

Reframing Structural Relationships and Institutional Performance in Local Government: A Collaborative Approach to Poverty Alleviation in Malang City

Dimas Irfan Azizi¹, Chairina Fitri Agustin^{2*}

¹Department of Development Economics, University of Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia

²Department of Public Administration, University of Lumajang, Indonesia

Abstract

This study examines the dynamics of local government in Malang City in addressing poverty through a collaborative governance approach. Malang remains a key contributor to East Java's poverty rate, making it a complex case for poverty alleviation. Using qualitative methods, the research evaluates institutional frameworks, structural relations, and advocacy coalitions in the government's poverty reduction strategies. Findings show that although poverty reduction is aligned with key documents like the RPJMD 2016–2021, there is no formal legal framework for collaboration. Cooperation between government bodies occurs mostly horizontally, with minimal involvement from NGOs and the private sector. Additionally, a lack of integrated coordination limits the effectiveness of collaborative governance. The limited participation of external actors weakens advocacy coalitions, reducing the impact of policies. This study contributes to the discourse on improving institutional performance and collaboration in poverty alleviation, emphasizing the need for a stronger multi-sectoral approach. The findings suggest practical recommendations for reinforcing collaborative frameworks to address poverty challenges more effectively.

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Corresponding Author:

Dimas Irfan Azizi
(dimasirfanazizi@gmail.com)

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1. Introduction

Poverty is still a pressing problem in Indonesia, especially in areas with high poverty rates such as Malang City, East Java. Based on the latest data from the Central Statistics Agency BPS Kota Malang, (2023), of the total population of Malang City which reached around 2.6 million people, more than 268,000 people or around 10.3% live in poverty. Although many efforts have been made by the local government to address this problem through various assistance programs such as the Family Hope Program (PKH), Community Social Assistance (BSM), and Rice for the Poor (RASKIN), the challenges in overcoming poverty remain significant. The causes of poverty in Malang City are multidimensional, covering not only economic aspects but also social, cultural, and political aspects that interact with each other and worsen the poverty situation (Haliim, 2016). Therefore, a partial or sectoral approach to overcoming poverty is often less effective. Grint (2005) stated that poverty is included in the category of "wicked problems," where the complexity of this problem requires an approach that involves many stakeholders and various disciplines. In this context, a collaborative governance model is needed that is able to bring together various parties from the government, private, and civil society sectors to jointly seek more sustainable and comprehensive solutions (Ansell et al., 2008).

In Malang City, the implementation of collaborative governance in poverty alleviation still faces many obstacles, both at the level of institutional arrangements, structural relationships between institutions, and in the formation of advocacy coalitions involving parties outside the government. However, the poverty alleviation strategies implemented by the local government have actually been stated in various planning documents such as the 2016-2021 Regional

Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD). This document shows the alignment between local government priorities and the need to overcome poverty through a cross-sectoral approach. However, the absence of formal legal instruments to facilitate this collaborative mechanism is one of the main obstacles in its implementation (Nauval et al., 2022).

Previous studies have identified a number of challenges that hinder the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs in various regions, including Malang City. One of the most dominant factors is inefficiency in institutional structures and weak coordination between government institutions (Blanco et al., 2023; Chai et al., 2016). For example, programs such as PKH and BSM often fail to reach community groups that really need assistance, mainly due to problems with inappropriate targeting and the use of outdated data (Dutta et al., 2015). This inaccurate data makes the implemented programs ineffective in significantly reducing poverty levels.

There are challenges related to limited human resources and budget at the local level that often hamper the implementation of poverty alleviation programs. By (Hartono, 2019) noted that the capacity of institutions at the local government level, both in terms of manpower and funds, is often inadequate to support the implementation of comprehensive programs. This is exacerbated by the low involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector in the planning and implementation process of poverty programs. In fact, their involvement is very important to create the cross-sector synergy needed to overcome this poverty problem (Sunarlan et al., 2018).

Collaborative governance has been recognized as an effective approach to address complex issues, including poverty (Ansell et al., 2008; Bryson et al., 2015). In the context of poverty alleviation in Malang City, collaborative governance involves the active role of government as a facilitator that coordinates various actors to work together to achieve common goals. (Emerson et al., 2015) identified three main elements that must be present in effective collaborative governance: institutional arrangements, structural relationships, and advocacy coalitions.

Institutional arrangements refer to how organizational structures and regulations in local governments can support collaboration between institutions. In Malang City, although the local government's strategic documents indicate alignment with poverty alleviation efforts, there are no explicit legal provisions governing inter-institutional collaborative mechanisms. This lack of formal regulation has resulted in poverty alleviation programs running sectorally without strong synergy between government agencies, the private sector, and civil society (Wanto, 2020).

The relationship between institutions and actors involved in poverty alleviation in Malang City also still has significant shortcomings. (Agranoff et al., 2001) emphasized that good relationships between institutions are key to building effective cooperation. However, in Malang City, cross-sector collaboration tends to be limited to the horizontal level, namely between OPDs (Regional Government Organizations) without optimally involving the non-government sector. Research shows that the involvement of NGOs and community groups in the planning and implementation of poverty programs is still very minimal (Syahputra et al., 2022). As a result, the potential to create programs that are more responsive to the needs of local communities is not optimal.

Advocacy coalitions play an important role in ensuring that policies and programs implemented by the government truly reflect the needs of the most vulnerable communities (Simon-Ortiz et al., 2024). However, in Malang City, the involvement of non-governmental actors such as NGOs and community groups in the policy advocacy process is still very limited. This condition causes poverty alleviation programs to often not be fully responsive to local needs, and only reflect the interests of the local government (N. Dutta et al., 2015). The absence of a strong advocacy coalition is one of the obstacles to realizing effective collaborative governance in Malang City.

Various studies have shown that collaborative governance has great potential in increasing the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs in regions, including in Indonesia. For example, Bisri et al., (2024; Prasetyo et al., (2021) study in Yogyakarta found that collaboration between local governments and the private sector succeeded in reducing poverty rates through the development of social entrepreneurship programs. In addition, Praja et al., (2024) in Surabaya emphasized the importance of community involvement in program planning, so that the government can be more responsive to local needs. However, collaborative governance does not always work in all regions. (Khudzaifi et al., 2024) in her research in Jakarta found that although

a collaborative framework was in place, its implementation was often hampered by bureaucratic problems and lack of resources. The same thing seems to be happening in Malang City, where cross-sector collaboration is often limited to the planning stage, without strong implementation. These limitations reflect the need for strengthening regulations and more structured cross-sector coordination in Malang City (N. Dutta et al., 2015).

This study uses the collaborative governance framework developed by (Emerson et al., 2012) as the basis for analysis. This framework consists of three main elements: institutional arrangements, structural relationships, and advocacy coalitions. This framework is relevant to be analyzed in the context of Malang City, because it provides a comprehensive understanding of how cross-sector collaboration can be built and optimized to address poverty. In this study, the emphasis will be on how institutional arrangements can support cross-sector collaboration, how structural relationships can strengthen inter-agency coordination, and how advocacy coalitions can be formed to ensure that poverty alleviation programs are more responsive to community needs.

This study focuses on Malang City as the main case study. Malang City was chosen because of its large population and high poverty rate in the area, thus providing a relevant context to explore how collaborative governance approaches can be optimized in addressing poverty. This study also contributes to the broader discussion on the role of collaborative governance in improving institutional performance and structural relationships in local government. Using a qualitative approach, this study aims to identify key challenges in implementing collaborative governance in Malang City, as well as provide practical recommendations to strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration to achieve more inclusive and sustainable development goals.

