugglers frequently collaborate with security services to send prohibited products through mouse paths (Focus Group Discussion August 1, 2020).

The question of custom is a matter of money

Belu and Bobonaro Districts are geographically separated by border, yet their cultures and traditions bind them together. Timor island residents' customary entities as relics of their ancestors, are holy "pamali" (a phrase that refers to taboos or prohibitions that are established based on prevalent traditions and customary law). Every customary activity, like marriage, land negotiations, and so on, requires that the tribes involved give the amount of money or property established by the *Na'i* (customary chief). Another example is related to *belis* (dowry) in marriage. *Belis* was formerly a plague for Timorese. The *belis* or dowry will be changed based on the bride's socioeconomic status. Bride grooms often had to provide *belis* of 40 cows to propose a bride. If the bridegroom is not able to pay the customary *belis*, he needs to borrow (Focus Group Discussion August 1, 2020).

Sociocultural changes in border areas influence the border communities' survival strategies. The community is eager to help each other things related to their social group and group's survival. Nevertheless, they may not fully help in customary items related to private matters, such as *belis* or responsibilities in a direct family. One informant suggested that neighbors (but not nuclear family) may only provide assistance by lending money as *belis*.

Inequality of Access in the Economy, Health, Education and Infrastructure sectors

The World Bank and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicate that Indonesia's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita between 2000-2016 increased by 329 percent (10 percent each year) while Timor-Leste's increased by 250 percent. (8.5 percent per year). In 2000, Indonesia's GDP was \$175.8 billion, with a per capita GDP of \$830.58. In 2016, the gross domestic product was \$932.26 billion, with a per capita GDP of \$3,570.29. Following a vote in 1999 that led to East Timor's independence, the country's GDP in 2000 was US\$350.39 million, with a GDP per capita of US\$402. Timor-Leste's GDP in 2016 was \$1.78 billion, with a per capita GDP of \$1,405.39 (lokadata.beritagar.id, 2016).

Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 shows the communities' access encompassing the rights to health, education, and a reasonable standard of life in Belu District, Indonesia (Tim Nasional Percepatan Penanggulangan Kemiskinan (TNP2K), 2021b):

Table 2: Belu district demography (2021)

	Male	Female	Total
Belu district	110.692	110.072	220.764

Table 3: Belu District residents' health insurance (2021)

	BPJS PBI	BPJS Non PBI	Jamkesda
Belu district	43,49	16,63	1,94

Table 4: Demography of Belu District literate population age 15 or older (2021)

Belu district	Literate		Illiterate
	Latin letter	Arab	
Male	92,83	2,61	0,53
Female	92,29	2,25	9,83

Table 5: Belu District homeownership status (2021)

	Privately owned	Rent	Office
Belu district	86,71	4,25	1,32

Table 6: Source of drinking water by district (2021)

	Bottled water	Refill water	Piped water	Artesian well water	Well water
Belu district	0,00	6,71	6,99	13,73	37,73

Table 7: Average monthly per-capita expenditures by district/city and type of expenditure (2021)

	Food	Percentage (%)	Others	Percentage (%)
Belu district	IDR 447.911	57,29	IDR 333.862	42,71

"The poverty in Timor-Leste is multi-dimensional. Rural areas have a higher poverty rate of 70 percent, which is 55 percent greater than the urban rate of 29 percent. The categories with the greatest multi-dimensional poverty rate are children, elderly (60 years and older), and adolescent males aged 15 to 17 years old. It can be implied that adult women are more likely to endure hardship and poverty than males. This situation is comparable to what occurred in the municipalities of Ermera and Ainaro, which have the greatest number of impoverished people, with poverty rates of 75% and 68%, respectively (Timor-Leste Ministry of Finance and UNICEF, 2021) shown in Tables 8, 9, 10, 11.

Table 8: East Nusa Tenggara district/city poverty index (2021)

	Number of poor residents	Percentage of poor residents	Poverty Intensity Index	Index of Poverty Severity	Line of Poverty (IDR/Capita/Month)
Kabupaten Belu	35,41	15,68	3,13	0,96	379.280

Table 9: Deprivation in each dimension (2014)

	Deprived in water and sanitation	Deprived in living standards	Deprived in information	Deprived in health	Deprived in education	Deprived in employment opportunities
Bobonaro district	65.7	89.5	88	84.4	51.1	24.8

Table 10: Municipal prevalence of impoverishment for each indicator (2014)

	Unable to read and write	Not in education employment training	Child 6-14 not in school	Did not complete 9-year compulsory school
Distrik Bobonaro	47.5	23.1	12.8	11.6

Table 11: Progress and Completion in Education (2018-2019), (uis.unesco.org, 2019)

	Total	Male	Female	Year
School life expectancy ISCED 1-8 (years)				
Percentage of retakers in primary (%)	12.7	14.9	10.4	2019
Survival to the last grade of primary (%)	89.78	86	93.81	2018
Gross intake ratio into the last grade of primary (%)	105.2	101.3	109.2	2019
Effective transition rate from primary to lower secondary general education	93.2	91.5	94.9	2018

Discussion

State policies on poverty reduction in bordering nations have spawned various management approaches and structures. The Timor-Leste government's policies differ from those of Indonesia because the policies are based on regional districts. Even though these two nations have distinct poverty alleviation strategies, the sociocultural issues in each border region are not nearly as concerning as the achievement of a poverty alleviation strategy. The national border communities' similar traditions and cultures may tie the cultural commonalities within the community, and each region's reactions to the applicable rules vary depending on the policies applied.

