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Alleviating Society's Economic Crisis: Narrative Policy on Social Safety Nets Policy Process During Covid-19 Pandemic

Abstract

This study aimed to see how the coalition policy at the national level narrated the social safety net (JPS) policy as an effort to save people from the crisis during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) was used to analyze the influence of the policy narrative component from experts, executives, and their supporters on the JPS policy process. The method of the study was descriptive qualitative. The result of the study showed that the strategy of policy coalitions at the meso level in policy narrative influenced the social safety net policy-setting process. In the JPS policy narrative, groups supporting the policy fall into the category of status quo group which positioned itself as a hero. This group came from government circles who claimed that the JPS policy is for the benefit of the community. The second group (victims) came from people who believed in the notion that the implementation of JPS policies was problematic and inappropriate. Villain from the JPS narrative was characterized from a group that took advantage of the situation for personal gain. Moral of the story from JPS policy was that the hero tried to lead the narrative so that the story built legitimized the policy.

Keywords:

Social Safety Nets, Covid-19 Pandemic, Narrative Policy Framework, Qualitative NPF

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has triggered a global economic crisis. The OECD report for March 2020, projects that global GDP will only grow by 2.4%, and 2.5% for the G-20 countries. According to the ILO, the decline in GDP, if only around 2%, would encourage an increase in the

unemployment rate of 5.3 million people (ILO, 2020).

Indonesia is also experiencing a serious crisis. Economic activity has stalled, causing production, distribution and consumption processes to stall (Scarabel, Pellis, Bragazzi, & Wu, 2020). A study from SMERU estimated that the Covid-19

disaster would have an impact on increasing poverty in Indonesia, which had been predicted to be 9.7-12.4 percent or equivalent to an increase in new poor groups of 1.3–8.5 million people by the end of 2020 (Suryahadi, Al Izzati, & Suryadarma, 2020). Meanwhile, data from the Ministry of Manpower as of April 20, 2020 states, there were 2,084,593 workers from 116,370 companies were laid off.

To minimize the impact of the crisis, in April 2020, the Indonesian government issued a social safety net (JPS) policy as an effort to protect people from crisis risks (Djalante et al., 2020). Assistance provided in the form of cash assistance through the improvement of the family hope program, basic food cards, pre-employment cards, and eliminating electricity rates for 450 VA customers as well as a 50% discount rate for 7 million 900 VA customers in April, May, June 2020 (Bayu, 2020).

The government hoped that the social safety net policy will be able to save people affected by the economic crisis. JPS is likened to a safety on a high-wire walker so that when it falls, it doesn't hit the ground directly (Paitoonpong, Abe, & Puopongsakorn, 2008) the issue of "social safety nets" (SSNs). However, the JPS policy was considered by many to be ineffective and not on target. Even according to the Institute for Development of Economics & Finance (INDEF) the JPS policy is only a government gimmick.

In public policy debates, narratives are conducted strategically by competing stakeholders to influence policy (Gray & Jones, 2016). In the policy process, many studies have attempted to unravel the complexity of the temporal interactions between public policies and policy actors, events, contexts, and outcomes. (Weible in Shanahan, Jones, & Mcbeth, 2011, page. 1). In the context of JPS policy process during pandemic, an analysis of the narratives that influence policy was needed. Previous researchs were mostly limited to the implementation and evaluation of JPS policies

so far (see Alam & Hossain, 2016; Griffiths, 2019; Jamaruddin, 2017; Mumtaz & Whiteford, 2017; Narayanan & Gerber, 2017; Sumarto, Suryahadi, & Pritchett, 2000). An overview of the policy process can provide an understanding of the underlying narrative that is built into a policy.

This research tried to fill in the gaps in the study of the policy process in terms of JPS policy narrative. We applied Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) for the analysis. NPF is one of the most developed approaches to policy studies and is most suitable for analyzing policy narratives (Shanahan, Jones, & McBeth, 2018). The NPF is also a policy process framework (Shanahan et al., 2018) or a sophisticated theory of the policy process (Veselková, 2017). The policy narrative is at the core of the NPF study (Jones, Michael D, Shanahan, Elizabeth A, McBeth, 2014, pages. 251–253).

