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An Analysis of Collaboration Between Village Governments and the Social Services Agency in Addressing Poverty in Barru Regency: An NVivo-Based Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Poverty is a multidimensional problem that requires cross-institutional collaboration to address. This study aims to analyze the collaboration between Village Governments and the Social Services Agency in addressing poverty in Barru Regency. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation of village government officials and the Social Services Agency. Data analysis was conducted using NVivo software using coding techniques, word frequency queries, and thematic analysis. The results indicate that inter-institutional collaboration has been functionally implemented through data collection, program coordination, and the distribution of social assistance. The village government plays a key role in identifying the poor, while the Social Services Agency acts as a policy coordinator and technical program implementer. However, the collaboration remains administrative in nature and does not fully reflect the principles of collaborative governance. The main obstacles identified include data asymmetry, limited inter-institutional communication, and a policy orientation that focuses on short-term assistance. This study concludes that strengthening dialogue, synchronizing data, and shifting approaches toward community empowerment are necessary to increase the effectiveness of collaboration in addressing poverty at the local level.

Keywords: Government Collaboration; Village Government; Social Services; Poverty Alleviation; NVivo



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A.INTRODUCTION

Poverty remains a persistent and multidimensional development problem faced by many regions in Indonesia, including Barru Regency. Despite continuous economic growth and various social assistance programs, poverty rates in several rural areas remain relatively high and unevenly distributed. This condition reflects that poverty is not merely an economic issue but is closely related to structural, institutional, and governance factors. In the context of regional development, poverty alleviation requires comprehensive and integrated policy interventions. Local governments play a strategic role in translating national poverty reduction policies into concrete actions. Village governments, as the lowest level of administration, are at the forefront of direct interaction with poor communities. Meanwhile, the Social Services Agency is responsible for managing and coordinating social welfare programs. Therefore, effective collaboration between these institutions becomes a critical requirement for successful poverty reduction (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Barru, 2023; Kementerian Sosial Republik Indonesia, 2022).

Village governments possess strategic advantages in poverty alleviation efforts due to their proximity to local communities and their detailed knowledge of socio-economic conditions. Through village authority, governments can conduct poverty data collection, identify beneficiaries, and implement community empowerment programs. Village institutions also play a role in ensuring that social assistance reaches eligible households. On the other hand, the Social Services Agency holds formal authority in designing, coordinating, and supervising social welfare policies at the district level. The agency is responsible for integrating village-level data into broader poverty alleviation programs. Without effective coordination, programs risk overlap, mistargeting, or inefficiency. Therefore, collaboration between village governments and the Social Services Agency is essential to ensure policy coherence and program effectiveness (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Collaborative governance theory emphasizes that complex public problems such as poverty cannot be effectively addressed by a single institution. Instead, they require joint action involving multiple actors with shared responsibilities and resources. Collaboration allows government institutions to align objectives, coordinate actions, and share information. Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh (2012) argue that collaborative governance regimes are necessary to manage

interdependence among public actors. In decentralized governance systems like Indonesia, collaboration between village governments and sectoral agencies becomes increasingly important. Policy fragmentation often occurs when coordination mechanisms are weak. Therefore, collaborative governance serves as a strategic approach to improving policy implementation outcomes (Emerson et al., 2012; Walt & Gilson, 1994).

Despite its importance, collaboration in poverty alleviation policies often encounters significant challenges at the local level. Previous studies indicate that unclear division of authority and overlapping responsibilities frequently hinder effective coordination. Inconsistent poverty data between village governments and social service agencies also creates implementation problems. Limited communication and weak institutional capacity further exacerbate coordination failures. These conditions may lead to ineffective targeting of beneficiaries and reduced program impact. In many cases, poverty alleviation programs operate in a fragmented manner. Such fragmentation undermines the overall effectiveness of social policies. Therefore, understanding barriers to collaboration is crucial for improving poverty reduction strategies (Dunn, 2018).

