

Deliberative Problems in the Distribution of COVID-19 Social Assistance: Critical Dialogue with the Village Government

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Abstract: *The distribution of Covid-19 social assistance has caused vertical conflicts between the village government and its people. This problem occurred all over Indonesia, including in Blitar Regency, where the village heads gave up and asked for advocacy from the District Parliament (DPRD). This study aims to identify the problem in the distribution of Covid-19 social assistance faced by the village government in Blitar Regency. Critical paradigms are used as the basis for finding problems, while the research approach used is qualitative with a case study. The results showed that the problems in the distribution of Covid-19 Social Assistance in villages in Blitar Regency are divided into two, the accompanying problem in each social assistance and the derivative problem resulting from the social assistance distribution processes. Theoretically, most of the distribution of the covid-19 social assistance are experiencing deliberative problems which means the absence of deliberation. Elaboration on the recommendations made by the village government, the analysis of theories, and relevant studies refers to the alignment towards deliberative democratic methods, because this method hints at the management of social assistance that is more participatory, transparent, and oriented to the value of justice.*

Keywords: *Covid-19 social assistance; deliberative problem; village government.*

Introduction

Coronavirus Disease Pandemic 2019 (Covid-19) has not only impacted health problems but also economic problems in all countries. In Indonesia, policies in the health sector such as Physical Distancing, Crowding Bans, Work from Home (WFH), Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) and the influence of export country lockdown policies, have caused tremendous economic turmoil. The practice of mass dismissals due to the closure of factories, malls, restaurants,

hotels, tourist attractions and other businesses is inevitable. As a result, millions of people are experiencing direct economic impacts. Data from the Ministry of Manpower as of April 20, 2020 recorded as many as 2,084,593 workers from 116,370 companies being put on leave and having their employment terminated (Lipi, 2020). Meanwhile, the Ministry of Cooperatives and UMK as of April 2020 recorded 43% or about 23.68 million UMKM stopped operating due to the Covid-19 pandemic, out of a total of 59.2

million businesses (Fajar, 2020; Santia, 2020).

The impact of Covid-19 on the economic sector was swiftly responded to by the government, by conducting a Social Safety Net Program (Jaring Pengaman Sosial) in the form of providing social assistance (Bansos). There are at least seven types of social assistance from the central government, including: Peningkatan Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH) or Improved Family Hope Program; Kartu Sembako or Grocery Card; Bantuan Sosial Jabodetabek or Social Assistance for the people of Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi; Bantuan Tunai Non Jabodetabek or Cash Assistance for people other than Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi; Kartu Pra Kerja or Pre-Employment Card; Bantuan Langsung Tunai (BLT) Dana Desa (DD) or Direct Cash Assistance from the Village Fund; and Electricity Tariff Subsidy (Fajar, 2020). Meanwhile, local governments also contribute in providing social assistance sourced from each regional budget. But the many types of assistance on the other hand are responded negatively by the community in almost all regions, because it is considered to be unfair and not accurate. Ever since social assistance began to be distributed, it can be said that "new problems" arise and further disrupt the community.

The results from The Habibi Assessment Center mentioned that one of the vertical conflicts that arise in the Covid-19 pandemic is related to the distribution of social assistance provided by the government to the community (Ansori, 2020). The source of the conflict was reinforced by a Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (SMRC) survey which

stated that 49% of respondents rated Covid-19 social assistance as not accurate. Meanwhile, there are fewer respondents who rated Covid-19 social assistance as accurate (37%), (Saputri, 2020). The survey conducted by the Indonesian Political Indicators even stated that 60.3% of respondents answered that the Covid-19 social assistance was not accurate (Yahya, 2020). Also, the Pusat Kajian Pembangunan dan Pengelolaan Konflik (Puspek) Universitas Airlangga (Unair) also concluded the same thing, that the social assistance of Covid-19 has not been accurate (Ihsanuddin, 2020). Meanwhile, according to Dr. Hempri Suyatna, S.Sos., M.Si, lecturer of Social Development and Welfare at Gadjah Mada University (UGM), the root of the problem in the COVID-19 social assistance is data validation and bureaucratic flow in its distribution (Hakam, 2020).

