

## TOWARDS A RESILIENT INDONESIA: EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES THROUGH INCLUSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICIES

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### ABSTRACT

*This research aims to examine social protection policies in the context of national economic recovery (PEN) due to the impacts of COVID-19. The pandemic has exacerbated the complexities of poverty, inequality, and unemployment. A qualitative study design is employed, gathering data through a literature review of relevant government documents, journals, and news articles, and utilizing the problem structuring method. The findings indicate that social protection policies have not yet had a significant impact. The implementation of the pre-employment card program faces several challenges, including fund misappropriation and inaccurate data submissions. The research offers several policy alternatives: 1) Addressing limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic; 2) The informal sector, being the most economically affected, requires community business stimulus; 3) Ensuring that social protection policies are fully compliant with legal frameworks; 4) Social and skill enhancement initiatives targeting impoverished populations; and 5) Robust social protection grounded in community empowerment. The originality of this research lies in its emphasis on the critical role of the government in implementing equitable, relevant policies with a significant societal impact and a focus on public interest.*

### INTRODUCTION

The problems of poverty, inequality, and unemployment are increasing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has a broad impact on behavioral changes, limited economic activity, and decreased community income (Fahri et al., 2020). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced economic activity quite thoroughly (Ferdi, 2020; Setyadi & Indriyani, 2021). The pandemic has resulted in a decrease in the level of public demand for goods and services (Kurniasih, 2020). This affects the decline in business activity and affects the demand for labor, leading to an increase in the poverty rate (Fahrika & Roy, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has widened the gap between the rich and the poor (Sabila, 2021). Badan Pusat Statistik (2020), recorded the inequality of expenditure of the Indonesian population as measured by the Gini ratio of 0.385 as of September 2020.

The poverty rate is one of the indicators that describe the level of community welfare. The Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration noted that around 21,173 villages, or 28.2 percent of the total 74,953



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villages in Indonesia are categorized as 17,633 villages and 3,540 villages as very underdeveloped (CNN Indonesia, 2020). Villages are more difficult to develop and break out of the poverty cycle due to low income, limited access, and lack of development (Murdiyana & Mulyana, 2017).

According to the Socio-Demographic Survey data issued in 2020, the people most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak are the poor and vulnerable people as well as those employed in the unorganized sector. Approximately 70.53% of workers in the low-income category—whose income fell below IDR 1,800,000—saw a reduction in their earnings (BPS, 2020). As per Mulyono (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a growing complexity of economic issues. Problems include the decline in the village economy due to difficulties experienced in marketing production, the decline of MSMEs, and a decline in people's purchasing power. (Biduri et al., 2021). Household consumption expenditure also contributed to the poverty rate according to (BPS, 2021), household consumption expenditure also contracted by 2.23% in the first quarter of 2021.

The cause of this condition is based on the large number of companies laying off their employees, resulting in minimal job opportunities (Sunija et al., 2020). On the other hand, the level of community skills is still minimal and government policies limit community activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the PSBB and PPKM policies. Thus, the impact caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has become the focus of community economic recovery through the redistribution of community income (Pangkerego et al., 2022).

Based on the Kemenkeu page, the government has tried to issue various policies that can encourage people to rise from the COVID-19 pandemic (Kemenkeu.go.id, n.d.). The policy is contained in the National Economic Recovery Programme (PEN). Assistance for households is provided in the form of expanding recipients and benefits of the Family Hope Program (PKH) and Basic Food Cards, Jabodetabek Basic Food Assistance, Cash Basic Food Assistance, Village Fund Direct Cash Assistance, PKH Rice Assistance, as well as providing Cash Assistance for Recipients of Basic Food Cards, Salary / Wage Subsidies, Pre-Employment Cards, Electricity Discounts, Internet Quota Subsidies to support Distance Learning (PJJ), Wage Subsidy Assistance (BSU) BPJS Employment and honorary educators. Support is provided by the government in the form of fund placement, interest subsidies, Micro Business Productive Assistance (BPUM), MSME Final Income Tax incentives, credit guarantees, and LPDB investment financing. This form of assistance from the government, both from the demand side and from the supply side, indirectly also aims to reduce the rate of increase in poverty, reduce unemployment, and increase people's purchasing power with the main objective of restoring people's welfare (Ekon.go.id, n.d.)