NPF has been using a lot of quantitative approaches. The quantitative approach to NPF has limitations in exploring the strategies of each interest group in narrating policies (Gray & Jones, 2016). This research will use qualitative approach in the NPF so that it can map in depth how the policy narratives affect the JPS policy process. The research question that would be answered in this research is how does the coalition policy at the national level narrate the social safety net (JPS) policy as an effort to save the community's economy from the crisis during the Covid-19 Pandemic from the perspective of NPF approach?

Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) Theory in Policy Studies

Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) originally developed in the 1990s. NPF can be defined as a systematic attempt to study policy narratives and their role in policy processes and outcomes (McBeth, Clemons, Husmann, Kusko, & Gaarden, 2013). The NPF thus complements efforts to understand policy processes and outcomes.

While majority of policy theories focus on actors and processes in the policy subsystem (Kingdon; Sabatier dan Jenkins-Smith; Baumgartner dan Jones in (Crow & Berggren, 2014)), NPF analysis focuses on the assumption that narrative is an important component of processes and tools that can reflect the beliefs and actions of policy stakeholders. Through this framework, researchers can see an overview of the narrative strategies of actors in influencing policy outcomes.

Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) is a policy process framework (Shanahan et al., 2018) that can be said as the recent or most recent theory of the policy process (Veselková, 2017). NPF places the role of policy narrative in a centralized policy process (Shanahan et al., 2011). NPF is an approach to study the policy process that comes from postpositive theory in public policy (especially policy analysis), but paradoxically, NPF also fights for the so-called 'positivist method' to study the policy process so that the NPF explicitly views the world of policy through the lens of a social construction. This concept subscribes to the idea that policy issues and the entire policy process really depend on the meanings attached to them by the actors involved (Jones & Radaelli, 2015). NPF stands on a series of key assumptions, including that policy narratives are very important in the policy process; policy narratives work at three levels of analysis: micro (individual), meso (policy subsystem), and macro (institutional / cultural); a large number of policy actors produce policy narratives; and policies and programs are a form of translation of believed thoughts communicated through policy narratives, which are tools to convey and organize policy information (Shanahan et al., 2011).

Experts operationalized policy narratives by distinguishing two different components, namely narrative form and narrative content. The narrative form examines the structure of a policy narrative, while narrative content describes the objects contained in it (Jones,

Michael D, Shanahan, Elizabeth A, McBeth, 2014). The policy narrative has a spatial and temporal setting or context when the policy occurs (Jones & Radaelli, 2015; Shanahan et al., 2018), a plot that introduces temporal elements (beginning, middle, end) explaining the relationship between setting and character and the arrangement of the causal mechanism, the character who determines the problem (heroes), the cause of the problem (villains), or the victim (victim). those harmed by problems), and moral stories, where policy solutions are usually offered (Jones & McBeth, 2010). In other words, the policy narrative consists of four basic elements, such as setting, character, plot, and moral of the story (policy solution) (Gray & Jones, 2016). The purpose of these narrative elements is to capture the definition of a particular problem and propose a policy solution proposed by the author as an answer that leads to mobilization (Snow and Benfort in (McBeth, Shanahan, Anderson, & Rose, 2012).

NPF can be applied to various research designs, both in the form of experimental and non-experimental research, quantitative and qualitative, and can use a variety of data sources (Shanahan et al., 2018). (Gray & Jones, 2016) for example, conducting research with NPF to examine US campaign finance regulatory reform policy narratives. (Weiss, 2018) used a narrative analysis of the reform paradigm of New Public Management (NPM) based on NPM literatures published in Germany using the NPF. NPF was also used to research advocacy groups in tweet messages on social media Twitter in relation to nuclear policy in the United States (Gupta, Ripberger, & Wehde, 2018).