Reflecting on Dr. Hempri Suyatna's statement, there is basically a bureaucratic line that is most under pressure from the distribution flow of Covid-19 assistance, namely the village government. This is because the village government is the one directly facing the community. As quoted from various online news source, vertical conflicts between the community and the village government related to the distribution of social assistance Covid-19 have occurred in various regions. The vertical conflict for example occurred in Sugihan Village, Grobogan Regency (Nusantara, 2020), Gembongdadi Village, Tegal Regency (Syaifullah, 2020), Krikilan Village, Gresik Regency (Wijayanto, 2020), Rumbling Village, Karimun Regency (Khairul, 2020), Kambang Utara Village, Pesisir Selatan Regency (Putra, 2020), Sukajadi Village, Pandeglang Regency

unprecedented, so a lot of studies or research are needed.

The academic consequences of this study put critical social sciences as the basis for finding the problem occurring in the distribution of the covid-19 social assistance. The helplessness of the village government due to two structural pressures at the same time requires disclosure and release measures. Therefore the critical paradigm is best used as the basis for seeing problems, considering that critical paradigms always see social reality in unfair conditions. Furthermore, this study uses Jurgen Habermas's theory of deliberative democracy. The selection of the theory used in this research is based on the assumption that the problem of social assistance distribution of Covid-19 requires a solution by considering the opinions of various parties. Because the facts in reality show that Covid-19 social assistance seems exclusive, done by the government and has minimal community participation. Exemplified in Maruhun and Asmony's research (2018), Apriani (2016), Putra A. S. (2017), Yamin (2021), and Winarno (2017) that solutions to problems directly involving the community need to implement public participation.

The problem occurring in the distribution of Covid-19 Social Assistance experienced by the village government needs to be addressed immediately. Blitar regency as an affected area, deserves to be the focus of this research. The background accumulation of the problem focuses this research on several objectives, namely: (i) identifying the problems encountered by the village government in Blitar regency in the process of distributing COVID-19

social assistance; (ii) providing an opportunity for the village government to voice its recommendations based on the actual circumstances in the village; and (iii) analyzing the problem into a critical social science study that can be used as an evaluation.

Methods

This study uses a critical paradigm as a basis for looking at the problem of distributing social assistance Covid-19 that occurred. The critical paradigm was chosen because research with a critical paradigm can reveal and analyze social reality by questioning the inequality of existing social relations. The critical paradigm views reality as not in harmony, but tends to be in situations of conflict and social struggle (Halik, 2018). Furthermore, this research uses a qualitative approach with the type of a case study. Citing Guba and Lincoln in Creswell (1994), a qualitative approach is used in research that views reality as subjective. This is relevant to the research on the distribution of Covid-19 social assistance because the village government in this study is the main party in critical dialogue. While the case study was chosen because it is an empirical investigation that investigates "contemporary phenomena" in real-life contexts (Guba and Lincoln in Creswell, 1994). This type of research is relevant to the context of the "contemporary phenomenon" of the problem of distributing Covid-19 social assistance itself.

This study used three data collection techniques, interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted using an unstructured model. The interview

Java Provincial Government called the Jaring Pengaman Sosial (JPS) or Social Safety Net, from the Ministry of Social Affairs called Bantuan Sosial Tunai (BST) or Cash Social Assistance and from the Ministry of Villages and Disadvantaged Regions in the form of Bantuan Langsung Tunai Dana Desa (BLT DD) or Direct Cash Assistance from the Village Fund. The four types of assistance chronologically began to be distributed at almost the same time since the end of April 2020.

1. Problems for Each Assistance

Bantuan Sosial Daerah (Bansosda) or Regional Social Assistance from the Blitar Regency Government was distributed three times. First, it was distributed on April 23, then two months later on July 15, and after that, two months later on September 17, 2020. The Bansosda was basic food packages that were worth approximately Rp. 200,000. The target recipients, at the time, could not be defined, because apart from the data on recipients coming directly from the sub-districts through the districts, the Bansosda recipients were from many circles of people, like, farmers, traders, breeders, housewives, casual daily workers, both those affected in their economy due to Covid-19 and those who were not. Because of the absence of clear criteria and information, the village government was confused when asked by the people. In addition to not being involved in the data collection process, the validation process for prospective recipient data provided by the sub-district operator was also very sudden. This is exacerbated by the village government's inability to file complaints or make room

for criticism, because the communication was only built one way.