The agenda of the National Economic Recovery (PEN) now includes the Pre-Employment Programme. Layoffs have harmed Indonesia's economic sector due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the country's economic resilience has declined (Fasri et al., 2023). To offer social protection and lessen the pandemic's negative effects on the economy, Presidential Instruction No. 4 of 2020 addresses refocusing activities, budget reallocation, and the procurement of goods and services in the framework of accelerating the handling of COVID-19. The Pre-Employment Card is a semi-social support program that offers online training to aid in recovery. It is targeted towards the unemployed, job seekers, and COVID-19-affected communities. This promotes the acceleration of the COVID-19 pandemic-related redistribution of communal income. Nevertheless, attempts



to enhance community skills via virtual training courses have failed to influence the absorption of new jobs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the social and economic landscape, compelling governments worldwide to develop social protection programs as mitigation measures. In Indonesia, various social protection policies, such as the Pre-Employment Program (*Kartu Prakerja*) and social assistance initiatives, have been introduced to alleviate the negative effects on affected communities. However, the effectiveness of these programs remains a critical issue. Previous studies indicate that structural and implementation challenges hinder the achievement of the primary goals of these programs, particularly in improving the welfare of impacted populations (Ginting & Herdiyana, 2021). The Pre-Employment Program, intended to improve community skills and facilitate worker welfare recovery, has encountered significant criticism. Determined that the program has not yet produced ideal results. (Purnama, 2022), emphasizes a deficiency in the data management systems, resulting in inequities in aid distribution and facilitating the abuse of power in the allocation of social assistance. These findings highlight the pressing necessity to improve data management and implementation frameworks to get more precise and effective outcomes (Widiastian, 2021).

Alongside the Pre-Employment Program, social assistance initiatives under social protection programs have faced considerable hurdles. According to (Latif & Pangestu, 2022), although these initiatives intend to safeguard populations impacted by the epidemic, the distribution procedure frequently fails to realize its full potential. A primary concern is corruption in the distribution of help, which hinders recipients from effectively capitalizing on the assistance provided. Wahyuni, (2021), further outlines deficiencies in the distribution system, including inadequate openness and accountability, which compound these problems.

The significance of transparency and accountability in the delivery of social aid is underscored by findings from the Centre for Anti-Corruption Studies at Gadjah Mada University (Pukat UGM). In emergency scenarios, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the distribution of substantial social assistance monies is particularly susceptible to corruption. These problems not only undermine the efficacy of the programs but also reduce public confidence in the government. Consequently, immediate structural improvements in social protection measures are essential to rectify these systemic flaws. This study intends to examine the policies of Indonesia's social protection program utilizing the problem structuring method. This method aims to discern unmet demands and chances for enhancement within the policies. This study's conclusions aim to offer strategic recommendations to improve the effectiveness and equity of future social protection program implementation.

## METHOD

This study employs a case study methodology alongside a qualitative descriptive approach. As stated by (Rukayat, 2018), qualitative descriptive research is intended to systematically and properly delineate a real scenario or particular population. The data gathering procedure emphasizes secondary sources, entailing the extraction of pertinent information from diverse literature, reports, and other materials related to the study issue. The research employs targeted keywords pertinent to the examined issues and utilizes the problem structuring method. This strategy, as described by (Simatupang, 2017),



entails systematically categorizing existing issues to enhance comprehension of root causes and find viable remedies, hence aiding policy analysis.

This research utilizes the data analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman (Yusuf, 2014), comprising three essential stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drafting. Data reduction entails the selection, simplification, and organization of data to emphasize the most pertinent information. Data presentation entails the compilation of organized data into formats such as charts or narratives to facilitate comprehension and interpretation. Ultimately, conclusion drafting entails analyzing the data to reveal patterns, insights, and possible conclusions, so offering a lucid comprehension of the challenges and guiding policy suggestions. These procedures guarantee that the analysis is comprehensive, systematic, and consistent with the study objectives.