In the context of JPS policy, (Sumarto, Suryahadi, & Widyanti, 2005) showed that there are some important things related to JPS in the 1998 monetary crisis, including the fact that there is no preparation to handle the social impact of the crisis. It means that JPS program was not well

planned, was not supported by reliable data and no direction to the community (public narrative). As a result, there was pressure from people who did not understand that JPS was only for the poor. For this reason, research is needed on the JPS program during the Covid-19 pandemic to find out the rolling policy process and how actors in policy narrate the policy to the public to achieve success. The study of JPS in Indonesia is still focused on the implementation level, for example research by (M. Baiquni, 1999) who examined the implementation of JPS, research on the objectives and constraints of JPS in Indonesia (Ananta & Siregar, 1999), research on the effectiveness of the implementation of JPS in the education sector (M. Nugroho, 2005). Research on JPS in Indonesia as mentioned above as well as other research on JPS (Barkat-e-khuda, 2011; Daly & Fane, 2002; Kannan, 2011; Khan, 2013) mostly linked JPS with community poverty level and poverty alleviation policies.

This research differs from the various previous studies above from several aspects: (1) This study discusses the JPS policy process by linking JPS policies with the actors involved, the spatial and temporal context in which policies are taken, the flow of policy making and solutions to policy problem solving. This study does not discuss indicators of poverty rates and the impact of JPS on poverty alleviation, as previous studies have applied; (2) This study does not discuss policy implementation like previous studies, but focuses on the policy process from the initial emergence of policy problems to the existence of policy solutions using NPF with a qualitative approach that has not been widely researched and studied (Gray & Jones, 2016); (3) In terms of approach, this research uses NPF with a qualitative approach which is still rarely used. In addition, we analyzed the narrative process in depth in order to find out the strategies of the actors (which is difficult to obtain using quantitative approach).

Methods

This study used qualitative descriptive approach by analyzing the social safety net (JPS) policy narrative in crisis conditions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. At the initial stage, the policy process will be divided using the NPF approach by simulating existing components and then analyzed and narrated it descriptively.

Sources of data in this study were primary data and secondary data. Primary data was collected from the narratives of policy makers in the mass media and interviews with experts (academics) and society, including informal sector workers targeted by these policies. technocrats of Ministry of Social Affairs, and the National Development Planning Agency were interviewed too. Interviews were conducted with the help of structured questions in order to analyze each component of the NPF (Shanahan et al., 2018). The key questions that were asked of all respondents are:

“The pandemic that occurred caused an economic crisis [focusing event], and a social safety net policy that the government sees as one solution [policy issue] into a debate in the community. How do you think about this issue? [problem definition; plot; setting]

“In your opinion, what problems arose from the policy and who caused it?” [villain]

“Who is harmed by this condition?” [victim]

“Who can solve these problems?” [hero]

To strengthen and complement the analysis, secondary data were collected from statements from the coalition of supporters of JPS policies in print, electronic, social media, and scientific articles during the period March-May 2020. Data mined from social media were statements directly related to the JPS policy process. In addition, analysis was carried out of official state documents such as regulations and activity reports. The scope of analysis of this NPF research is the meso level, which is analyzing the narrative nationally. Data collection will be carried out from June and July 2020 via video conference or telephone.

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed inductively and deductively by the research team manually. Deductive aspects of coding include NPF policy narrative code: setting, plot, characters, and policy solutions (e.g., moral of the story).

Results and Discussion

Narrative Policy in the context of Meso

Policies can be analyzed using the Narrative Policy Framework using three levels of analysis: macro, meso and micro (Shanahan et al., 2018). At the meso level, the policy area for social safety networks during the Covid pandemic includes policy actors in the policy subsystem (groups, coalitions and organizations), how these policy actors shape / construct and communicate policy narratives to influence the policy process. In other words, this research will focus on the policy narratives of Social Safety Net policy actors from government officials, organizations, groups and coalitions. Sources of data used to obtain policy narratives are from various media available on the internet, which can be accessed easily and for free by all levels of society. By analyzing JPS policies in the scope of meso, it will get a picture of the policy actors and the coalition they belong to, in which they have a position / perspective on policy. In this meso context, it will be clear how each coalition narrates policies according to the perspective they believe in.