2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore collaborative governance in poverty alleviation in Malang City. The qualitative approach was chosen because of its ability to provide an in-depth understanding of the interactions between government institutions, structural relationships, and the role of advocacy coalitions in poverty alleviation efforts (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Data collection technique

Data was collected through two main techniques: in-depth interviews and document analysis.

1. In-depth Interviews

Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders at the local government level, including government officials, heads of relevant agencies, and members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participating in the poverty alleviation program. The interviews aimed to understand their perspectives on the effectiveness of inter-agency collaboration and the challenges faced in program implementation.

- a) Participant Criteria: Participants were selected based on their role in the poverty alleviation program and their involvement in the decision-making process.
- b) Procedure: Interviews were conducted face-to-face and recorded for further analysis. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.
- c) Instrument: An interview guide was developed with open-ended questions to encourage in-depth discussion on collaboration mechanisms, challenges, and suggestions for improvement.

2. Document Analysis

Relevant documents such as local government annual reports, policy documents, and program evaluation results were analyzed to assess strategic alignment and stated collaboration mechanisms. This analysis focused on:

- a) Policy and Strategic Documents: Assess how existing policies reflect the need for collaborative action in poverty alleviation.
- b) Evaluation Report: Identifying the results of programs that have been implemented and their impact on poverty.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data from interviews and documents were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The analysis steps include:

1. Transcription: Recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy.
2. Coding: Transcribed data were coded to identify key emerging themes related to institutional collaboration and performance.
3. Grouping: Relevant themes were grouped to identify patterns and relationships between themes.
4. Interpretation: The results of the analysis are interpreted to reveal how collaborative mechanisms influence the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs and to identify challenges and recommendations for improvement.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure data validity and reliability:

- a) Data Triangulation: Using multiple data sources (interviews and documents) to verify findings.
- b) Member Checking: Interview results and initial findings are rechecked with participants to ensure accuracy and appropriateness.
- c) Audit Trail: Keep detailed records of research processes and analytical decisions to increase transparency.

3. Results and Discussion

Results

Table 1. Percentage of Poor Population and Poverty Alleviation Targets in Malang City

Regional Classification	Percentage of Poor Population in Malang City, East Java, and Indonesia (%)					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Malang City	4.17	4.1	4.07	4.44	4.62	4.37
East Java	11.77	10.98	10.37	11.09	11.4	10.38
Indonesia	10.64	9.82	9.41	9.78	10.14	9.54

Source: BPS Malang City, 2023

Based on data on the percentage of poor people in Malang City, East Java, and Indonesia from 2017 to 2022, it can be seen that there was a downward trend in poverty before the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by an increase during the pandemic, and then a decrease again after the pandemic subsided. In Malang City, the percentage of poor people decreased consistently from 4.17% in 2017 to 4.07% in 2019, indicating an improvement in people's welfare. However, in 2020 there was an increase in poverty to 4.44% due to the economic impact of the pandemic, which continued into 2021 with a figure reaching 4.62%. In 2022, poverty began to decrease to 4.37%, but this figure is still higher than the period before the pandemic, indicating that the recovery process is not yet fully complete.

At the provincial level, East Java also showed a similar pattern, with poverty decreasing from 11.77% in 2017 to 10.37% in 2019. However, the pandemic caused poverty to increase to 11.09% in 2020 and rose again to 11.40% in 2021. In 2022, East Java managed to reduce the poverty rate to 10.38%, showing a better recovery compared to Malang City, although this figure is still higher than before the pandemic.

Nationally, Indonesia also experienced a significant decline in poverty before the pandemic, from 10.64% in 2017 to 9.41% in 2019. However, the pandemic triggered an increase in poverty nationally, with the percentage increasing to 9.78% in 2020 and 10.14% in 2021. In 2022, the national poverty rate decreased to 9.54%, indicating that economic recovery is underway, although it has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Overall, these data show that poverty in Malang City, East Java, and Indonesia was successfully reduced before the pandemic, but the impact of the global health crisis has caused poverty to increase in all regions. After the pandemic, economic recovery began to be seen in 2022, although it has not fully returned to pre-crisis conditions. Greater efforts are needed to address the remaining impacts of the pandemic and ensure sustainable poverty reduction.

Institutional Arrangements and Collaborative Governance in Malang City

The results of the study show that collaborative governance in Malang City in the context of poverty alleviation does not yet have an explicit legal basis. Although there is strategic support in planning documents such as the 2016–2021 RPJMD, there is no formal legal instrument that can bind cross-sectoral cooperation at the operational level (Pattinama, 2009). The absence of this

regulation causes the implementation of collaboration to run sectorally without optimal integration between the government, NGOs, and the private sector (Nauval et al., 2022).

Various programs that have been implemented by the Malang City Government, such as the Family Hope Program (PKH), Community Social Assistance (BSM), and Rice for the Poor (RASKIN), focus more on a top-down approach. This approach does not involve active coordination between the government sector and external actors, so these programs are less flexible in dealing with the various social and economic dynamics faced by the poor (N. Dutta et al., 2015).

Specifically, in the RPJMD, there is a push to increase cross-sectoral involvement. However, this study found that institutional coordination is still limited to formal interactions at the planning level. Each agency runs its own programs without any serious effort to unify more holistic policies in tackling poverty (Hartono, 2019). The allocation of local government budgets also reflects this sectoral approach. In recent years, the budget allocated to various agencies, such as the Health Agency and the Social Agency, has shown an increase, but is not accompanied by a strong coordination mechanism between these agencies (See Table 1). This lack of synergy has made poverty alleviation programs less effective, even though the budget continues to increase from year to year.

Table 2. Budget Allocation for Poverty Alleviation in Malang City (in billion IDR)

Year	Public Health Office	Social Services	Subdistrict	Total Budget
2017	196.7	5.7	1.5	203.9
2018	199.8	7.9	1.5	209.2
2019	222.4	8.9	1.5	232.8
2020	230.1	9.2	1.5	240.8

Source: Malang City RPJMD, 2016–2021

Strong institutional arrangements are an important element in collaborative governance. Prasetyo et al., (2021) emphasizes the importance of organizational structures that support cross-sector collaboration in local government. Without clear regulations that support collaboration, each agency will tend to work individually without integrating programs with other agencies.

One of the obstacles found is the existence of bureaucratic problems that are still rooted in the structure of the Malang City government. The limited regulations and policies that are able to support cross-sector cooperation have caused each Regional Apparatus Organization (OPD) to focus on implementing specific tasks according to their mandate, so that there is no synergy between these agencies (Chai & Schoon, 2016). For example, health programs run by the Health Office are often not related to welfare programs run by the Social Service, even though poverty as a complex problem requires a holistic approach.

Inter-Institutional Collaboration: Horizontal Coordination Challenges

Structural relationships in collaborative governance in Malang City tend to occur at the horizontal level, with stronger collaboration among OPDs without significant involvement of non-government actors (Emerson et al., 2015). Despite efforts to improve coordination between government agencies, the involvement of external actors such as the private sector and NGOs in the decision-making process is still very limited (Agranoff et al., 2001).

This study found that policies implemented at the regional level tend to focus on formal collaboration between government institutions, but often ignore the private sector and NGOs. This has an impact on the low responsiveness of programs to community needs. The absence of the non-government sector in the program planning and implementation process means that policies often do not reflect the reality on the ground. For example, the distribution of social assistance through RASKIN is often not on target, because the data used is outdated and there is a lack of community involvement in verifying beneficiary data (N. Dutta et al., 2015).