This research demonstrates that centrally determined policies in a government system caused limited public involvement in decision-making. It turns out that within national borders, poverty reduction measures that engage the public will be able to satisfy their demands. Aspirations that result from direct community engagement stress the immediate satisfaction of all needs and solutions to challenges experienced. This tendency is consistent with Wong's (2012) perspective, which examined community poverty using two models: the needs and capacity approaches (Wong, 2012). Wong (2012) addressed poverty using the preventive aspect via legislation. This model may then be used to implement asymmetric policies (Saryana, 2020), where distinct programs are implemented depending on the challenges of each area. Multiple program types in the Belu district tend to conform to a centralized policy structure, as shown by the number of program variations managed by the central government under the National Team for the Acceleration of Poverty Reduction (TNP2K, 2021). The lack of public engagement in policymaking has persistent and serious structural and cultural consequences. Thus, establishing the community as an engaged subject rather than a passive subject for obtaining social aid is seen as more significant.

The comparative analysis of border area policies and other poverty reduction policy studies showed that the distinction resides in the effect of implementing policies and policy execution (Dewi & Yustikaningrum, 2018; Feijó, 2015; Prasojo, 2012). Findings on the poverty reduction policies reveal a significant gap in asset ownership at the family level and difficult access to the state's assistance programs. Consequently, the impoverished circumstances in Bobonaro and Belu might be used as factual proof of the failure of government policies (Yuda, 2016). However, poverty alleviation in Bobonaro is viewed as significantly more effective and collaborative due to the growth of citizen cooperatives driven by non-governmental organizations that can promote

food security at the family level and use household funds more productively and constructively.

This research demonstrates that externalization policies, both in the form of centralization and decentralization, affect sociocultural transformations. Issues pertaining to poverty reduction are becoming more pressing in light of restrictions on access to social assistance, disparities in the administration of state programs, and the historical problem of the state division of sovereignty. Poverty alleviation policies cannot be separated from the structure of society since they play a crucial role in the achievement of the national poverty reduction program (May, 2010). Nonetheless, the culture and traditions shared by these two nations have the same ancestry and origins, and at present, customs and culture are closely associated with financial spending. The marriage system, which demands a substantial amount of money, and the street gambling mentality, which prioritizes profit, are among the social and anthropological aspects contributing to inequality in the national border communities. This situation contradicts Foxley (2004) placed the responsibility for developing poverty alleviation programs only on the policy sector, while at the sociocultural level, it encourages families and people to act differently (Foxley, 2004).

Through a sociocultural lens, poverty in the border regions of Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste is consistently influenced by prevalent practices and traditions (Siburian, 2009; Sudi & Rini, 2018). The findings of Siburian (2009) and Sudi and Rini (2018), which suggested that culture has a substantial impact on poverty, are still applicable today (Sudi & Rini, 2018). However, the issue of poverty cannot be seen just through the lens of social and cultural norms; there is also a structural component to the poverty alleviation process. The principles of "willingness to assist" and "gotong royong" among ethnic groups in social concerns explain the growth and development of social solidarity in border regions. Due to the inadequate utilization of the partnership dimension, however, the partnership that promotes equality, social inclusion, and empowerment tends not to cooperate with central and local government programs (Rasdi & Kurniawan, 2019).

Conclusions

In summary, the governments' assumptions about implementing community assistance programs in border regions were incorrect. Centralized policymaking and planning diminish the necessary dynamism of the fundamental demands of the people within the national borders. However, decentralized policy planning in the district does not adequately address family-level community issues. It occurs due to the lack of community engagement in defining the beneficial policies. This research demonstrates that the ultimate objective of poverty reduction policies in border regions is contingent on the community's desire for change. Unfortunately, the central government imposes the necessities and the welfare of the community without considering the society's social and cultural evolution.

This research underlines the need to recognize people's sociocultural changes in national borders owing to the restrictions of the family-scale economy, as well as the significance of relying on local wisdom when formulating policies to alleviate poverty.

Inequality in border regions is not just a systemic issue but also a sociocultural one that policymakers must consider. Ultimately, the researcher acknowledges that this work is limited in several ways, including a small sample area. The researcher also has not been able to validate policy considerations in border regions at the central government level. In accordance with this, further research is required to accommodate the variety of societal issues in border regions and direct input from the central government in developing poverty reduction programs for national borders.

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