Policy actors that can be identified from this policy are the government as the main initiator, planner and implementer of the Social Safety Net policy, in which the Ministry of Social is at the forefront of the implementation of this policy. Other agencies involved in the social safety net policy include Ministry of National Development Planning / Bappenas, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Financial Affairs, and so on. In addition, community organizations also oversee the process of implementing social safety net policies, including independent research

institutes such as The Smeru Research Institute, Perkumpulan Prakarsa (Welfare Initiative for Better Societies), Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), mass media as asumsi.id and tirto.id and individual policy observers from various academic and non-academic institutions.

All policy actors mentioned in the paragraph above can be categorized into several policy coalitions: The first policy coalition is a group that complies. (Gray & Jones, 2016) called this group as the status quo group, which means group that supports the current social safety net policy system. This policy coalition includes the government which presents a policy narrative about the noble intention of the JPS, namely to help the community. They positioned themselves as heroes in their policy narratives. Interestingly, All policy narratives obtained and analyzed from the government circles indicated that this social safety net policy is in the interest of helping society (Komite Penanganan Covid 19 dan Pemulihan Ekonomi Nasional, 2020; Samodro, 2020). The Government Spokesperson in handling Covid-19, Yuriyanto, added that the social safety net is proof of the government's seriousness so that people can carry out this difficult time calmly, without panic. (Wibowo, 2020). In line with this, the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia stated that social safety nets help to create good community stability (Kementerian Keuangan Republik Indonesia, 2020). Another claim from the government is that the first phase of the JPS program in the April-June 2020 period has been going well (Purnamasari, 2020).

The second policy coalition is a group that assume that the social safety net policy is vital, but its implementation is problematic and needs program improvement, for example in targeting recipients of pre-work card assistance and electricity subsidies (Adam, 2020; Hidayat, 2020). This coalition believes in the noble goal of the Ministry of Social Affairs to save communities

from the impact of the pandemic by implementing social safety nets, but they hope to improve and reform the implementation of better programs and mechanisms. Included in this second policy coalition are several independent research institutions which in their studies question the implementation and mechanisms of social safety net policies, such as CSIS and The Smeru Research Institute. Several mass media have also positioned themselves as social catalysts and critics of the government's performance in social safety net policies, for example Tempo, Kontan.co.id, Asumsi.co and Tirto.id. Furthermore, the status quo of the existing social safety net policies is deemed inadequate and solves the problem. There are even observers who argue that social safety net policies are a government gimmick, incompatible and ill-targeted (Hidayat, 2020). In the practice, various parties have voiced many complaints regarding the distribution of social safety net assistance. Ombudsman (Lindawati, 2020; Purwaningtyas, 2020) said that 72 percent of the total reports submitted to the Indonesian Ombudsman in 2020 were dominated by reports on social assistance. The media also voiced the problem of the mismatch in the distribution of aid (Susanto, 2020). The Indonesian Political Indicator Survey Institute said that in a survey they conducted on May 16 to 18, 2020, the majority of the people considered that the social assistance program from the central government to communities affected by the pandemic was not on target. The first category, 46.8 percent of respondents, considered that the social assistance program was not well targeted. The second category, 13.5 percent of respondents, said that the social assistance program was not on target at all. There are also respondents who think that the government's social assistance program is very well targeted but the number is only 4.1 percent. Meanwhile, the number of respondents who considered the social assistance program quite right on target was 25.6 percent (Yahya,

2020). At least there are several obstacles noted by (Rahmansyah, Qadri, Sakti, & Ikhsan, 2020) in terms of distributing social assistance to deal with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, including assistance delivery inaccuracy (many families returned assistance because they were not included in the target beneficiary but were given assistance, incorrect data on beneficiaries, inconsistencies in recipient data held by the central government and local governments), distribution problems at the grassroots level, for example in the RT and RW areas that lack supervision and monitoring, and