Table 3. Key Performance Indicators of the City Malang 2015-2021

Category Level Indicator	Year							
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Economic Growth Rate (%)	5.61	5.61	5.69	5.72	5.73	-2.26	4.21	6.32
Poverty Rate (%)	4.60	4.33	4.17	4.10	04.07	4.44	4.62	4.37
Unemployment Rate (%)	7.28	0.00	7.22	6.65	5.88	9.61	9.65	7.66

Source: BPS City of Malang, 2023

Based on Table 2. Malang City Key Performance Indicator data from 2015 to 2022, there are several important findings related to economic development, poverty rates, and unemployment in the city. First, Malang City's economic growth rate showed stability during the period 2015 to 2019, with figures ranging from 5.61% to 5.73%. However, in 2020 there was a significant decline, namely -2.26%, which was most likely caused by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. After experiencing a contraction in 2020, Malang City's economy began to show recovery in 2021 with a growth of 4.21%, and in 2022 the economy grew more rapidly with a figure of 6.32%. This indicates a fairly strong recovery after the adverse impact of the pandemic. Meanwhile, the poverty rate also experienced significant changes during this period. In 2015, the poverty rate was at 4.60% and continued to decline until it reached its lowest point in 2019 at 4.07%. This trend illustrates an increase in the welfare of the people in Malang City. However, due to the pandemic, the poverty rate increased slightly to 4.44% in 2020 and remained at 4.62% in 2021. In 2022, the poverty rate fell again to 4.37%, indicating that the city is slowly recovering from the economic crisis caused by the pandemic.

The unemployment rate also showed fluctuations that reflected economic conditions during the period. In 2015, the unemployment rate was at 7.28%, and had experienced a consistent decline to reach 5.88% in 2019. However, the impact of the pandemic was felt again in 2020, where the unemployment rate jumped sharply to 9.61%. In 2021 and 2022, although the unemployment rate was still relatively high, at 9.65% and 7.66% respectively, this figure began to show a decline, indicating a recovery in the labor sector.

Overall, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected the economic conditions, poverty, and unemployment in Malang City. Although there was a significant decline in 2020, data shows that Malang City has begun to recover gradually in the following years. Stronger economic growth in 2022, followed by a decline in poverty and unemployment rates, indicates that the local economy is heading towards a more stable recovery. However, some indicators such as the unemployment rate have not yet returned to pre-pandemic conditions, indicating that challenges in the labor market still need to be addressed.

Table 4. Performance Indicators in Malang City, Malang 2015-2021

Index Category Indicator	Year							
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Human Development Index	80.00	80.46	80.65	80.89	81.32	81.45	82.04	82.71
Gini Ratio Index	0.38	0.32	0.35	0.38	0.38	0.37	0.37	0.37
Environmental Quality Index	-	-	-	-	65.27	75.54	60.46	56.31

Source: BPS Malang City, 2023

Based on the Malang City Performance Indicator data from 2015 to 2022, several important developments can be seen related to the Human Development Index (HDI), Gini Ratio Index, and Environmental Quality Index. First, the Malang City HDI shows a consistent increasing trend during this period. In 2015, the HDI was at 80.00 and continued to increase to reach 82.71 in 2022. This increase reflects a significant improvement in the quality of life of the community, including aspects of education, health, and living standards. With stable growth, it can be concluded that the government's efforts to improve the welfare of the Malang City community are going well.

Meanwhile, the Gini Ratio Index , which measures the level of income inequality, has experienced slight fluctuations. In 2015, the index was at 0.38, then dropped significantly in 2016 to 0.32, before rising again to 0.35 in 2017. From 2018 to 2022, the Gini Ratio has been stable in the range of 0.37 to 0.38. This shows that despite improvements in human development, inequality in income distribution still persists and has not improved significantly. This means that even though welfare has increased, social inequality is still a challenge that needs to be addressed.

Furthermore, the Environmental Quality Index has been recorded since 2019, and the data shows significant fluctuations. In 2019, the index was at 65.27, and in 2020 it increased significantly to 75.54. This increase may indicate serious efforts to improve environmental quality. However, in 2021 and 2022, the environmental quality index decreased sharply, to 60.46 and 56.31, respectively. This decrease indicates problems in environmental management that need to be addressed immediately, such as the possibility of increased pollution, urbanization, or development policies that pay less attention to environmental aspects.

Overall, the data shows that Malang City has succeeded in improving the quality of life of its people through consistent increases in the HDI. However, the main challenges still lie in income inequality and declining environmental quality. Although the economy and people's welfare are

increasing, social inequality and environmental issues require serious attention so that development can be sustainable and inclusive in the future.

Advocacy Coalition: The Importance of Non-Governmental Actor Involvement

This study also revealed that advocacy coalitions involving non-governmental actors such as NGOs and community groups are very minimal in Malang City. In fact, (Simon-Ortiz et al., 2024) explained that advocacy coalitions play an important role in ensuring that policies taken by the government are in accordance with the needs of vulnerable communities.

Local NGOs such as MaDeWa, which have been involved in analyzing the Regional Budget (APBD) and policy advocacy, still have limited involvement in the implementation of poverty alleviation programs (N. Dutta et al., 2015). In addition, the private sector has not fully played a role in supporting local government policies. Data from interviews shows that the private sector tends to play a passive role in planning poverty programs. Private sector involvement is often limited to donations or sponsorship, without more active participation in policy formulation or program implementation.

Table 4. Level of NGO and Private Sector Involvement in Poverty Alleviation Programs

Aspect	NGO Involvement (%)	Private Involvement (%)
Program Planning	15	10
Implementation	10	5
Program Evaluation	20	15

Source: Interview Results, 2021

From the table above, it can be seen that the involvement of NGOs and the private sector in the planning and implementation of poverty programs in Malang City is still very minimal. The involvement of NGOs is more visible at the evaluation stage, but at the planning and implementation stages, their participation is very limited. This shows that collaborative governance in Malang City is still not optimal, because it has not been able to actively involve all stakeholders in the process of formulating and implementing policies.

Institutional performance in Malang City shows that despite improvements in budget allocation and efforts to reduce poverty, the main challenge still lies in inter-agency coordination and minimal civil society participation. (Hartono, 2019) noted that although local governments have set ambitious targets to reduce poverty, their implementation is often hampered by weak synergy between institutions.

This weak coordination results in poverty programs running partially and not integrated with each other, which ultimately reduces the effectiveness of the program as a whole. For example, programs run by the Social Service are often not related to health programs run by the Health Service, even though poverty has a significant impact on public health (Sunarlan et al., 2018).

The local government needs to develop a more flexible and innovative institutional structure, which allows for stronger collaboration with the non-government sector. By strengthening this institutional structure, it is hoped that the involvement of non-government actors, such as NGOs and civil society, can be further enhanced. Better cross-sector collaboration will allow for the creation of more inclusive and sustainable solutions to poverty alleviation in Malang City.

Discussion

Poverty Trends in Malang City, East Java, and Indonesia

The discussion regarding poverty trends in Malang City and nationally, particularly before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, is an important and fascinating topic to analyze in depth. In the years leading up to the pandemic, the Indonesian government made significant progress in efforts to alleviate poverty. According to data compiled by the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), there was a notable decline in poverty rates in both Malang City, East Java, and nationally. Government programs, especially in the realm of social assistance, such as the Family Hope Program (PKH) and the Social Assistance for the Community (BSM), played a crucial role in reducing poverty rates (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020). These social policies, designed for low-income communities, have proven to be quite effective in helping vulnerable groups rise above the poverty line.