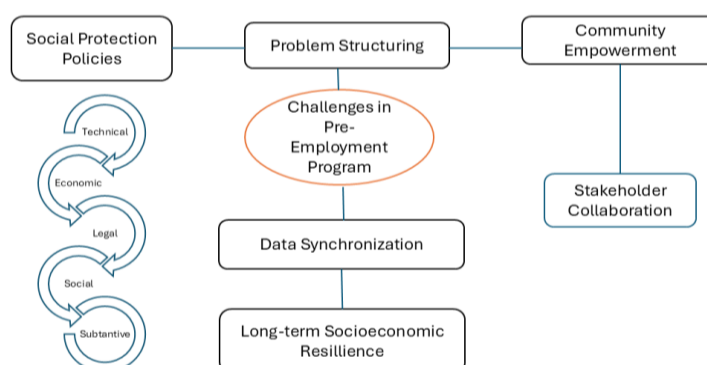
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Problem Structuring Community Social Protection

The government has recognized income redistribution as a fundamental tool to rejuvenate the economy after the disruptions created by the COVID-19 outbreak. This technique, although essential, encounters considerable obstacles in the execution of social protection measures, especially in the implementation of the Pre-Employment Card program. This initiative, intended to offer training and financial assistance to individuals affected by job losses, has shown multiple shortcomings that necessitate prompt rectification to fulfill its objectives successfully.

A significant difficulty is the inefficiency of data synchronization. The absence of precise, real-time data regarding unemployment and intended recipients has resulted in resource misallocation and delays in program implementation. The fragmented structure of data management systems across different government departments exacerbates this issue, leading to inconsistencies that diminish the program's credibility and efficiency. A further substantial impediment pertains to accessibility and inclusivity. A multitude of beneficiaries, especially in isolated and disadvantaged regions, encounter difficulties in accessing the program owing to insufficient infrastructure and restricted digital literacy. The program's dependence on online platforms has unintentionally marginalized vulnerable people lacking internet access or technological skills, thereby failing to offer equitable chances for skill enhancement and financial support.

**Figure 1. Problem Structuring Community Social Protection**



Source: Analysis Results, 2024



Transparency and public trust have become critical concerns. The initiative has encountered criticism for alleged mismanagement and insufficient accountability in budget allocation. This has diminished public trust and dissuaded active engagement. Addressing these difficulties necessitates a thorough redesign of program architecture, integrating robust data systems, enhancing infrastructure, and implementing procedures for increased transparency and inclusivity. The principal issues currently facing the government and the public concerning social protection measures are evident in the implementation of the pre-employment card program, which revealed the following shortcomings:

- a. The pre-employment program is nearly identical to the BLT program, which assists COVID-19 victims. For four months, an incentive of Rp600.000 per month is offered for training (Solihin et al., 2022).
- b. The quality of training offered is subpar because, amidst the pandemic, instruction is limited to online platforms or training videos procured via training partners, and the government using the remaining balance of the Pre-Employment card (Rp1.000.000) to purchase comparatively costly training packages (Kompas.com, 2022).
- c. This policy generates community-wide controversy. The contentious issues encompass dissent towards the relatively costly online training, challenges faced by potential beneficiaries in accessing the platform, unavailability of sites, data entry errors, unverified NIK, and restricted accessibility for vulnerable populations (Ginting & Herdiyana, 2021).
- d. Enrollment for the Pre-Employment Card program and the online training that accompanied its introduction amidst the pandemic. As a result, the program becomes less focused. A considerable number of individuals who are obligated to receive the training face technological limitations. As a result, numerous pre-employment brokers exploit this situation by assisting those who wish to register; in exchange, if they complete the pre-employment, the brokers request a portion of the monthly incentives (Muhyiddin et al., 2022).

The Pre-Employment Program, launched as a government response to the economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, aims to provide financial assistance to those most affected. However, as highlighted by the (Kementerian Keuangan, 2019), the program's effectiveness in reducing poverty and inequality is questionable. In a low- to middle-income country like Indonesia, the challenge lies in accurately identifying vulnerable populations amidst a transitioning economy. Reveals that only a small portion of the benefits reach the poorest communities, with the program's benefits often deemed insignificant. These issues indicate the need for improved targeting mechanisms and a more equitable distribution system to enhance the program's impact (Sunan et al., 2022).