In Barru Regency, poverty alleviation initiatives involve multiple programs implemented by village governments in coordination with the Social Services Agency. However, the persistence of poverty indicates that existing collaborative mechanisms may not yet function optimally. Differences in administrative capacity and institutional priorities may create coordination gaps. Village governments often face limitations in resources and technical capacity. Meanwhile, the Social Services Agency may encounter challenges in supervising and integrating village-level implementation. These conditions suggest the need for systematic evaluation of collaboration practices. Examining how collaboration operates in practice can provide valuable insights for policy improvement. Therefore, empirical research on this issue is highly relevant (Patton, 2015).

Most existing studies on poverty alleviation focus primarily on program outcomes or policy impacts. Fewer studies examine the collaborative processes that shape policy implementation at the local level. Research that specifically analyzes collaboration between village governments and social welfare agencies remains limited. This gap is particularly evident in district-level contexts such as Barru Regency. Understanding collaboration dynamics requires in-depth exploration of actors' interactions and institutional arrangements. Such analysis is difficult to capture through

quantitative approaches alone. Therefore, qualitative research becomes essential to reveal underlying processes and challenges. Addressing this research gap contributes to the development of collaborative governance studies (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Qualitative research methods are well suited to studying collaborative governance because they allow researchers to explore perceptions, experiences, and interactions among policy actors. Through qualitative inquiry, researchers can examine how collaboration is understood and practiced by different stakeholders. This approach enables a deeper understanding of institutional dynamics and power relations. Qualitative data derived from interviews and observations provide rich insights into policy implementation processes. Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasize that qualitative research captures contextual complexity in social phenomena. Such complexity is particularly relevant in poverty alleviation policies involving multiple actors. Therefore, qualitative methods are appropriate for this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To enhance the rigor of qualitative analysis, this study employs NVivo software as an analytical tool. NVivo facilitates systematic coding and thematic analysis of qualitative data. The software enables researchers to manage large datasets efficiently and transparently. NVivo also supports the identification of relationships among themes and actors. Bazeley and Jackson (2013) argue that software-assisted analysis strengthens methodological credibility. In policy research, NVivo helps uncover patterns that may not be visible through manual analysis. The use of NVivo thus enhances analytical depth and consistency. This approach supports evidence-based policy evaluation (Bazeley & Jackson, 2012).

Based on the above considerations, this study aims to analyze collaboration between village governments and the Social Services Agency in addressing poverty in Barru Regency. The study focuses on identifying forms of collaboration, supporting factors, and barriers to effective coordination. It also examines the implications of collaboration for poverty alleviation outcomes. By using an NVivo-based qualitative approach, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of collaborative governance practices. The findings are expected to contribute to academic discussions on public policy and collaborative governance. Practically, the study offers insights for policymakers to strengthen poverty reduction strategies. Ultimately, effective collaboration is essential for sustainable poverty alleviation (Patton, 2015).

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to analyze collaboration between the Village Government and the Social Services Agency in poverty alleviation in Barru Regency. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for in-depth exploration of the processes, interactions, and dynamics of inter-institutional collaboration within a complex social context. The case study was used to gain a contextual understanding of collaborative practices at the local level, particularly in the implementation of poverty alleviation policies involving various government actors. The research locations were selected in several villages in Barru Regency targeted by poverty alleviation programs, with a focus on interactions between the village government and the Social Services Agency. Research informants were selected purposively, including village government officials, Social Services officials, and other relevant parties directly involved in program planning and implementation. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation studies to obtain comprehensive and complementary data.

Data analysis was conducted thematically using NVivo software. The analysis stages included transcription of interview data, coding, grouping themes, and word frequency query analysis to identify dominant issues in the qualitative data. The use of NVivo assists researchers in systematically managing data, increasing analytical transparency, and facilitating the exploration of inter-conceptual patterns emerging from interviews and research documents.

Data validity is maintained through source and method triangulation techniques, as well as member checking. This approach aligns with Creswell's perspective, which emphasizes the importance of validity and reliability in qualitative research through a multi-layered verification process to ensure the accuracy of findings (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, this research method is expected to produce credible and relevant findings that explain collaborative poverty alleviation practices in Barru Regency.