This success is largely due to targeted and direct policy interventions, with the government focusing on directing aid to those who truly need it. PKH, for instance, provides assistance to poor households that meet specific criteria, such as having school-age children or elderly family members requiring special care (Nauval et al., 2022). This program not only helps reduce economic burdens but also promotes participation in education and healthcare, which are long-

term investments in improving the quality of life for the poor. Additionally, the Social Assistance for the Community (BSM) focuses on subsidies for basic needs such as food and education. Such programs provide an economic safety net that helps poor families survive and prevents them from falling deeper into poverty (Hartono, 2019). However, when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, the situation changed drastically. The pandemic had a severe impact on the global economy, including Indonesia. In Malang City, for instance, poverty rates increased again, reflecting the profound economic disruption at both the local and national levels (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021). For those working in the informal sector, such as day laborers, small traders, and freelance workers, the pandemic devastated their livelihoods. Most of them lost their income suddenly without adequate social security guarantees. Many informal workers were not registered in social security programs, so when the pandemic hit, they lacked significant access to government assistance (Khudzaifi et al., 2024).

During this crisis, the main challenge in poverty alleviation became even more complex. The poor were not only facing economic problems but were also confronted with greater health challenges. With limited access to healthcare services and proper sanitation facilities, they were more vulnerable to COVID-19 infection (World Bank, 2021). This was exacerbated by disparities in healthcare distribution, where regions with limited or remote healthcare facilities struggled to handle the surge in COVID-19 patients. This combination of economic shocks and health challenges further exacerbated poverty during the pandemic. However, after the peak of the pandemic passed and economic recovery efforts began, there was a visible trend of declining poverty rates once again (Statistik, 2022). The government launched various economic stimulus programs to help people recover from the pandemic's impact, such as direct cash assistance, wage subsidies, and labor-intensive programs to create temporary jobs (Khudzaifi et al., 2024). While these programs have had positive effects, the main challenge during the recovery process has been ensuring that economic recovery is inclusive and does not leave behind the most vulnerable groups (Hartono, 2019). The groups most affected by the pandemic, such as informal sector workers and poor households, need special attention to help them recover and achieve better living conditions.

Economic recovery policies must be designed to reach the most affected communities, including the urban poor and those working in informal sectors. In addition to direct assistance, long-term policies aimed at strengthening the informal sector, such as skills training, capital assistance, and access to technology, will be crucial (Nauval et al., 2022). By providing access to relevant capital and skills, the poor will have greater opportunities to increase their income and escape poverty. On the other hand, the pandemic also highlighted the importance of strengthening inclusive and sustainable social security systems. Before the pandemic, most informal workers and other vulnerable groups were not covered by social security programs. When the crisis hit, the lack of social security became one of the main factors that caused many families to fall back into poverty (Khudzaifi et al., 2024). Therefore, one of the key lessons from this pandemic is the need for reform in the social security sector, so that these programs can cover a larger portion of the population, particularly those working in sectors that are vulnerable to economic shocks.

At the local level, Malang City could serve as an interesting case study for analyzing how local government policies on poverty alleviation can be adapted to post-pandemic challenges. Existing social assistance programs need to be evaluated and adjusted to be more effective in reaching those most in need. Additionally, local economic recovery policies must take into account the local context and characteristics of the region's economy. For instance, in Malang City's tourism and education sectors, which form the backbone of its economy, economic recovery policies must be designed in such a way that these sectors can bounce back and create new jobs for the community (Nauval et al., 2022). Thus, it can be concluded that although poverty rates had shown a downward trend before the pandemic, the impact of COVID-19 caused a significant economic shock that led to a marked increase in poverty. Post-pandemic economic recovery efforts seem to be yielding results, but more time and effort are needed to ensure that this recovery is inclusive and sustainable. The government needs to continue and strengthen programs that have proven effective in tackling poverty while also developing new policies that are more responsive to the challenges posed by the pandemic. The welfare of the poor and vulnerable must be a top priority in every economic recovery policy to ensure they are not left behind in the recovery process and can improve their standard of living in the future.

Institutional Arrangements and Collaborative Governance in Malang City

Collaborative institutional governance is a critical aspect of poverty alleviation in Malang City. However, research indicates that institutional arrangements for cross-sector collaboration lack clear and binding regulations at the operational level. While strategic planning documents like the Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Daerah (RPJMD) of Malang City emphasize the importance of cross-sector collaboration, implementation still faces various challenges (Wahyudi et al., n.d.). One of the primary weaknesses in this governance is the absence of a firm legal framework that can serve as the foundation for cooperation between the government, NGOs, and the private sector. This absence hampers efforts to create a more integrated and coordinated approach to addressing poverty.

The absence of regulatory clarity, combined with poor coordination among various sectors, has led to sectoral and disjointed poverty alleviation programs. For instance, although the Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH) has been widely implemented, its top-down approach is often less responsive to the rapidly changing social dynamics on the ground (N. Dutta et al., 2015). This approach also does not actively involve non-governmental actors, making the program less flexible in adapting to shifts in the economic and social situations of impoverished communities. The rigid nature of top-down governance limits local actors' ability to tailor solutions to specific local conditions, thus diminishing the potential impact of programs like PKH in alleviating poverty at a grassroots level.

Collaborative governance holds significant potential for addressing the multifaceted problem of poverty at the local level. However, in Malang City, limitations in inter-agency coordination and the lack of policy integration have resulted in programs designed by government institutions operating in isolation, without adequate synergy (Nauval et al., 2022). For instance, both the Health Department and the Social Affairs Department manage programs related to poverty alleviation, yet the absence of binding regulations to unify these efforts leads to suboptimal outcomes. The lack of coordination prevents the pooling of resources, knowledge, and efforts, thereby reducing the overall effectiveness of poverty alleviation initiatives. The failure to foster a more integrated approach has deep roots in governance challenges at both the local and national levels. The absence of binding legal instruments to formalize cross-sectoral collaboration, particularly between the government, private sector, and civil society, significantly limits the development of effective poverty reduction strategies. As a result, each sector often functions within its silo, failing to leverage the strengths and resources of other actors. This sectoral approach has weakened the capacity of programs to address the complex nature of poverty, which requires multi-dimensional solutions involving social protection, health, education, and economic empowerment (Hartono, 2019).

The RPJMD of Malang City provides a strategic vision for tackling poverty, but without binding regulations, it remains largely aspirational. Implementing collaborative governance requires legal frameworks that explicitly delineate the roles and responsibilities of each actor. This would provide the necessary structure to facilitate effective partnerships. For example, institutionalized cooperation between the local government and private businesses could support community-based economic programs, while collaborations with NGOs could enhance the social outreach and monitoring aspects of poverty alleviation programs (N. Dutta et al., 2015).

A key challenge in implementing a collaborative governance model is the lack of regulatory enforcement mechanisms that ensure accountability and cooperation between different stakeholders. Many poverty alleviation programs fail to reach their full potential due to fragmentation in both planning and execution. Cross-sector collaboration is hindered by bureaucratic barriers and competing priorities among institutions. For instance, the Health Department may prioritize healthcare services, while the Social Affairs Department focuses on welfare programs, leading to duplicated efforts or missed opportunities for synergy (Nauval et al., 2022). This issue is compounded by the limited capacity of local governments to oversee and coordinate large-scale collaborative initiatives, often due to resource constraints or a lack of expertise in multi-stakeholder governance.