The program's design focuses on addressing immediate needs rather than tackling the root causes of poverty and inequality. As (Carolina & Andini, 2021) observe, while it provides short-term financial relief, its contribution to long-term economic recovery remains limited. The current structure prioritizes rapid responses over sustainable solutions, highlighting the necessity for a shift in approach. To achieve more enduring outcomes, the Pre-Employment Program should incorporate strategies that





combine immediate assistance with efforts to build economic resilience and empowerment among the most vulnerable groups.

**Table 1. Problem Structuring Community Social Protection**

No.	Multi Criteria	Classification	Problem Identification
1.	Technical rationality	The ability of each to solve public problems effectively	Policies in restricting community activities during the COVID-19 pandemic
2.	Economic rationality	Based on the ability to find the most efficient solutions to public problems	Informal sector severely impacted by COVID-19
3.	Legal rationality	Since the law's conformity to regulations and previous case law previous	There is abuse of power in the distribution of social assistance and many companies lay off employees and minimal employment opportunities
4.	Social rationality	based on its ability to maintain or enhance valuable social institutions valuable social institutions, i.e. organizing institutional	The community skills improvement program is still not effective in its implementation
5.	Substantive rationality	Based on the ability to make the most appropriate choice between two or more forms of rationality (technical, economic, social, legal) under the given conditions	Data from the government's social assistance beneficiary system is poorly targeted and misused

Source: processed by the author, 2024

The social protection programs implemented by the government, such as the Pre-Employment Card program, have faced several issues, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the main problems is the quality of the training provided, which is limited to inadequate online platforms or training videos, along with the purchase of costly training packages. Additionally, the program is often viewed as being too similar to the Cash Transfer Program (BLT), which hinders the focus on improving community skills. These issues are further compounded by technical difficulties and lack of access for potential beneficiaries, particularly vulnerable groups.



From a technical and economic rationality standpoint, restrictions on community activities during the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the informal sector, resulting in a severe loss of income. Many companies laid off employees, and job opportunities were minimal, exacerbating the situation. Moreover, there has been abuse of power in the distribution of social assistance, indicating gaps in policy implementation that do not fully align with legal regulations. The inaccuracies in social assistance beneficiary data further complicate efforts to ensure that aid reaches those who need it most.

Socially, the community skill improvement programs have been ineffective, particularly in delivering relevant training aligned with labor market demands. A lack of coordination among stakeholders in managing social assistance recipient data has led to inefficiencies in the program's ability to meet its objectives. Substantive rationality highlights the need for a more holistic approach, considering technical, economic, social, and legal aspects, to ensure that social protection policies are not only effective in the short term but also sustainable in supporting long-term national economic recovery.

### **Forecasting in Income Redistribution Policy**

This forecasting process uses predictions that are based on theoretical assumptions. Forecasting for the future related to policies in national economic recovery on government social assistance programs will be predicted through empowerment theory. This theory is relevant to the socio-economic conditions faced by the community during the pandemic and the government's efforts to redistribute community income through empowerment. Community empowerment can create a process of independence in development (Suryo, 2016). Furthermore, community empowerment through strengthening the local economy, entrepreneurship, and community participation. The spread of the empowerment paradigm is closely related to the rise of civil society or sovereign civil society (Ras, 2016). The implication is that it will create broad employment opportunities and play a role in being part of every decision-making.

The focus of community empowerment is on those who are excluded from the socioeconomic hierarchy and lack influence. Therefore, to confer "agency" upon individuals belonging to this category, they must be empowered. Agency in community empowerment signifies the demonstration of an individual's capacity to make decisions regarding their lives in a free manner. Thus, actors capable of translating community agency into action are required to actualize the essence of community empowerment, which is the transformation of the community into one that is autonomous, liberated, and powerful. By offering avenues for community members to participate in the process of empowerment via collective empowerment. Group empowerment is crucial for bringing opportunity structures and agencies together through the identification of community problems and needs, which leads to the development of empowerment programs. The collective effectively cultivates agency to the extent that the community attains self-reliance and acquires agency.

The agency that the program targets open new avenues for other communities to acquire agencies by providing access to skills development opportunities. According to (Handini et al., 2018) findings, group problem-solving is the most efficient method of using resources while also being the most effective for impoverished people who find it difficult to solve their problems on their own. Individual problem-solving also broadens the scope of assistance. Furthermore, it is imperative to foster economic relationships



between these groups and more advanced groups. Thus, local communities work to balance opportunity frameworks and agency so that people can engage in active participation.