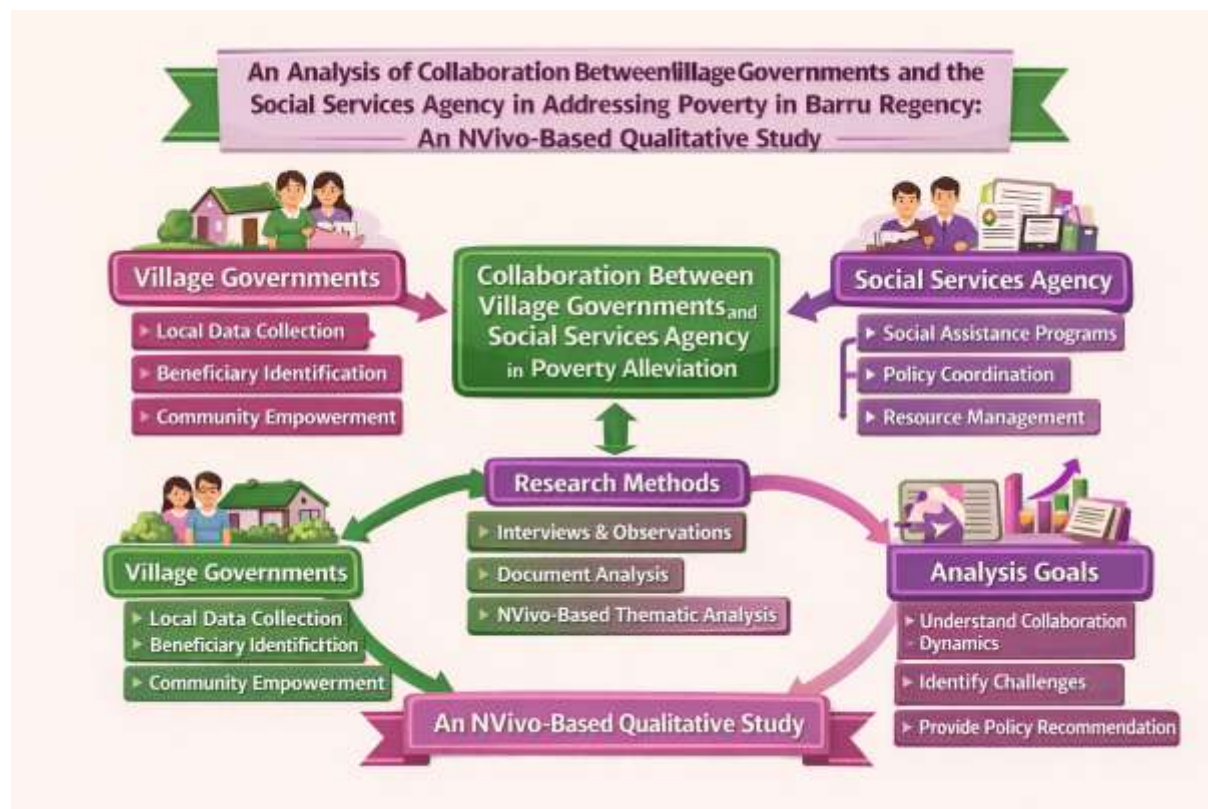


Figure 1 Research Framework Diagram

C. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

➤ Research Results

The research results indicate that collaboration between the Village Government and the Barru Regency Social Service in poverty alleviation has been formally implemented through various social assistance and community empowerment programs. This collaboration is reflected in the data collection, aid distribution, and monitoring of beneficiaries. The village government plays a key role in identifying the poor, while the Social Service serves as the policy coordinator and technical implementer of the program. This finding is supported by the NVivo coding results, which show the dominant themes of "program coordination" and "institutional roles." However, the implementation of this collaboration is not yet fully optimized due to its administrative nature. Interactions between institutions occur primarily during program implementation. This indicates

that collaboration remains oriented toward bureaucratic routines. A long-term strategic approach is not yet clearly evident.