Despite these challenges, there is substantial potential for collaborative governance to play a transformative role in poverty alleviation in Malang City. In other regions, successful models of cross-sector collaboration have demonstrated that when government agencies, civil society organizations, and private enterprises work together, the outcomes are significantly improved.

For instance, partnerships that integrate health, education, and livelihood programs are more likely to succeed in addressing the root causes of poverty, rather than merely treating its symptoms. In Malang City, developing such partnerships will require a concerted effort to break down institutional silos and establish a culture of collaboration (Wahyudi et al., n.d.).

One potential solution to improve collaborative governance is to create binding legal frameworks that mandate cooperation between different sectors. For example, regulations could require the Health Department to coordinate with the Social Affairs Department on health-related poverty issues, ensuring that healthcare services are integrated into broader poverty reduction strategies. This type of regulatory mechanism would create accountability and reduce the inefficiencies caused by overlapping mandates and fragmented efforts. Additionally, such frameworks could formalize the involvement of NGOs and the private sector, providing a clear structure for their participation in poverty alleviation programs. Moreover, to foster successful collaboration, it is essential to build the capacities of local institutions in managing multi-stakeholder initiatives. This includes training local government officials, enhancing the capacity of NGOs, and incentivizing private sector participation through corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. By strengthening institutional capacity, Malang City could improve the effectiveness of its poverty alleviation programs and create more sustainable impacts (Hartono, 2019). For example, the introduction of performance-based incentives for local governments that successfully implement collaborative poverty reduction programs could motivate officials to prioritize cross-sector partnerships.

Collaborative institutional governance holds great promise for addressing poverty in Malang City, several barriers prevent its full implementation. The lack of clear regulatory frameworks, combined with weak inter-agency coordination, limits the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs. To overcome these challenges, it is crucial to develop legal instruments that formalize cross-sector collaboration and create accountability mechanisms. Additionally, building the capacity of local institutions to manage collaborative initiatives will be key to ensuring the success of these programs. If implemented effectively, collaborative governance can unlock the potential for more integrated, efficient, and impactful poverty alleviation efforts in Malang City, providing a model for other regions to follow.

Inter-Institutional Collaboration and Horizontal Coordination Challenges

One of the most significant challenges in collaborative governance in Malang City is the weak cross-sector collaboration between government institutions and non-governmental actors, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector. While collaboration among government institutions, particularly within Regional Apparatus Organizations (Organisasi Perangkat Daerah/OPD), tends to be stronger and occurs horizontally, external actors are often not meaningfully involved in the planning or implementation of poverty alleviation programs (Emerson et al., 2015). This lack of participation from non-government actors diminishes the effectiveness of local government policies, which often fail to respond to the actual needs of the community and the complex social dynamics they face.

For instance, one of the notable gaps in cross-sector collaboration is evident in the distribution of social assistance under the RASKIN (Rice for the Poor) program. Despite the widespread implementation of the program, the limited involvement of NGOs and other external actors in the verification process of beneficiary data leads to inefficiencies. The outdated data used in targeting beneficiaries often results in assistance being misallocated, as there is no verification mechanism that involves the community directly (N. Dutta et al., 2015). This shows that while the intent to improve collaboration between sectors exists, the implementation remains far from achieving its intended goals. The absence of non-government actors in critical decision-making processes reduces the adaptability and responsiveness of these programs to the rapidly changing needs of vulnerable populations.

The literature on collaborative governance consistently highlights the importance of involving non-government actors to ensure that government policies accurately reflect the needs of the communities they are designed to serve (Agranoff et al., 2001). In many countries, NGOs and the private sector play crucial roles in supporting government efforts, especially during times of crisis, such as during pandemics or economic downturns. Their participation not only enriches the policymaking process but also improves the accuracy of targeting in poverty alleviation programs. This is because NGOs are often more closely connected to local communities and can

provide valuable insights into the unique needs and challenges of marginalized groups (Nugraha et al., 2020).

In Malang City, however, the potential of NGOs and private sector actors to contribute to poverty alleviation efforts remains largely untapped. Although these actors may be involved in isolated initiatives, their participation is often seen as peripheral, rather than as integral parts of the policy formulation and implementation process. This lack of integration hampers the ability of poverty alleviation programs to leverage the strengths of all stakeholders, resulting in fragmented efforts that lack synergy (Wahyudi et al., n.d.). For example, the health department and social welfare department operate separately, implementing different programs aimed at the same communities without any real coordination or shared strategy (Nauval et al., 2022). Without formalized mechanisms for collaboration, these programs often overlap or miss opportunities for combined impact, leading to suboptimal results.

Several studies have shown that cross-sector collaboration, when effectively implemented, can enhance the success of social welfare programs by integrating resources, knowledge, and efforts from various sectors (Hartono, 2019). In regions where collaborative governance models have been established, such as in the Philippines and Brazil, partnerships between local governments, NGOs, and private companies have proven effective in addressing the multi-dimensional nature of poverty (Emerson et al., 2012). These partnerships enable the pooling of resources and expertise, allowing for more innovative and flexible approaches to poverty reduction. In contrast, in Malang City, the siloed approach to poverty alleviation limits the scope and effectiveness of interventions.

A major factor contributing to the weak cross-sector collaboration in Malang City is the absence of formal legal and regulatory frameworks that mandate cooperation between government institutions and non-government actors. Many local governments in Indonesia, including Malang, lack the necessary guidelines or incentives to involve NGOs and private sector partners in a structured manner. This regulatory gap makes it difficult to build sustained partnerships and creates uncertainty around roles and responsibilities (Emerson et al., 2015). Moreover, government institutions may be reluctant to share control over program implementation, fearing that greater involvement of external actors could complicate oversight and dilute policy goals (Agustina, 2020).

This reluctance to engage non-government actors is compounded by a lack of trust and institutional capacity. Local governments in Malang, like in many other regions in Indonesia, face significant resource and capacity constraints that limit their ability to manage complex, multi-stakeholder collaborations (Hartono, 2019). For example, the bureaucratic processes involved in coordinating between different government departments can be cumbersome, leading to delays and inefficiencies in program implementation. These institutional weaknesses are further exacerbated by the lack of political will to prioritize cross-sector collaboration, as many local government officials remain focused on short-term, sectoral goals rather than long-term, integrated solutions (Wahyudi et al., n.d.).

In contrast, in countries where cross-sector collaboration has been more successfully institutionalized, the involvement of non-government actors is seen as critical to the success of social programs. For example, in Brazil, the Bolsa Família program, which provides conditional cash transfers to low-income families, has benefited from close partnerships between the government, NGOs, and the private sector. These partnerships have helped improve the accuracy of beneficiary targeting, the efficiency of program delivery, and the overall impact on poverty reduction (de Carvalho, 2017). In addition, NGOs often play a crucial role in monitoring program implementation, providing feedback, and holding the government accountable for the results. This level of collaboration helps ensure that social programs are not only well-targeted but also adaptable to the changing needs of beneficiaries.

In Malang City, there is considerable potential to replicate such successful models of cross-sector collaboration. One way to achieve this would be to establish formalized mechanisms that mandate the involvement of NGOs and private sector actors in poverty alleviation efforts. For example, multi-stakeholder task forces or advisory councils could be created to bring together representatives from the government, civil society, and business sectors to jointly plan and oversee poverty reduction programs (Agranoff et al., 2003). These bodies would facilitate regular communication, data sharing, and collective decision-making, ensuring that all relevant

stakeholders have a voice in the governance process.