According to Wrihatnolo and Dwidjowijoto, empowerment is a "process of becoming" rather than an "instant process" (Bahri, 2019). As a process, empowerment consists of three main stages: awareness, capacity building, and empowerment. These stages are interconnected and aim to equip individuals and communities with the ability to face challenges, enabling them to become more independent and empowered.

The participatory approach, as a form of bottom-up methodology, better understands the specific characteristics and real conditions in the field. This approach aligns with community needs in capacity building and promotes improved public services through decentralized management. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of adopting a holistic and integrated approach to community development, addressing both social and economic dimensions as essential components of sustainable environmental renewal (Hawtin & Smith, 2007).

Empowerment programs are crucial solutions for poverty alleviation and improving community welfare, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has posed significant social and economic challenges, making community empowerment a strategic initiative to address these impacts. Through such programs, communities can acquire new skills, which not only help meet daily needs but also serve as valuable assets to navigate future uncertainties.

Successful empowerment initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly influenced people's lives from both social and economic perspectives. Socially, empowerment fosters the formation of strong community groups, enhances communication, and facilitates the acquisition of new knowledge. These outcomes strengthen solidarity and improve the capacity of communities to collaborate in overcoming local challenges (Handini et al., 2018).

Economically, empowerment enables communities to increase their income through existing skills or newly developed competencies. As a result, these programs not only enhance individual capabilities but also create long-term impacts on the economic stability of communities. In the post-pandemic context, this becomes a critical foundation for supporting communities in recovering from economic hardships.

Government initiatives, such as national economic recovery programs, aim to encourage retraining and re skilling efforts to absorb the workforce affected by layoffs and unemployment. These strategies are expected to enhance the competitiveness of the workforce and foster productivity within communities. By adopting an integrated and needs-driven approach, empowerment programs can serve as a robust foundation for building resilient and self-reliant societies.

### **Alternative Social Protection Policies in National Economic Recovery**

The primary challenge faced by governments and societies in redistributing income post-COVID-19 lies in addressing structural inefficiencies and ensuring equitable access to support systems. Effective social protection policies must not only alleviate immediate economic hardships but also create sustainable pathways for recovery. The redistribution of income must focus on reducing gaps in wealth distribution while strengthening mechanisms that prevent misuse of funds and authority. Addressing these root issues is critical to achieving a more resilient and inclusive recovery process.





A multi-criteria framework incorporating technical, economic, legal, social, and substantive dimensions offers a comprehensive approach to refining social protection policies. Technically, the system must rely on robust data management and transparent digital platforms to ensure accurate targeting and distribution of assistance. Economically, policies should aim to stimulate productive activities, including workforce skill development and support for small businesses, fostering long-term economic growth. Legally, the framework must address loopholes that allow corruption and enforce strict accountability measures to restore public trust.

Socially and substantively, the policies should be inclusive, prioritizing vulnerable populations most impacted by the pandemic. Social dimensions must emphasize community engagement to ensure the policies align with local needs, while substantive criteria focus on creating measurable impacts, such as poverty reduction and employment creation. By integrating these dimensions, social protection policies can effectively contribute to national economic recovery, reducing inequalities and fostering a sustainable path forward.

**Table 2. Role Model of Social Protection Policy**

No.	Criteria	Remarks
1.	Technical	The community is in a difficult economic condition so there is a need for business development funding assistance targeting the informal sector affected by COVID-19
2.	Economic	Stimulate community income and encourage community business activities
3.	Legal	Direct instruction from the President in Strengthening the law with strict action on budget misappropriation
4.	Social	Social protection programs for people who experience layoffs and business operations stop through skill improvement in the Pre-Employment Card program
5.	Substantive	Community empowerment-based social protection programs in providing benefits in solving poverty and inequality problems

Source: Analysis Results, 2024

The multi-criteria role model for social protection policies offers a robust framework for addressing the economic and social challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. The technical criterion highlights the importance of providing targeted funding assistance to informal sectors, which were among the hardest hit during the crisis. By focusing on business development for these sectors, governments can mitigate the impact of economic downturns and create opportunities for recovery. This approach requires accurate data systems and efficient distribution mechanisms to ensure assistance reaches the intended beneficiaries effectively.