The data validation results from the village government did not seem to be fully accepted by the donor institution, because the data that appeared when assistance was distributed was the initial data (that was first given before the validation process). This problem had become a rage of the village government and an emergence of narratives that threaten to not do the validation of recipient data again. Fortunately, when the distribution took place, there was a policy from the donor institution that if the recipient of the assistance is deemed not right on target, it can be transferred to a more appropriate recipient on condition that they fill out a statement. However, this solution cannot be implemented optimally, because not all people who are considered capable are willing to give up their assistance. Their unwillingness is because they already feel entitled to receive the social assistance with their name listed in the list of recipients as proof.

The problem in Bansosda is actually not a new problem. For example, the results of the Najidah and Lestari (2019) research resulted in the finding that the factors inhibiting the effectiveness of the Family Hope Program (PKH) in Semarang City consisted of three, namely coordination, planning and service accuracy. The study is the same as the Bansosda problem, the program being implemented is actually not carefully planned and calculated, so administrative problems cannot be avoided. In practice, Bansosda seems to only meet targets without attaching importance to good distribution management.

Similar to Bansosda, Jaring Pengaman Sosial (JPS) or Social Safety Net from the East Java Provincial Government was also distributed three times. The JPS was distributed starting on May 17, then three months later on August 10, and another two months later on October 18, 2020. The JPS was also in the form of basic food packages worth approximately Rp. 200,000. The target recipients of the JPS also could not be clearly defined because the recipients were very diverse, ranging from UMKM, housewives, casual daily workers, widows, farmers, to breeders, both those affected in their economy due to Covid-19 and those who were not. This raised strong potential suspicions from the community, that the data on recipients for assistance can be manipulated by the village government. The problem is further complicated when some of the recipients in JPS were also recipients of Bansosda. The data on recipients was directly from the province through sub-districts, and the data collection process for prospective recipients did not involve the village government.

Similar to Bansosda, the validation process of prospective recipient data on the JPS, provided by the district operator, was very sudden. Both JPS and Bansosda, had the average validation time of only around 24 hours, and then they must be sent back immediately. Some villages also reported that the data that appeared when the assistance was distributed was the initial data (before validation). Unfortunately for JPS, there was no policy on transfer of assistance if the recipient is deemed to be in a better economy. Finally, several villages made a policy themselves, although the signature is from the listed recipient, but in reality, it will be received

by someone else who is more in need and deserving.

Looking at other problems that have occurred, the study of Domri *et.al* (2019), which states that the process of collecting data on recipients to determine the recipients of the Family Hope Program (PKH) in Bungo Regency experienced various obstacles, namely the most important data taken from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) is seen as not reflecting the actual state of society. In general, the problem of data collection and its derivatives is basically a social assistance problem in Indonesia that has not been resolved. This was exacerbated by the sudden pandemic Covid-19 conditions so that problems were accumulating.

Bantuan Sosial Tunai (BST) or Cash Social Assistance from the Ministry of Social Affairs was not distributed through the village government, but the process of data validation and the provision of information to the community still involved the village government. BST itself is an assistance in the form of cash which is distributed through PT. Pos Indonesia with a more sophisticated system. It is by scanning the barcode in the recipient's invitation. This system is considered to be more effective because it minimizes fraud. BST was distributed from April to December 2020. The amount of BST in the first three months, in April, May and June was Rp. 600,000 and from July to December was Rp. 300,000. Regarding the BST target recipients, the criteria of people affected in their economy due to Covid-19 were not explained in detail. If traced further, BST recipients were people with lower economy than Bansosda and JPS recipients.