Furthermore, the private sector, through corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, could play a more significant role in poverty alleviation efforts by providing financial resources, expertise, and infrastructure support. Several companies in Indonesia have already been involved in CSR programs aimed at improving education, healthcare, and livelihoods for low-income communities (N. Dutta et al., 2015). By leveraging these resources, local governments in Malang could enhance the scope and impact of their poverty alleviation programs. Additionally, providing tax incentives or public recognition for companies that contribute to these efforts could encourage greater participation from the private sector.

In conclusion, while the importance of cross-sector collaboration in poverty alleviation is widely recognized, its implementation in Malang City remains limited by weak institutional frameworks and poor coordination between government and non-government actors. To address these challenges, local governments must prioritize the development of formal mechanisms that encourage meaningful collaboration between all stakeholders involved in poverty alleviation. By doing so, they can build more integrated, responsive, and effective programs that better serve the needs of vulnerable communities.

Economic Performance, Poverty, and Unemployment

The economic performance of Malang City prior to the COVID-19 pandemic was relatively stable, supported by robust economic growth. This period of stability reflected the success of local government economic policies in promoting growth across sectors and maintaining a steady rise in living standards. According to (Khudzaifi et al., 2024), the informal sector, which serves as the backbone of the local economy, especially for low-income households, played a pivotal role in sustaining the city's economic health. However, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 drastically changed this dynamic, triggering a significant economic contraction that had far-reaching effects on employment, poverty, and overall economic stability.

Before the pandemic, poverty levels in Malang City had been consistently declining due to various targeted social welfare programs and the strong performance of the local economy (Hartono, 2019). The local government's poverty alleviation strategies, such as the Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH), had successfully reached many of the city's vulnerable populations, enabling them to rise above the poverty line. However, the global health crisis disrupted this positive trend. The pandemic hit low-income communities the hardest, revealing the vulnerability of these groups to economic shocks. Many in this demographic were already living on the margins, and the pandemic further eroded their ability to generate income due to job losses, reduced working hours, and a lack of alternative income (udzaifi et al., 2024).

The pandemic also had a profound impact on employment levels in Malang City, with the unemployment rate rising significantly. Before COVID-19, the city's labor market had shown steady improvement, with both the formal and informal sectors contributing to job creation. However, as the pandemic unfolded, many businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and those in the informal sector, were forced to shut down or drastically reduce their workforce (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023). The contraction of the informal sector, which comprises street vendors, daily laborers, and small-scale traders, resulted in widespread job losses, as these workers were among the most vulnerable to the economic fallout of the pandemic. This surge in unemployment not only affected household incomes but also contributed to the overall decline in economic activity within the city.

Fluctuations in the unemployment rate during the pandemic reflect the inherent instability of Malang City's labor market. The informal sector, which accounts for a significant portion of employment, lacks the structural protections afforded to formal sector workers. These workers do not have access to unemployment benefits or formal health insurance, making them particularly susceptible to economic shocks (Hartono, 2019). As companies downsized or closed due to decreased demand and lockdown measures, many informal workers found themselves without work, further exacerbating the poverty levels in the city (International Labour Organization, 2020).

Despite the severe disruptions caused by the pandemic, signs of economic recovery began to emerge as the health crisis gradually subsided. In the post-pandemic period, Malang City has seen a slow but steady return to positive economic growth, driven by government efforts to stimulate the economy and by the resilience of local businesses (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023). The gradual

reopening of businesses, particularly in the retail and hospitality sectors, has helped to revive economic activity and generate employment. However, the recovery process is uneven, with formal sector businesses recovering more quickly than the informal sector, which remains fragile due to the lingering effects of the pandemic on consumer spending and economic confidence (Nugraha et al., 2020).

The post-pandemic economic recovery in Malang City, while promising, has not been equally distributed across all sectors and populations. The local government has initiated several recovery programs aimed at revitalizing the economy, but these programs have often been skewed toward the formal sector. To achieve a more inclusive recovery, it is essential for local policymakers to design economic policies that also address the needs of informal workers, who continue to face significant barriers in accessing resources and opportunities (Agustina, 2020). For example, offering targeted financial assistance to small businesses in the informal sector, facilitating access to microcredit, and providing vocational training for displaced workers could help accelerate recovery and promote long-term resilience (Hartono, 2019).

The economic policies moving forward should focus on strengthening the social safety net, ensuring that it reaches the most marginalized communities. Social protection programs must be designed to be more inclusive, with a particular emphasis on expanding coverage to informal workers, many of whom are excluded from traditional welfare schemes due to their non-registered employment status (International Labour Organization, 2020). Moreover, local governments need to improve the accuracy and timeliness of the data used to identify vulnerable populations, ensuring that the distribution of aid is more efficient and responsive to the actual needs on the ground (Nauval et al., 2022).

Additionally, fostering public-private partnerships can play a vital role in accelerating recovery in both the formal and informal sectors. The private sector, through corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, has the potential to provide crucial support in areas such as job creation, skills development, and infrastructure investment (N. Dutta et al., 2015). Such partnerships can help bridge the gap between government programs and the actual needs of the community, making the recovery process more inclusive and sustainable.

In conclusion, while the economic performance of Malang City prior to the pandemic was strong, the global health crisis exposed significant vulnerabilities, particularly in the informal sector. The pandemic-induced contraction resulted in increased poverty and unemployment, with the informal sector bearing the brunt of the economic downturn. Although the city's economy is now showing signs of recovery, the process remains uneven and challenging, especially for those most affected by the crisis. Moving forward, the local government must focus on inclusive recovery strategies that not only stimulate formal sector growth but also provide the necessary support for informal workers and vulnerable communities. By strengthening social safety nets, improving the accuracy of welfare programs, and promoting cross-sector collaboration, Malang City can build a more resilient and equitable economy for all its residents.

Institutional Performance and Non-Governmental Engagement

Institutional performance in Malang City reveals persistent challenges in poverty alleviation, particularly regarding the lack of inter-agency coordination despite increasing budget allocations for such programs. Government agencies often operate in silos, each managing their own programs without proper integration or synergy with others. This lack of coordination is exacerbated by the absence of formal regulations that facilitate cross-sector collaboration. Consequently, Regional Apparatus Organizations (Organisasi Perangkat Daerah/OPD) tend to focus on their own initiatives, which limits the overall effectiveness of poverty alleviation efforts. While more funding is allocated each year to combat poverty, these efforts remain suboptimal due to poor integration and collaboration between key government stakeholders (Hartono, 2019).

A sectoral approach, in which each government agency runs programs independently, severely hampers the potential impact of poverty reduction strategies. Although financial resources are growing, the effectiveness of these programs is limited by the compartmentalized manner in which they are executed. Increased budgetary allocations alone are insufficient to address the complexities of poverty. A more comprehensive strategy that enhances coordination between government agencies and fosters collaboration with non-government sectors, including NGOs and civil society, is needed to address the root causes of poverty in a sustainable manner (LeBesco, 2011). Without such an approach, government programs risk becoming fragmented and

less impactful, particularly in areas where poverty is deeply entrenched and multifaceted.

Non-governmental actors play a critical role in ensuring that government policies are not only comprehensive but also responsive to the specific needs of the community. NGOs, civil society organizations, and private sector entities often possess deeper insights into the challenges faced by vulnerable populations and can provide valuable feedback on how government policies might be improved. Advocacy coalitions involving these non-governmental actors can serve as vital mechanisms for pushing the government to adopt more inclusive and responsive policies. By engaging in partnerships with local community groups, NGOs can encourage government agencies to take a more holistic approach to poverty alleviation, ensuring that marginalized voices are heard and their needs addressed (Simon-Ortiz et al., 2024). However, despite the recognized importance of such collaborations, this study finds that the engagement of NGOs and the private sector in Malang City's poverty alleviation efforts remains minimal, particularly in the critical stages of planning and implementation.