NVivo analysis of interviews with village officials revealed that the village government has a fairly good understanding of the socioeconomic conditions of its residents. Poverty information is obtained through village meetings, neighborhood unit (RT/RW) data collection, and direct reports from the community. This data is then submitted to the Social Service as the basis for determining aid recipients. The "local-based data collection" code emerged as one of the most dominant nodes. This demonstrates the important role of villages in ensuring the accuracy of targeting poverty alleviation programs. However, several informants stated that village proposals were not always fully accommodated. Mismatches between central and village data were a major obstacle, leading to potential community dissatisfaction.

Regarding the Social Service, research results indicate that this agency carries out its coordinating and technical functions in accordance with applicable regulations. Programs such as the Family Hope Program (PKH), the Non-Cash Food Security Program (BPNT), and other social assistance programs are key instruments in poverty alleviation. Through NVivo thematic analysis, the nodes "national program implementation" and "regulatory compliance" were highly frequent. This indicates that the Social Service focuses more on top-down policy implementation. Village involvement is often limited to the initial and final stages of a program. The Social Service still relies on the national integrated data system. This situation limits flexibility in adapting to local needs. Consequently, the program's effectiveness has not yet been fully felt by all poor communities.

Inter-agency collaboration is also evident in formal coordination forums such as cross-sectoral meetings and program outreach. NVivo coding results indicate the emergence of a "coordination forum" as a form of official communication between the village government and the Social Services Agency. This forum serves as a platform for policy dissemination, program evaluation, and clarification of field issues. However, the frequency of meetings remains low and incidental. Collaboration has not yet developed into sustainable collaborative work. Several informants assessed that the coordination forum has not yet produced concrete solutions to structural poverty issues. Discussions are more informative than solution-oriented. This indicates a weak substantive collaborative dimension.

This study also found that data synchronization between the village government and the Social Services Agency remains a crucial issue. NVivo analysis identified the "data asynchronous" node as a frequently raised issue in interviews. The discrepancy between the Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS) and the actual conditions in the village creates various problems. The village government often faces public protests due to inaccurate aid targeting. Furthermore, the Social Services Agency is tied to a national system with limited updating mechanisms. This situation weakens public trust in government programs. Ideal collaboration should be able to bridge these data gaps. However, in practice, synchronization efforts remain suboptimal.

In terms of role allocation, research results indicate clear functional clarity between the village government and the Social Services Agency, but this has not been accompanied by capacity building. The "division of tasks" node in NVivo indicates that villages play a more active role as field implementers, while the Social Services Agency plays the role of program designers and controllers. However, village officials often feel inadequately involved in policy planning. Limited village authority hinders local innovation in poverty alleviation. Villages tend to wait for instructions from the district level. As a result, the potential of local wisdom has not been fully utilized. Existing collaboration remains hierarchical, and the equal partnership model has not yet been fully realized.

Communication is a crucial factor in determining the quality of collaboration. According to the NVivo analysis, the theme of "institutional communication" emerged with moderate intensity. Communication between the village government and the Social Services Agency is generally conducted formally through letters and meetings. Informal communication channels are rarely utilized. This slows down the problem-solving process. Several village informants expressed difficulty accessing the latest policy information. Meanwhile, the Social Services Agency assessed that villages are less proactive in submitting reports. This communication imbalance impacts the effectiveness of collaborative work. Effective collaboration should be supported by intensive two-way communication.

Community participation in poverty alleviation collaboration is also a key finding of this study. NVivo analysis shows that the "community participation" node emerged but was not dominant. Communities generally acted as beneficiaries, not as subjects of planning. Community involvement in village deliberations remained largely symbolic. Community aspirations have not been fully integrated into Social Services program planning. This situation results in assistance programs being less responsive to the specific needs of poor communities. Active participation can improve program sustainability. Ideally, collaboration positions communities as strategic partners. However, the reality on the ground still demonstrates a paternalistic approach.