Although BST was through a system that is considered effective, BST is not problem-free. The BST data received by the village government is past-poor population-data. Several villages gave information that those data could be from 2015 or even 2012. This can be seen from the large number of recipients who have died or moved. Similar to Bansosda and JPS, the pressure on the village government peaks when the problematic data was only given less than 24 hours to validate. In addition, problems also occurred in the second and third stages of BST disbursement, where some of the data suddenly disappeared. The recipient's data suddenly decreased and the distributor (Srengat Post Office) was unable to provide a satisfactory answer. The village government's policy in response to this problem was to seek disbursement assistance from other sources for the supposed recipients whose data suddenly disappeared.

Problems that occur in BST are validated by research of Rahmansyah *et.al* (2020) which also concludes that BST reaps many obstacles. In fact, according to him, if referring to the various obstacles that occur in the implementation of BST, it can be concluded that the government has not been able to fully fulfill the mandate of Law Number 11 of 2009 concerning Social Welfare and Decree of the Minister of Social Affairs number 54/HUK/2020 concerning the Implementation of Social Assistance for Basic Food and Assistance Social Cash in Handling the Impact of Covid-19. Whereas according to Susantyo (2020), if the Cash Social Assistance can be implemented properly, it can meet the needs of the beneficiary's family for 2-3

weeks and use it for food, health, and debt repayment needs.

Bansosda, JPS and BST have very similar problems because the distribution mechanism is almost the same. According to Rahmansyah *et.al* (2020), the obstacles found by the Regional Government in the distribution of social assistance, among others: (1) Data on recipients of social assistance is still overlapping with other recipients of assistance. (2) The data used is sourced from DTKS data or data on the poor, which is obtained from the region through Rukun Tetangga (RT) and Rukun Warga (RW) or neighbor groups. However, there is a possibility that the RT/RW forgot to enter the latest data affected by Covid-19, and the affected residents did not report their data to the RT/RW. (3) A lack of community awareness about changes in the economy that affect him and his family.

The only assistance that was considered as wise and prudent was the Bantuan Langsung Tunai Dana Desa (BLT DD) or Direct Cash Assistance from the Village Fund. This assessment is based on the data collection process up to its distribution, which not only involves the village government but also elements of village institutions through village deliberations (Musyawarah Desa/Musdes). The elements of the village institutions include Rukun Tetangga (RT), Rukun Warga (RW) or neighbor groups, and Badan Permusyawaratan Desa (BPD) or Village Parliament. BLT DD is a Covid-19 social assistance taken from the Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Desa (APBDes) or Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget of each village, which is sourced from the transfer of Village Funds from the Ministry of Villages and

Disadvantaged Regions. As the name implies, BLT DD is in the form of cash assistance worth Rp. 600,000 in the first to third disbursement, in April, May and June, and worth Rp. 300,000 in disbursement from July to December 2020. BLT DD is also still continuing in the 2021 fiscal year. Although with this positive assessment, BLT DD is also not problem-free. The immensely complicated criterias for recipients is considered unreasonable.

The BLT DD or Direct Cash Assistance from the Village Fund recipients requirement include poor people with the following criterias: (i) House with a floor area of < 8 m² per person, (ii) cheap earth/bamboo/wood floors, (iii) cheap bamboo/rumbia/wood walls/walls without plaster, (iv) defecation without facilities/with other people, (v) lighting without electricity, (vi) drinking water from wells/unprotected springs/rivers/rainwater, (vii) fuel from wood/charcoal/kerosene, (viii) Consumption of meat/milk/chicken only 1 time/week, (ix) Can only buy one set of clothes a year, (x) Eat 1-2 times a day, (xi) Can't afford to go to the puskesmas/polyclinic, (xii) Source of income from Family Cards (KK) for farmers with land <500 m², farm laborers, fishermen workers, construction workers, plantation workers, other jobs with wages <Rp 600 thousand/month, (xiii) Family Card Education (KK) not attending school did not finish elementary school/graduated elementary school, and (xiv) do not have savings/easy to sell goods at least Rp 500,000.