lack of public understanding of the social assistance provided by the government. (Consuello, 2020) analyzed the inaccuracy of the pre-employment card policy which seems to focus only on developing the soft skills of prospective job seekers whose output cannot be clearly measured, but ignored the problem of limited employment opportunities during the pandemic, so that it did not have significant capacity to solve the existing unemployment problem. Several solutions have been offered in several studies regarding the evaluation of social safety network programs, for example by considering more to list targets and channeling social assistance with the right mechanism, adjusting pre-employment card training to priority needs, expanding the coverage of electricity assistance recipients, and changing the scheme and name of assistance, and ensuring business continuity of MSEs affected by pandemic (Yumna, Arfyanto, Bima, & Bachtiar, 2020). CSIS analyzed the need to consider a self-reporting mechanism for those affected and in need of assistance, cooperation with other institutions or private parties, especially start-ups that empower vulnerable groups, pay attention to the supply side such as domestic food production, both in terms of quantity and quality, loosening the requirements for obtaining JPS in accordance with current conditions, organizing clear and regular public communication so that the public understands

the assistance to be provided and the mechanism, and synergy between Ministries / Agencies is needed as the implementation of social assistance programs is under the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Coordinating Ministry for the Economy, Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Public Works and People's Housing and Local Government (Barany, Simanjuntak, Widia, & Damuri, 2020).

Narrative Components of JPS Policy in Indonesia

Background

The President's directives at the Limited Meeting on Tuesday, April 7, 2020 regarding the Effectiveness of the Distribution of the Social Safety Net Program were: (1) implementation is really on target, data is also from beneficiary groups by name, by address; (2) distribution of disbursement as soon as possible, as quickly as possible, precisely and quickly; (3) the mechanism for distributing this social safety net is carried out as efficiently as possible, using practical methods, which are not complicated, and make it difficult for the community.

In practice in the field, through the Ministry of Social Affairs, the government has allocated a budget of IDR 203.9 T for social protection in the context of handling Covid-19. Of this amount is used for: 1) PKH (Indonesian Conditional Cash Transfer Programme) IDR. 37.4 T; 2) Groceries IDR. 43.6 T; 3) Jabodetabek Social Assistance IDR. 6.8 T; 4) Non-Jabodetabek Social Assistance Rp. 32.4 T; 5) Pre-employment IDR 20 T; 6) Discount on electricity IDR. 6.9 T; 7) Logistics / Food / Staple Food IDR 25 T; 8) Village Fund Direct Cash Social Assistance IDR.31.8 T.

In the case of the Covid-19 safety net program, at least the government has seven programs that seem to be a "trump card" for the government to get out of the abyss of slowing economic growth during the pandemic. The seven programs are the Indonesian Conditional

Cash Transfer Programme (PKH), Cash For Work (PKT), Direct Cash Social Assistance (BLT), Basic Food Cards, Pre-Employment Cards, electricity subsidies for certain groups, and special social assistance for the Jabodetabek area. The presence of these various programs actually presents new problems at the level of implementation, especially at the grassroots level.

Character

Hero: The government acts as the protagonist of the social safety net policy because it acts as the savior of the community during the pandemic. In the perspective of BAPPENAS, for example, through Presidential Regulation Number 86 of 2020 concerning the 2021 Government Work Plan (RKP) as an elaboration of the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) (Presidential Decree 18 of 2020), the Ministry of National Development Planning / Bappenas determines the Integration of Social Assistance Major Project Social towards Comprehensive Social Protection Schemes. This Major Project (MP) is based on the condition of the Covid-19 Pandemic which has an impact on increasing new poor and vulnerable groups due to the large number of people losing their jobs and unable to carry out economic activities. Seeing this pandemic condition, it is necessary to reform the social protection system that improves mechanisms and expands the coverage of social assistance and social security (Bappenas, interview, 18/08/2020). Reform of the social protection system is carried out through improving data on the poor and vulnerable, integrating and digitizing social assistance, developing an adaptive social protection system, and improving social protection financing mechanisms.

Reform of the social protection system is the main key to accelerate poverty reduction which was predicted to increase by the end of 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, it is necessary to accelerate the improvement of

Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS) towards social registration in stages to include 100 percent of the population which is supported by updating the Social Welfare Integrated Data (DTKS) nationally, developing and digitizing village monographs, as well as increasing the capacity of local governments to support regular independent updates of DTKS through active and on-demand outreach. This goal is to support data accuracy on the integration of various social assistance as a reliable and comprehensive social safety net system. In addition, assistance to beneficiaries, and refinement of non-cash-based distribution mechanisms to realize the implementation of effective social protection programs based on the criteria of being right on target, right in number, on time, on quality, and on administration (5T) are also the main agenda.