The economic criterion focuses on stimulating community income and fostering entrepreneurial activities. Programs that encourage the establishment and growth of small businesses can create sustainable economic opportunities and reduce dependency on direct financial aid. Such initiatives enable communities to recover faster while contributing to broader economic stability. By facilitating access to financial resources and promoting local economic activities, these policies can serve as a catalyst for long-term growth and resilience.

The legal criterion underscores the need for strong governance and accountability mechanisms to safeguard the integrity of social protection programs. Misappropriation of funds and corruption are critical challenges that undermine public trust and hinder the success of these initiatives. Strengthening legal frameworks and enforcing strict actions against violations are essential steps to ensure transparency and efficiency. Clear directives from national leadership, coupled with robust monitoring and evaluation systems, can enhance the credibility and impact of these programs.

The social and substantive criteria prioritize community empowerment and the reduction of inequality. Social protection programs that integrate skill development, such as the Pre-Employment Card, address the immediate needs of those affected by layoffs while building their long-term capacity to participate in economic activities. Empowerment-based approaches not only provide immediate relief but also tackle structural issues of poverty and inequality, paving the way for a more inclusive recovery. Integrating these criteria into social protection policies ensures that they address both short-term relief and long-term developmental goals comprehensively.

Policy design methods that pay equal attention to the functions of problem sensitivity, framework reflection, forward and backward mapping, and thoughtful handling by empowering, can achieve politically responsible and legitimate problem definition (Hoppe, 2018). The current social protection policy design is used as a basis for analyzing how the direction of effective social protection policies for the welfare of society in the future (Nawawi, 2021). Government policies have implications for forecasting the socio-economic conditions of the community and policy alternatives in efforts to restore the national economy in the efforts of social protection policies for the community.

**Table 3. Policy Recommendations from *Multicriteria***

No.	Policy Recommendations	Description
1.	Optimizing the Pre-Employment program	The process of implementing offline-based training in the process of improving community skills that are not semi-social assistance. By fixing unemployment data so that it can be used as a <i>real time</i> unemployment database
2.	Community social protection program corruption mitigation	Effective role of internal supervisors and community participation. Transparency and openness of information related to social assistance programs. The government needs to conduct massive socialization related to social assistance policies and open and process abuse of government programs



3.	Empowerment program in improving entrepreneurship-based community competencies	Improving skills through training and mentoring as well as workshops, workshops encouraging MSMEs to improve their business, as well as opening access to capital. In the empowerment process, the government will become a facilitator and motivator in mobilizing empowerment activities that are <i>bottom-up</i> so that they are by the needs of the community. To reduce poverty and strengthen the local economy of the community
4.	Synchronization and coordination of data on social assistance recipients between <i>stakeholders</i>	Beneficiary data sourced from the village bureaucracy through RT/RW. By checking and rechecking according to data needs. Village monographs can be utilized to collect data on social assistance recipients. Village monographs will be linked to population data at the local government and routinely verified and validated to update the data on social assistance recipients linked to DTKS. Village officials and village facilitators will be part of the team responsible for updating the data. Data updates are made more open so that they can be monitored by the community

Source: processed by the author, 2024

A multi-criteria approach in formulating social protection policies provides new and innovative findings that address challenges in policy implementation. One key discovery is the potential application of blockchain technology for real-time unemployment data updates. This technology enables transparent data integration, reduces manipulation risks, and accelerates synchronization processes between central and regional authorities. Collaborating with the private sector to develop hybrid training platforms combining offline and online training emerges as a strategic solution to overcome accessibility barriers, particularly for remote communities.

This collaboration not only positions the private sector as financial supporters but also as strategic partners in creating inclusive training platforms. Public education on rights and obligations within social assistance programs is a critical element for enhancing transparency and encouraging active public participation. Findings suggest that intensive educational campaigns strengthen program accountability while addressing bureaucratic resistance, which has often been a major impediment.