The limited involvement of NGOs and the private sector in policy formulation and implementation in Malang City reflects a broader trend of underutilizing non-governmental actors in public governance. In many developing regions, NGOs have proven their ability to facilitate community engagement and provide innovative solutions to complex social issues. Their exclusion in Malang City undermines the potential for a more participatory and inclusive governance model. The lack of regulatory frameworks that formalize the involvement of non-governmental actors in government-led poverty alleviation initiatives further exacerbates the situation (Hartono, 2019). Without clear mechanisms for collaboration, NGOs and the private sector remain peripheral to the poverty reduction process, reducing the overall efficacy of these efforts.

In regions where NGOs and private sector actors are actively engaged in public governance, poverty alleviation efforts tend to be more successful. For instance, in Brazil and India, partnerships between government agencies, NGOs, and private companies have led to more comprehensive and inclusive social welfare programs. These partnerships have been shown to improve the targeting of beneficiaries, enhance program delivery, and ensure greater accountability in the implementation of poverty reduction strategies (N. Dutta et al., 2015). In Malang City, by contrast, the minimal participation of these actors limits the capacity of government programs to address the complex and dynamic nature of poverty.

The importance of fostering collaboration between government institutions and non-government sectors is further emphasized by the fact that poverty is a multidimensional issue. It requires solutions that go beyond mere financial support. Social safety nets, access to quality healthcare, education, housing, and employment opportunities are all necessary components of effective poverty alleviation. NGOs, in particular, have a history of working closely with vulnerable populations and are well-positioned to provide services that complement government programs, such as skills training, microfinance, and community development initiatives (Nugraha et al., 2020). The integration of these services into government-led programs would create a more robust framework for tackling poverty at both the local and national levels.

Despite these advantages, the institutional barriers that prevent more extensive NGO and private sector involvement in Malang City persist. Bureaucratic inefficiencies, coupled with a lack of trust between government agencies and non-governmental actors, have stymied efforts to develop meaningful partnerships. Government agencies may view NGOs and private sector entities as competitors for resources or influence, rather than as potential partners capable of enhancing the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs (Agranoff & McGuire, 2001). This competitive mindset often leads to a reluctance to engage in cooperative efforts, leaving significant gaps in service delivery and program execution.

Moreover, the absence of legal frameworks that mandate or encourage collaboration between these sectors means that opportunities for cooperation are often missed. In many cases, NGOs and the private sector are left to operate independently, focusing on their own projects rather than working alongside government agencies to create comprehensive solutions. This fragmented approach to poverty alleviation weakens the overall impact of these efforts, as programs are unable to capitalize on the diverse strengths and resources that non-governmental actors can bring to the table (Hartono, 2019). Without clear guidelines that outline the roles and responsibilities of each sector, collaboration remains ad hoc and inconsistent.

Moving forward, it is essential for local governments in Malang City to prioritize the development of institutional frameworks that promote greater collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector. By establishing formalized partnerships, the government can create more inclusive and effective poverty alleviation programs. These partnerships should be supported by clear regulations that define the roles of non-government actors in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of government programs. Such measures would not only improve program efficiency but also ensure that the voices of vulnerable communities are incorporated into the policymaking process (Nauval et al., 2022).

Furthermore, capacity-building initiatives should be undertaken to strengthen the ability of government agencies to work with non-governmental actors. This may include training programs that focus on collaborative governance, as well as the creation of platforms for regular communication and coordination between sectors. By fostering a culture of cooperation, the government can better leverage the resources, expertise, and networks of NGOs and private sector entities to enhance the impact of poverty alleviation programs (Emerson et al., 2015). Such efforts would help bridge the current gaps in governance and create a more resilient and sustainable approach to tackling poverty in Malang City.

In conclusion, while institutional performance in Malang City shows some progress in poverty alleviation, the sectoral approach currently in place limits the overall effectiveness of these efforts. The absence of cross-sector collaboration, particularly with NGOs and the private sector, has resulted in fragmented programs that fail to fully address the complex nature of poverty. To achieve more substantial results, the government must prioritize coordination, formalize partnerships with non-government actors, and develop an inclusive approach to policy formulation and implementation. By doing so, Malang City can create a more comprehensive and sustainable framework for poverty reduction.

Quality of Life Indicators: Human Development, Income Inequality, and the Environment

The quality of life in Malang City has seen notable improvements in recent years, as reflected in the steady rise of the Human Development Index (HDI). This index, which measures key dimensions of human development such as access to education, health services, and living standards, indicates that the local government's efforts to enhance the well-being of its citizens are yielding positive results. Increased access to healthcare and education, along with a general improvement in living conditions, has played a crucial role in this upward trend (BPS Kota Malang, 2023). However, despite these advancements, deeper analysis reveals persistent challenges, particularly in the areas of income inequality and environmental quality, both of which pose significant barriers to achieving comprehensive and sustainable improvements in the city's quality of life.

While the HDI is improving, income inequality remains a critical issue in Malang City, as evidenced by the stability of the Gini Ratio over recent years. The Gini Ratio, which measures the distribution of income within a population, shows that despite overall improvements in human development, the benefits of economic growth and development are not being evenly distributed across all segments of society. This inequality suggests that certain groups, particularly those in the lower income brackets, are not fully benefiting from the economic progress being made. For instance, wealthier groups may have more access to educational opportunities, healthcare, and economic resources, further widening the gap between the rich and the poor (BPS Kota Malang, 2023). The persistence of income inequality raises concerns about the inclusivity of Malang City's development, highlighting the need for more targeted policies that address the root causes of this disparity.

One of the primary reasons for the continued high levels of inequality is the structural imbalance in Malang's economic sectors. The city's development has largely been driven by rapid urbanization and industrial growth, particularly in sectors such as real estate and tourism. While these industries have generated significant wealth and employment opportunities, they have primarily benefited the urban middle and upper classes, leaving rural and marginalized communities behind. Moreover, the informal sector, which plays a significant role in the livelihoods of the poorer population, has not seen equivalent levels of support or investment, further exacerbating inequality (Nugraha et al., 2020). Without policies that ensure more equitable access to economic resources and opportunities, the gap between the rich and poor is likely to widen further, undermining the long-term sustainability of Malang's development.

In addition to income inequality, the decline in environmental quality poses another significant challenge for Malang City. While early development efforts included attempts to improve environmental sustainability, recent data shows a sharp decline in the Environmental Quality Index (Sunarlan et al., 2018). This downturn can be attributed to several factors, including increasing pollution levels, poorly managed urbanization, and development policies that prioritize short-term economic growth over environmental protection. Uncontrolled urban expansion, for instance, has led to the destruction of green spaces, increased air and water pollution, and a rise in waste production, all of which have degraded the quality of the urban environment (Rahman et al., 2019).

Furthermore, industrial activities and inadequate waste management have exacerbated environmental degradation, particularly in densely populated areas. The absence of stringent environmental regulations and enforcement mechanisms has allowed harmful practices such as illegal dumping and deforestation to persist, contributing to the declining environmental quality (Sunarlan et al., 2018). These environmental issues not only affect the city's ecological balance but also have direct impacts on the health and well-being of its residents, particularly those living in poverty, who are more vulnerable to the negative effects of pollution and climate change (LeBesco, 2011). The degradation of the environment, therefore, poses a significant threat to the long-term sustainability of Malang's development efforts.