The BLT DD criterias confused the government and elements of village institutions. The poor, according to the village government in Blitar Regency can

no longer rely on these 14 criteria. The poor people with these criteria are rare. Even when there is a policy that people with a minimum of 9 from all 14 criteria are eligible, the determination is still difficult. If there is any, it is certain that the recipients who meet the BLT DD criteria have already received assistance from PKH or BPNT. The problem became a commotion between village heads and village assistants. The village assistant's request clearly cannot be fulfilled by the village government. The problem finally found a solution that the absolute decision of BLT DD recipients was based on the results of village meetings, while still taking into account the required criteria, but adapted to the conditions of the community. This means that even if the prospective recipient does not meet the minimum 9 criteria required, if according to the participants of the village meeting they deserve social assistance, and have not received other social assistance, they can be included in the list of recipients.

In addition, another problem in BLT DD is that it cannot be distributed in the right month and is prone to subjectivity. The distribution of BLT DD which cannot be routinely done every month is due to the wait for fund transfer from the Ministry of Villages. Thus, the BLT DD, several times, was given in accumulation in the following month. In regard to the claim that BLT DD is prone to subjectivity, it means that the nomination of candidates for direct recipients from each RT (neigboar groups), sometimes cannot be truly objective. Because the proposal by the head of the RT is often influenced by emotional factors and close kinship. This makes the deliberation

longer until the data proposed is actually valid and feasible to be validated

Actually the example of BLD DD implementation is very good because it involves community participation. However, studies in China suggest that targeting social assistance recipients based on community has risks, among which people may have hidden incentives in choosing target programs, for example they may prefer relatives and friends or

use the program as an instrument of power. Therefore, in the cases in rural China, legislators still have criteria determined by absolute income thresholds, certain household characteristics that reflect or affect welfare, before carrying out evaluations of village officials and community members (Coady, Grosh and Hoddinott in Kuhn *et.al*, 2016).

Table 1. Problems for Each Assistance

No	Assistance	Problem
1	Bantuan Sosial Daerah (Bansosda) or Regional Social Assistance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unclear Target Recipient Criteria, so it is considered not right on target. 2. Villages were not involved in the initial data collection. 3. Recipient validation time was very short and sudden. 4. Validation results were not used (using initial data). 5. One-way communication.
2	Jaring Pengaman Sosial (JPS) or Social Safety Net	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unclear Target Recipient Criteria, so it is considered not right on target. 2. There were dual recipient with Bansosda recipient 3. Villages were not involved in the initial data collection. 4. Recipient validation time was very short and sudden. 5. Validation results were not used (using initial data). 6. One-way communication.
3	Bantuan Sosial Tunai (BST) or Cash Social Assistance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Target recipient criteria were not explained. 2. The data used were data on the poor population in 2012-2015 therefore, no longer relevant. 3. Recipient validation time was very short and sudden. 4. One-way communication. 5. In the 2nd and 3rd distribution, there were many recipient data that suddenly disappeared/decreased.
4	Bantuan Langsung Tunai Dana Desa (BLT DD) or Direct Cash Assistance from the Village Fund	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complicated and unreasonable criterias 2. Cannot be distributed in the right month 3. Has an element of subjectivity from the proposer

Source: Authors

It can be seen from the table above that each social assistance involving the

village government has accompanying problems. However, the accompanying

problems for each of these assistances do not appear to be sufficient in describing the social assistance problem for COVID-19 holistically. Because when viewed from a wider scope, there are derivative problems that arise from the entire distribution process of the four existing social assistance. The problem in question is more directly related to the community. Some of these problems include, (i) distribution time, (ii) type and amount (iii) quota, (iv) initial purpose change, and (v) communication. All problems, both accompanying and derivative problems, have destructive potential in the form of conflict. Both the vertical conflict between the village government and the donor institution, between the village government and its people, as well as horizontal conflicts between individuals in the community due to mutual envy and suspicion.

2. Derivative Problems

On the issue of derivative problems, the distribution time had caused a commotion in the community. The difference of distribution time led to protests from the community against the village government and the practice of mutual suspicion among the community. It is known that the four assistance that involved the village government in its distribution, were not distributed at the same time, but it was based on the policies and readiness of each donor institution. This system provides a loophole for protests and suspicions. People are envious of others who have received the assistance first. Due to the limited information, those who are envious, assume that there is only one kind of social assistance and no further assistance will

be given. The problem expands when people spread uncertain news to other people.