In terms of impact, the research results indicate that the collaboration established is able to help meet the basic needs of the poor. Social assistance programs provide short-term benefits in reducing the economic burden on poor households. The "program impact" node in NVivo indicates a positive perception from most informants. However, the long-term impact on reducing structural poverty remains limited. Programs are more curative than preventive. Economic empowerment efforts have not been the primary focus of collaboration. This indicates that poverty alleviation is still oriented towards social assistance. The transformation towards an empowerment approach has not been optimal.

This research also identified various challenges in inter-institutional collaboration. NVivo coding results indicate the themes of "institutional constraints" and "limited resources" as key issues. Budgetary, human resource, and authority limitations are factors that hinder collaboration. Furthermore, rapid changes in central government policies often complicate adaptation at the village level. Village officials require ongoing mentoring and training. Without capacity building, villages struggle to fulfill their strategic roles. These challenges demonstrate that collaboration requires systemic support. Relying solely on individual commitment is not sufficient.

The overall NVivo analysis results indicate that collaboration between the village government and the Social Services Agency in Barru Regency falls into the functional collaboration category. Collaboration has progressed according to each agency's respective mandates, but has not yet achieved strong policy integration. The "limited collaboration" node summarizes the various emerging themes. Working relationships remain sectoral and procedural. Joint innovation in poverty alleviation remains minimal. Yet, the complexity of poverty demands an adaptive, cross-sectoral approach. Ideal collaboration should encompass joint planning,

integrated implementation, and participatory evaluation. This situation highlights the need for improved collaborative governance.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that collaboration between village governments and the Social Services Agency is a crucial element in poverty alleviation in Barru Regency. However, the effectiveness of collaboration is still influenced by factors such as coordination, communication, data, and institutional capacity. NVivo-based analysis helps systematically identify patterns, themes, and relationships between concepts. These findings provide an empirical overview of collaboration practices at the local level. Collaboration has not yet fully addressed the challenges of poverty comprehensively. Therefore, strengthening synergy based on equal partnerships is necessary. The results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for improving regional poverty alleviation policies.

NVivo 12 Pro data analysis



Figure 2 Visualization of Word Frequency (Word Frequency Query) Results of Nvivo Analysis.

This image displays the results of a word frequency query analysis using NVivo software, which identified the most frequently occurring words in interview transcripts regarding collaboration between the Village Government and the Social Services Agency in poverty alleviation in Barru Regency. This visualization provides an initial overview of the focus of informants' discussions and highlights the key issues most prominent in the practice of inter-agency collaboration. Through this approach, NVivo helped researchers systematically and measurably map discourse patterns and emerging themes within the qualitative data.

Words such as "collaboration," "village," "program," "data," and "poverty" appeared with the highest frequency, indicating that informants' primary focus was on institutional coordination, the process of collecting data on the poor, and the implementation of social assistance programs. The high frequency of the words "village" and "data" demonstrates the strategic role of the village government as a key actor in providing socioeconomic information to the community. Meanwhile, the occurrence of the words "program" and "collaboration" emphasizes that poverty alleviation is understood as a collaborative effort involving various levels of government.

The dominance of these words reflects the strong interconnectedness of the Village Government and the Social Services Agency in poverty alleviation efforts. These findings also confirm that the effectiveness of social policy is highly dependent on the quality of data synchronization, communication intensity, and inter-agency coordination. Therefore, the results of this word frequency query serve not only as a description of word frequency but also as an analytical basis for understanding the dynamics of collaboration and structural challenges in implementing poverty alleviation policies at the local level.

➤ Discussion

The discussion of the research results indicates that the collaboration between the Village Government and the Barru Regency Social Service can be understood as a form of collaborative governance, as proposed by Ansell and Gash, namely a governmental arrangement involving public actors across levels to achieve common goals. The NVivo findings, which emphasize the words "collaboration" and "program," indicate institutional awareness of the importance of cooperation in poverty alleviation. However, the collaboration remains at the formal and

procedural level, not fully reflecting the intense face-to-face dialogue required by Ansell and Gash's model. This suggests that collaboration in Barru Regency remains functional in nature and has not yet developed into a deliberative strategic partnership.