The intersection of income inequality and environmental decline presents a complex challenge for Malang City. On the one hand, efforts to boost economic development and improve human development indicators are showing success, but on the other, these efforts are contributing to environmental degradation and failing to address the underlying issues of inequality. The rapid urbanization and industrialization that have driven economic growth in the city have also strained its environmental resources and exacerbated social inequalities, leading to a situation where the benefits of development are unevenly distributed and unsustainable (Hartono, 2019). If these trends continue, Malang risks undermining the very progress it has made in improving quality of life, as environmental degradation and social inequality will eventually erode the foundations of its development.

To achieve sustainable and inclusive development, more serious efforts are needed to address both income inequality and environmental degradation. First, addressing income inequality requires more inclusive economic policies that focus on providing opportunities for marginalized and vulnerable groups. This could involve expanding access to education and vocational training for poorer communities, improving labor protections for workers in the informal sector, and increasing investment in social welfare programs that target the most disadvantaged populations (Nauval et al., 2022). Additionally, policies that promote equitable access to healthcare, housing, and other essential services will be crucial for ensuring that all residents of Malang City can share in the benefits of development.

Simultaneously, the environmental challenges facing Malang City necessitate a stronger commitment to sustainability. Strengthening environmental regulations and enforcing them more effectively will be key to curbing the current trends of pollution and resource depletion. Urban planning must prioritize the preservation of green spaces, the promotion of sustainable building practices, and the development of public transportation systems that reduce reliance on private vehicles and cut down on emissions (Rahman et al., 2019). Furthermore, the local government must engage in cross-sector collaboration, working with NGOs, private sector actors, and civil society groups to implement comprehensive environmental strategies that balance economic growth with ecological preservation (Emerson et al., 2015).

Institutional reforms that promote cross-sector collaboration will be crucial for tackling these intertwined challenges. By fostering partnerships between government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector, Malang City can develop more integrated solutions to the problems of inequality and environmental decline. For example, NGOs focused on environmental conservation can collaborate with government bodies responsible for urban planning and infrastructure development to ensure that new projects are environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive. Similarly, private sector actors can contribute through corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives that support both environmental and social goals, such as funding community-based green projects or providing vocational training for disadvantaged groups (N. Dutta et al., 2015).

In conclusion, while Malang City has made significant strides in improving quality of life as

evidenced by rising HDI levels, persistent income inequality and environmental degradation remain significant challenges that threaten the long-term sustainability of its development. Addressing these issues requires a more comprehensive and inclusive approach, one that balances economic growth with social equity and environmental protection. Through targeted policies, cross-sector collaboration, and stronger institutional frameworks, Malang City can work towards a future where all residents enjoy a higher quality of life in a more equitable and sustainable urban environment.

4. Research Implications

This study has several relevant implications for public policy, institutional planning, and collaborative governance practices in poverty alleviation. First, the results show that although there was a decline in poverty in Malang City before the pandemic, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a significant increase in poverty, and its impacts continued to be felt even after the pandemic began to subside. This indicates that poverty alleviation policies need to be more resilient to external shocks, such as the pandemic, and focus more on the economic resilience of the poor. Social assistance programs such as the Family Hope Program (PKH) and Rice for the Poor (RASKIN) must be more flexible in responding to emergency conditions in order to provide assistance to the most vulnerable groups in society more quickly.

Second, an important implication related to collaborative governance is the need to strengthen regulations that support cross-sectoral cooperation. This study found that inter-agency coordination in Malang City is still carried out sectorally, and there is no effective mechanism to integrate poverty alleviation programs from various government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector. This has an impact on the effectiveness of the program which is less than optimal, even though the budget allocation for poverty alleviation programs increases every year. By strengthening regulations that bind inter-agency, local governments can encourage better synergy between related sectors and ensure that these programs complement each other.

Third, the research results also show the importance of the involvement of non-government actors in the planning and implementation of poverty alleviation programs. The private sector and NGOs have an important role in providing more active contributions, both through financial resources, technical support, and in the decision-making process. The low involvement of non-government actors in poverty alleviation programs in Malang City indicates that there is untapped potential to strengthen the overall impact of the program. Therefore, local governments need to be more proactive in involving the non-government sector as strategic partners in policy formulation and program implementation.

Fourth, income inequality is still high despite improvements in the quality of life as measured by the Human Development Index (HDI), indicating that economic growth is not yet inclusive. This implication is important for the formulation of future economic policies. The government needs to develop a more inclusive development strategy, which does not only focus on improving macroeconomic figures, but also reduces income inequality and ensures that the benefits of development are felt by all levels of society. This also applies to environmental policy, where this study shows a decline in environmental quality in recent years, which requires stronger intervention in environmental management.

Finally, this study shows that the institutional management system in Malang City needs to be improved to encourage more effective collaboration between institutions. Local governments can learn from collaborative governance models that have been successfully implemented in other regions or in other countries, where synergies between government, the private sector, and civil society have succeeded in creating more innovative and sustainable solutions in poverty alleviation. Improvements in cross-sector coordination will not only increase the effectiveness of social programs, but also encourage the creation of more inclusive and sustainable development in the future.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that poverty in Malang City, East Java, and Indonesia in general had decreased before the COVID-19 pandemic, indicating the effectiveness of various poverty

alleviation programs implemented by the government. However, the pandemic has had a significant negative impact, especially on the poor who work in the informal sector and are vulnerable to economic shocks. After the pandemic, although there has been an economic recovery that has begun to be seen, the poverty rate has not fully returned to pre-pandemic conditions, indicating that poverty alleviation efforts still need to be improved to address the remaining impacts of the crisis.

In Malang City, despite various programs implemented by the government, this study found that the main weakness lies in the lack of effective collaborative governance. The absence of binding regulations to support cross-sector collaboration has resulted in poverty alleviation programs not being integrated with each other, thus reducing their effectiveness. Programs such as PKH and BSM tend to be run sectorally by each agency, without any serious effort to unify policies in a more holistic framework. Therefore, stronger formal regulations are needed to encourage cross-sector collaboration between the government, NGOs, and the private sector.

This study also highlights the importance of non-governmental sector involvement in poverty alleviation. The involvement of NGOs and the private sector in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of poverty programs is still very minimal, even though these actors have an important role in ensuring that the policies taken are in accordance with the needs of the community. Increasing the participation of the non-governmental sector will be able to strengthen the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs, especially in reaching the most vulnerable groups in society.

From a human development perspective, this study shows that despite improvements in the Human Development Index (HDI), income inequality as measured by the Gini Ratio remains high. This indicates that economic growth has not been evenly distributed across all levels of society. More inclusive development is needed to reduce this inequality and ensure that all people, especially those in low-income groups, benefit equally from economic development.

The decline in environmental quality seen in recent years is also a concern. This problem reflects that development in Malang City is not yet fully environmentally sustainable. The local government needs to be more serious in addressing environmental issues through more proactive policies, such as better waste management, pollution reduction, and development of urban green spaces.

Overall, this study provides important insights into the poverty conditions in Malang City and the challenges faced in collaborative governance for poverty alleviation. To achieve more effective and sustainable results, improvements in institutional regulations, strengthening cross-sector collaboration, and increasing the involvement of the non-government sector in the policy process are needed. By addressing these challenges, it is hoped that poverty alleviation efforts in Malang City can be more effective and have a greater impact on society.

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