This problem has a direct impact on the village government. Many people came to the village office with emotional outbursts and sentimental narratives. Even most of the village officials admitted that their houses were often visited by the people. This problem occurred especially when the initial social assistance began to be distributed, which was around April to May 2020. Theoretically, the condition can be said to be in a time of crisis, which results in increased social conflicts and grievances and the battle between different social classes for subsistence and resources also increases. All of this is very dangerous for social cohesion so that social and political matters are very important for the interests of the government (Lu, *et.al*, 2020).

The type and amount is also a serious problem for the recipients. It is known that of the four assistance have different types and values, some are in the form of cash and some are in the form of basic necessities. The amount also varies, ranging from Rp. 200,000, Rp. 300,000 to Rp. 600,000. This difference provides a gap for commotion among the people and sentiment for the village government. Most of the recipients tend to prefer assistance in the form of cash. As a result, the recipients of basic necessities are envious of the cash recipients. Cash is more appealing because its designation can vary, it can be adjusted according to their needs. Unlike basic necessities, recipients cannot select items other than those included in the assistance package, and each recipient has unique needs. These things that can actually be

categorized as trivial, in reality, become serious, because the trigger for the "unfair" narrative stems from this problem.

For the village government, the problem of this type of assistance also has an impact on the economic system in the village. This is because the small traders who usually sell basic and daily necessities have less customers. It is different if all assistance is in the form of cash, it can be projected that the recipients will spend the money at the stalls around their homes, so that the village economy becomes stable and improved. According to Gerard *et.al* (2020), when households can buy goods and services at a reasonable price, cash assistance is more appropriate and more valuable than in-kind assistance.

The amount of each assistance is also a cause of commotion in its own right. The people assume that social assistance is intended for the poor, but they question why the poor still have to be categorized again. It is difficult for the village government to explain this to its citizens. Because in addition to the village government not being given detailed information about each assistance from the donor institution, the people needing an explanation are also in a hurry. Moreover, most of them have low educational background, so that information that should be able to suppress emotions actually adds to the emotional outburst.

The difference in nominal assistance is the result of a lack of coordination among social assistance institutions. According to Arfan (2021), the Indonesian bureaucracy has not been able to respond to strategic problems quickly during the Covid-19 pandemic,

one of which is due to overlapping policies that take a long time to implement. Overlapping policies have been seen in policies that are made excessively so that it leads to an uncertain situation for the community to follow, including in this case social assistance. As a result, policy failure is inevitable (Ayu, 2021).

The problem of the amount of assistance began to dampen. It was worth Rp. 600,000 but then BLT DD was reduced to Rp. 300,000 on the fourth distribution, and later on with time, people finally began to understand that this was based on the economic level of the recipient. Based on the village government's mapping, the people who will receive Bansosda and JPS are classified in the upper poor criteria, while BST recipients are classified as middle poor and BLT DD recipients are classified as low poor or the poorest.

Assistance Quota becomes one of the problems that is no less crucial and a factor in the attitude of people's sentiment towards the village government. The quota is the total social assistance distributed when all recipients are accumulated. There are still many people who have not received the assistance, because when it comes to the Covid-19 pandemic, many people who are not classified as poor are in fact also affected. Meanwhile, the data that came to the village did not touch those affected. In addition, the opportunity for the village to propose those who have not received assistance is also constrained by the short validation time, and therefore the proposed data cannot be truly valid. In the end, the village government could only make promises to the people who should have deserved assistance but were

constrained by quotas, that they would be proposed if there were other sources of social assistance, such as private institutions and individuals (donors), who have also contributed several times.