Villain: Social safety net distribution team. The public is concerned that there are many deviations in the social safety net policy. There are some notes on the problems that occurred during the distribution of social safety net program assistance targeting Jabodetabek residents, including the uneven distribution of aid distribution, uncertainty in procedures and requirements for receiving assistance, data on target recipients that were not up to date, emergency conditions for residents who were needy but were not registered, and the problem of informal sector workers whose identity were migrants. Among these problems, in general, it has more to do with updating beneficiary data and appropriate distribution scheme. In connection with the problems of migrant residents, especially informal workers with immigrant status, it is necessary for them to receive separate treatment for the government

Victim: the community, in this case, informal sector workers who are one of the targets of the JPS policy. In this case, informal workers who were migrants will find it difficult to be covered in the social safety net assistance program scheme which

is included in the special social assistance category for the Jabodetabek area. Meanwhile, in order to obtain such assistance, informal workers were demanded to complete several documents that are bureaucratically complex and time-consuming. Meanwhile, if they wanted to take care of social assistance that came from the region they were from, they need to come to their region of origin, while social restriction policies are still being applied in Jakarta (such as closing access to public transportation, public transport administration procedures that required additional costs such as rapid test fees. etc). This condition was a problem that was urgent to get a discretion for the government so that the social safety net program can be obtained by informal sector workers. In fact, informal workers and vulnerable groups were groups that need serious attention from the government (A. A. Nugroho, 2018)

In addition to the social assistance program that specializes in the Jabodetabek area, other programs included in the social safety net program have also generated a similar polemic. Reflecting on the pre-employment card polemic, it does not have much significant effect or impact on informal sector workers in Jakarta. This is because in Jakarta, informal workers were able to attend training through other free and easily accessible media with relatively similar facilities provided in the pre-employment card program activities. This means that pre-employment cards were not appropriate to apply in Jakarta which people generally have access to facilities without paying (such as wifi corners, etc.) to access contents like business ideas, business opportunities, job skills or soft skills.

The community in general, especially informal workers, expects direct assistance without intermediaries (vendors). However, in pre-employment card program there was a selective system, so, general public could not join the program easily and this caused double assistance with other social safety net programs.

With a total budget of approximately Rp. 20 trillion, the pre-employment card program was very ineffective and inefficient for beneficiaries because part of the funds channeled will be used for purchasing training packages and there was incentive scheme provided in the system. This incentive scheme caused problems because the fund could not be received directly in cash but in the form of digital money (through e-wallets).

In this difficult situation, informal sector workers were no longer faced with the problem of how to get a new job but more towards “eating or not eating today”. So that the transfer of pre-employment programs or assistance schemes becomes more desirable for the informal sector workers, especially if the paid package fees and incentives are distributed in cash transfers to direct beneficiaries. It could also be a solution to cover people who were not registered (switched) in other social safety net programs. So it was not surprising then that the problem was increasingly widespread in the community and public complaints against the pre-employment program case have been brought up to the Ombudsman and the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK). The resignation of a special staff for President Jokowi, the CEO of the Ruang Guru Start-up who was the partner in the implementation of the pre-employment program also did not necessarily reduce the polemic of the social safety net program. Again, the beneficiaries (informal workers) are victims of a series of problems from the social safety net program.

Plot

Various social safety network policies in the form of programs were born during the pandemic period, whether they were started at the time of the pandemic (on going) or they were part of the social safety net program before the pandemic happened. After the discovery of the first case, in mid-April 2020 the government officially announced that Covid-19 was a national disaster

case. Since then the President of the Republic of Indonesia has issued Presidential Decree Number 12 of 2020 concerning the Determination of Non-Natural Disasters for the Spread of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). In line with this stipulation, every citizen has the right to obtain good public services from the state and the state is obliged to fulfill the rights and basic needs of its citizens (Law Number 25 of 2009). To address this, the Social Safety Net program has become a mainstay for the government to cover the basic needs of the affected communities through various assistance schemes.