Community empowerment through entrepreneurship emerges as a cornerstone of the proposed policies, offering a novel approach by incorporating localized training designs. Involving local communities and successful entrepreneurs in curriculum development bridges the gap between training content and real-world community needs. This approach is particularly relevant in supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which frequently face challenges in accessing funding and business mentorship. Collaboration with microfinance institutions opens funding opportunities for promising small-scale businesses. Another significant finding is the synchronization of social assistance recipient data. The study highlights the potential of using village monographs as a foundational data source integrated with local government systems to ensure the accuracy of beneficiary data. This approach not only enhances the efficiency of aid



distribution but also promotes transparency through active community involvement in data verification and validation. Furthermore, leveraging big data technologies is recommended to manage and update social assistance data efficiently, providing a robust foundation for evidence-based policy-making.

A participatory approach in these policies represents an innovative contribution. By involving communities at every stage of the policy process from planning to evaluation the sense of ownership among beneficiaries increases, ensuring more effective implementation with minimal resistance. The proposed establishment of regular cross-sectoral coordination forums strengthens synergies between central and local governments, as well as community stakeholders. These forums are designed not merely as communication platforms but also as project management tools for tracking measurable policy progress.

The focus on entrepreneurship-based empowerment highlights the importance of integrating local economic development with social protection strategies. This approach broadens the understanding of poverty alleviation policies, shifting from direct assistance to capacity building within communities. The integration of entrepreneurship, skills training, and access to funding creates a sustainable empowerment ecosystem.

The legal aspect of social programs also presents a compelling finding. The study emphasizes the need for law enforcement mechanisms to prevent the misuse of social assistance funds. This ensures that disbursed funds are allocated appropriately, fostering a higher level of accountability across all levels of policy implementation. Another noteworthy contribution is the prioritization of the informal sector within the National Economic Recovery (PEN) strategy. The findings underscore the significance of financial assistance coupled with skills training to enhance the competitiveness of informal workers, particularly those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This policy approach is not only reactive but also proactive in fostering inclusive economic recovery.

Overall, these policies reflect a bottom-up approach designed to be more responsive to community needs. By involving communities as key partners, the policies not only build trust but also strengthen economic resilience. Emphasizing data synchronization, transparency, public participation, and cross-sectoral integration, the proposed framework makes significant contributions to creating a more efficient and sustainable social protection system. By incorporating technological innovation, cross-sectoral partnerships, and community-based approaches, the proposed policies offer novel solutions to classic challenges in implementing social programs. This study reinforces the argument that inclusive, data-driven social protection policies can serve as a foundation for more equitable economic development while reducing societal inequalities. These contributions are not only academically significant but also have extensive practical implications for public policy.

## CONCLUSION

The National Economic Recovery (PEN) agenda emphasizes the imperative to develop and enhance social protection programs to facilitate Indonesia's recovery from COVID-19. In the context of the pandemic's socio-economic difficulties, conventional social protection initiatives, such the Pre-Employment Card, have demonstrated insufficiency in tackling poverty and inequality. Consequently, a more holistic strategy, grounded in community empowerment, is vital to cultivate enduring socio-economic resilience. This encompasses strategies that extend beyond immediate aid, emphasizing the promotion of community business growth, skill upgrading, and entrepreneurship,



especially within the informal sector, which was disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

Contemporary social protection policies must address governance challenges, including the mitigation of corruption in social assistance programs and the assurance of transparency in aid distribution. Fortifying legal frameworks and augmenting collaboration among stakeholders can avert resource misappropriation and enhance targeted precision for beneficiaries. A crucial element of this is the synchronization of data concerning social assistance beneficiaries, facilitating real-time updates and enhancing the efficiency of aid distribution. Moreover, the government's involvement as a facilitator of grassroots empowerment processes guarantees that social protection efforts are better matched with the genuine needs of communities.

Creative social protection policies are essential for revitalizing Indonesia's economy post-COVID-19. The focus on community empowerment and entrepreneurship activities, bolstered by legal and technical reforms, can foster a more lasting and inclusive economic recovery. This corresponds with the overarching objective of cultivating economic resilience through the empowerment of vulnerable communities, the enhancement of skill sets, and the equitable distribution of resources. Future study should concentrate on policy development and the involvement of diverse stakeholders in executing effective social protection strategies for Indonesia's post-pandemic recovery.

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