According to Juan & Wegner (2019), the provision of public social services is an important factor in determining the perception of a country. When a country fails to provide services equitably, people's trust in institutions is eroded and protests are more likely to occur. The lack of assistance quotas can be regarded as horizontal inequality in society. According to Stewart (2002) in Juan & Wegner (2019), horizontal inequality is multidimensional which consists of political, economic, and social elements. The first element refers to political participation, while the economic element includes distribution of assets, income and employment and the social element refers to unequal social outcomes such as life expectancy, access to education and access to other social services including social security and assistance.

The next problem that becomes a question from the village government and some people is the essence of the Covid-19 social assistance itself. If you refer to the initial purpose of the distribution of social assistance, it is basically aimed at people whose economy is directly affected by the pandemic. However, in reality, the implementation of social assistance, which is identical to the poor, is not much different. The data and the specified criteria target the poor, although most of them are not directly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. But if it were traced, the people affected by the economy due to the pandemic, which should have been

prioritized to receive assistance based on the original purpose, were not covered. Affected people such as farmers, UMKM (Micro Business), factory workers and laid off employees, were not listed as recipients of social assistance because the data that was sent to the village was the data of the poor. Apart from not being able to provide such assistance to affected people due to data constraints, the perception of the people, especially the lower middle class, has already assumed that social assistance is only for the poor. So if the village proposes people who are actually directly affected by the pandemic but whose daily life before the pandemic looks capable, will receive blasphemy and be considered not on target. This ambiguous fact indicates that the Covid-19 pandemic social assistance is no longer in accordance with its original purpose.

The problem of social assistance that is not in accordance with the original purpose is the impact of the lack of strict criteria for recipients. In the study of Unnikrishnan (2016), targeting social assistance recipients is a very important process. This is because the first, the purpose of any targeting scheme is the scarcity of economic resources, therefore, due to limited economic resources, it is important to identify the eligible recipients. Second, deepen understanding of the schemes used, for example consumption and household income schemes, the level of poverty and social welfare.

The last problem that greatly affects the previous problems is **communication**. The communication in question is communication between the village government and its people. The village government admitted that during the

distribution of Covid-19 social assistance there were communication problems with its people. The village government was not able to provide accurate information because the information needed from the donor was also very minimal. In addition to being very minimal, the pressure of distribution time between one assistance and another had resulted in a lack of information that should have been conveyed in its entirety and therefore not reaching all of the people. This is confirmed by the results of research by Putra *et.al* (2021), which states that the causes of poor government communication in the Covid-19 pandemic are caused by: (1) lack of coordination between levels of government; (2) the government's lack of ability to communicate with the public; and (3) an

incompetent crisis communication strategy.

At the village level, communication barriers are exacerbated by the decline in the ability and capacity of the RT heads due to old age. It is known that most of the RT heads in the five villages that are the focus of the research are still dominated by the older generation who are concerned with authority. It doesn't stop there, the communication problems are exacerbated by the recipients of the information. They come from various backgrounds, and not everyone is able to understand the information properly. Most of the responses that were first expressed were emotional attitudes and sentiment narratives. Communication problems may subside once social assistance is gradually distributed.

Table 2. Derivative Problems

No	Derivative Problem	Description
1.	Distribution Time	The difference in distribution time between each social assistance causes gaps in protest to the village government and suspicion among residents
2.	Type and Amount	Differences in the type and amount of social assistance have created a gap in protest at the village government and mutual envy among residents
3.	Assistance Quota	The total number of recipients still cannot cover all those in need, this causes a gap to protest the village government
4.	Not According to the Initial Purpose	Social assistance only targets the poor, residents who were previously not classified as poor but who were directly affected by Covid-19 were not covered.
5.	Communication	The lack of information from donor institutions causes the village government to experience limited communication to residents, coupled with the capacity constraints of the RT.

Source: Author

3. Village Government Wishes and Recommendations

The complexity of the distribution problems of the Covid-19 social assistance made the village

government wonder about the method that should be used by policy makers. Because the unstructured and untargeted distribution system has sacrificed the social relations between

the village government and its residents. Even though it is only wishful thinking, the method conveyed by the village government should not be underestimated, it can even be a recommendation, because after all, it is the village government who knows the facts on-site and has experience in dealing with its people directly. The village government considers that the most appropriate method of distributing social assistance should be the one that was promoted by BLT DD or Direct Cash Assistance from the Village Fund. It is known that all processes from data collection to decisions in BLT DD always involve elements of village institutions. However, the weakness of BLT DD is that the recipient criterias are very difficult to find and must be replaced by local village policies. In addition, elements of village or community institutions involved must be added to community representatives and women's elements, so that the proposal is more valid and far from subjective elements. That way, more and more elements of society will be able to verify.