Reflecting on the crisis era ahead of the 1988 reform era, at least it was the beginning of the government to issue a social safety network program for the first time in Indonesia. In the notes of the SMERU research institute, the social safety net program implemented by the government targets various fields including food security, education, health, employment, and community empowerment. At the end of the Social Safety Net program in that era, the program's target was that beneficiary households had experienced an increase in per capita consumption of 4-10%.

In the case of the Covid-19 safety net program, at least the government has seven programs that seem to be a “trump card” for the government to get out of the abyss of slowing economic growth during the pandemic. The seven programs are the Indonesian Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (PKH), Cash For Work (PKT), Direct Cash Assistance (BLT), Basic Food Cards, Pre-Employment Cards, electricity subsidies for certain groups, and special social assistance for the Jabodetabek area. The presence of these various programs actually presents new problems at the level of implementation, especially at the grassroots level.

The data problem is one of the things that becomes the “tap” to open the problem of implementing the social safety net program, not supported by a transparent and accountable

bureaucracy. The phenomenon of the President getting angry due to the implementation problem then appeared and became public consumption, including various statements by policy makers who were deemed inappropriate in unraveling the “tangled threads” of implementing the social safety net program. This phenomenon seems to be a justification that the policies made did not solve the problem but even created new problems and were far from the policy principles that according to Hugh Huclo (1989) are present in order to solve problems. Several times Ombudsman has also criticized the implementation of this social safety net program as a response to the increasing complaints regarding the central government’s promises to people affected by Covid-19.

Moral of the story

The social safety net program that was predicted to be the main solution to protect people affected by Covid-19 appears fragile in its planning and implementation. Several phenomena of these problems were a form of failure of policy makers (government) who did not see thoroughly what the problems were being faced. The case of the Covid-19 pandemic was a complex problem, especially having a “butterfly effect” which began with a case of health problems which then caused problems in various other aspects including the future fate of informal sector workers.

Redesigning existing policies is something that the government needs to do immediately, including improving the management of the implementation of social safety net program policies for informal sector workers. The complexity of the problem inevitably must be faced to continue providing the basic needs of people affected by the pandemic, especially for informal workers. In today’s dynamic era, policy redesign must be carried out by promoting “anticipatory democracy”, which according to (Toffler, 2009) puts forward bureaucratic planning in a more open, democratic and decentralized

style. Therefore, an evaluation is needed to formulate a policy improvement for the social safety net program. First, it is important to open up input from a number of experts who explore the root of the problem and then become an input in redesigning or refining social safety net programs. Second, improving data systems and procedures. This needs to be addressed in the near future to facilitate access to social safety net programs for informal workers. In addition, the synchronization of the data system between relevant stakeholders in a “one base data” will simplify and unravel what is the current polemic of inconsistencies in the target beneficiaries. Finally, the strengthening of stakeholders at the local level such as sub-districts / villages / sub-districts in the execution of the social safety net program. Strengthening institutions at the local level will be able to minimize errors in validating the accuracy of the target recipients of the program and even if there are mistakes it will be easily addressed by the pro-active role of stakeholders at the local level.

3. Saving society: Narrative of Social Safety Net Policy in Indonesia during a pandemic

Geras (1983: 72) stated that the essential needs that must be met in order for humans to survive consist of at least eating, drinking, working, resting and health. The conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic have forced online motorcycle taxi drivers to continue working outside the home to meet the needs of their families, at least to make a living. For those who rely on daily income, not working means not eating. All respondents interviewed for online motorcycle taxi drivers stated that their daily income from driving online motorcycle taxis dropped dramatically. Achmad Mukorobin (interview, 2020) online transportation driver said:

“Before (the pandemic), in a day I can get 70 to 120 and a half days, for example, it comes out at 7/8 A.M until

after lunch. Now (after the pandemic) from this morning I just started gosend. On average, if you go out at 7/8 A.M to 6 P.M o'clock, you only can get 2 orders"

The decline and even the loss of sources of income forced online motorcycle taxi drivers to adopt strategies to stay alive. Especially with a prolonged pandemic and it is uncertain when it will end. Some of them decide to return to their hometowns, or to send their family members back to their hometowns because they are no longer able to survive in the city.