The predominance of the words "village" and "data" in the NVivo analysis reflects the central role of village governments in providing locally based poverty information. From Emerson and Nabatchi's perspective, this relates to the element of shared understanding within the collaborative governance regime. Village governments possess a contextual understanding of the conditions of poor communities, while the Social Services Agency manages a national integrated data system. The lack of synchronization between these two data sources indicates that shared understanding has not yet been fully established. Consequently, the resulting collaborative decisions do not fully reflect the real needs of local communities.

Furthermore, the high frequency of the word "program" indicates that poverty alleviation collaboration remains oriented toward the implementation of social assistance programs. Within Ansell and Gash's framework, this situation indicates that incentives for participation in collaboration are still dominated by adherence to central policies. Collaboration has not yet been fully directed toward achieving intermediate outcomes in the form of policy innovation and community empowerment. Social assistance programs do provide short-term benefits, but they are insufficient to address structural poverty. This indicates that shared goals within the collaboration have not been comprehensively formulated.

The aspects of inter-agency communication and coordination identified in this study can also be analyzed using Emerson and Nabatchi's concept of principled engagement. NVivo results indicate that communication is still dominated by formal mechanisms, limiting the space for reflective dialogue and collaborative problem-solving. This lack of informal communication leads to low levels of trust between actors, which, according to Ansell and Gash, is a key prerequisite for successful collaboration. Without trust and shared commitment, collaboration tends to be symbolic and administrative, rather than a collective learning process.

Overall, this discussion confirms that the collaboration between the Village Government and the Social Services Agency in Barru Regency fulfills the basic elements of collaborative

governance, but has not yet optimally developed collaborative capacity, as proposed by Emerson and Nabatchi. NVivo-based research shows that the main challenges of collaboration lie in strengthening dialogue, aligning data, and formulating shared, long-term goals. Therefore, strengthening collaborative governance that encourages equal partnerships, increasing trust between institutions, and shifting approaches from social assistance to sustainable empowerment is necessary. These findings enrich empirical studies on collaboration in poverty alleviation at the local level.

D. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

➤ Conclusion

This study concludes that collaboration between the Village Government and the Social Service of Barru Regency in poverty alleviation has been taking place functionally and formally through the implementation of various social assistance programs. The village government plays a crucial role in data collection and identification of the poor based on local conditions, while the Social Service carries out coordinating and technical functions in accordance with national policies. NVivo-based analysis shows that the themes of collaboration, programs, and data are dominant issues in poverty alleviation practices at the local level.

However, the collaboration that has been established does not fully reflect the principles of collaborative governance as proposed by Ansell and Gash. The processes of dialogue, trust-building, and formulation of shared goals are still limited, resulting in collaboration tending to be administrative and hierarchical. Data asynchronous between the village government and the Social Service is a major obstacle affecting the accuracy of targeting social assistance programs.

From Emerson and Nabatchi's perspective, this collaboration has not been optimal in building collaborative capacity, particularly in the aspects of shared understanding, principled engagement, and joint action. Poverty alleviation programs are still oriented towards short-term assistance and not fully directed at sustainable economic empowerment. Thus, inter-institutional collaboration in Barru Regency still requires strengthened governance to address the complexities of poverty more comprehensively.

➤ Recommendations

The Barru Regency Government needs to strengthen the collaboration mechanism between the Village Government and the Social Services Agency through regular, participatory, and problem-solving-based coordination forums. These forums serve not only as a means of policy dissemination but also as a space for reflective dialogue to build trust and formulate shared goals in poverty alleviation.

Serious efforts are needed to synchronize poverty data between the village government and the Social Services Agency. Strengthening the village-based data collection system, integrated with the national integrated data, is a strategic step to improve program targeting accuracy. Furthermore, continuous capacity building of village officials through data management and social analysis training is necessary.

The direction of poverty alleviation policies needs to be encouraged not only in social assistance but also in community economic empowerment programs. Inter-institutional collaboration should open up space for local innovation that involves communities as subjects of development. By strengthening equal partnerships, intensive communication, and a long-term orientation, collaboration between the Village Government and the Social Services Agency is expected to produce more effective and sustainable poverty alleviation policies.

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