Some of the respondents who drove online motorcycle taxis said they had to increase their working hours two to three times during a pandemic. Extending working hours is not always followed by increasing the amount of income, or simply getting an income of the same value as their income before the Covid-19 pandemic strikes. With these limitations and a significant decrease in the amount of income, they have to adjust to reducing the quality and quantity of consumption in order to survive. Nurhadi, an online transportation driver (interview, 2020) explained:

"If in the past you could buy cigarettes, now it's bad, just buying peanuts are hard. Now I bring lunch box since leaving the house for lunch as well. I brought 2 large aqua bottles inside the seat. in this condition, we must be smart

In practice, there were so many problems and irregularities that this policy had experienced a lot of criticism and protests from various parties. People who felt aggrieved had also become one of the most influential actors in the dynamics of this policy, for instance by being direct observers and providing reports to authorized agencies such as Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman was even overwhelmed by the increase in the number of reports related to the distribution of social assistance funds. The policy coalition formed

in this case was divided into two, government coalition that stayed true with the initial aim of helping the community in facing the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, and another coalition that demanded a change in the system / work pattern of policy implementation. Both policy coalitions exchanged their respective policy narratives in the mass media, both print and electronic. What is understood at the outset is that basically these two coalitions agreed on the need for an appropriate social safety net to deal with the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, but what distinguished them was that the second coalition demanded or expected the government to respond more quickly to the problems faced in the field, especially in the distribution of budgets. The form and design of policies also require evaluation in the short term, so that immediate improvement effort can be taken.

According to (Makinde, 2005), policy implementation is a problem that is often and naturally faced in policy policies in developing countries. The analysis showed that there were several policy realities faced by both social safety net policy coalitions during Covid-19 pandemic. First, it is clear that there was implementation gap. Egownman in (Makinde, 2005) stated that implementation gap is the gap between stated policy objectives and realization of planned goals. Norris et al. in (Hudson et al., 2019) suggested that policies formulated at the national level can face challenges in determining the level of consistency of implementation at the subnational level, especially if the subnational level has different degrees of political authority. What was expected by the central government when this JPS policy was formulated for the first time was not in accordance with the implementation of aid distribution in the field. Minimal socialization, chaotic data, even extortion from the authorities in charge of distributing aid (CNN Indonesia, 2020a, 2020b) are things that the government had not anticipated at the time of policy formulation.

This implementation gap is the main task of the central government to handle in ensuring that the policy objectives narrated are truly realized optimally. In accordance with the description (Makinde, 2005) regarding successful policy implementation, in order to be able to carry out this policy further successfully in 2021 (still a pandemic), the government needs to pay attention to the following aspects: 1) Target beneficiaries of JPS should be involved in the formulation stage so that they can contribute to the policy process, and the government can find out what the community really needs during the pandemic, considering that many policies seem “futile” because they do not really fulfill the needs of many people; 2) More attention should be paid to human resources and budget needed to implement the policy; 3) There must be effective communication between target recipients of policies and implementors of the policy, so that target recipients of the policy truly understand government’s intent in this policy; 4) The government needs to pay attention to the sustainability aspects of a program, unless the program is deemed not useful for the government, and the last one; 5) Adequate supervision and monitoring, because projects that are less supervised usually produce unexpected results.

Conclusion

Policy narrative on social safety nets during a pandemic influenced policy making and implementation. In the scope of meso policy, narrative becomes an important part of the policy process. In the initial narrative, the government is considered a hero during the pandemic by offering a safety net policy as one solution. Through the jargon #KemsosHadir, the hero wants to show his actions in overcoming problems and helping people affected by the pandemic.

However, with various problems arising from the social safety net policy, it was clear that the government itself as the implementor could not distribute JPS in accordance with the provisions.

Another problem that arose was that some JPS programs were considered to benefit those who were close to the hero in the narrative of this policy. In this policy narrative, the informal sector workers became the victim of the policy because various problems that arose made the informal sector workers the most disadvantaged party.

The narrative in the policy is an important part of strengthening the determination and legitimizing the policy. The policy narrative could determine the moral of the story going forward.

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