When the expected method is like BLT DD, according to the village government, the social assistance donor should communicate beforehand with the service that oversees the village, namely the Dinas Pemberdayaan Masyarakat dan Desa (DPMD) or Community and Village Empowerment Service, because the systematic distribution of social assistance funds should be included in the Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Desa (APBDes) or Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget, so that after being included in the APBDes of each village, the village

government can immediately execute it. The hope that assistance is performed more like BLT DD also implies that social assistance must be in the form of cash, not basic necessities. The advantage of cash is that apart from minimizing price mark-ups that are prone to corruption, it is also to improve the village economy because the funds can be projected to be spent by recipients at their nearest stalls. Cash also expands the recipient's options based on their personal needs. In contrast to basic necessities, recipients can not get various choices even when each recipient's needs are different. The systematics expected by the village government is to provide opportunities for the people to participate in compiling an accurate and factual database of recipients. So that in addition to an accurate distribution of assistance, demonstrations, accusations, mutual envy and sentiments of the people to the village government can be minimized.

The method recommended by the village government can improve the distribution structure of social assistance, from the "fragmented" "based on the donor institutions", into one door system, that is through the APBDes mechanism. This mechanism will also make it easier for the donor institutions because they do not need to work on the recipient data, where the data will be done by the village government. The donor institutions are only tasked with providing funds. All processes in the field can be managed by the village government in a participatory manner. The donor institutions just need to simply wait for the accountability report after all the social assistance distribution processes are completed by

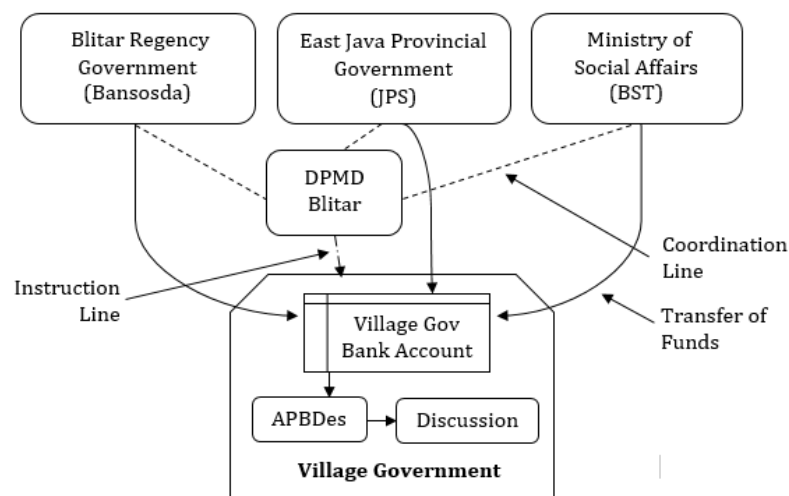
the village government. With this mechanism, the village government will feel more “humanized” because the current distribution process seems like dehumanization. The village government refers to itself as, “a relief courier”.

The village government acknowledged that if the management of social assistance is carried out together with the community in a participatory manner, it is not easy, due to a dual responsibility, both to the donor institutions and to the recipients. The village government realized that the recommended method is prone to community dissatisfaction. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare participatory settlement efforts, such as adding elements of the community involved so that data validation can be accurate and objective. Although full of challenges, this method is considered better than the current system. It is known that the village government became the first object of protest from the people, even when they did not actually have the authority to provide social assistance. If

the management is participatory, then when there are protests, at least the village government can explain the reasons clearly, chronologically and can be accounted for.

The implementation of BLT DD through the APBDes mechanism is a representation of the mandate of Law No. 6 of 2014 concerning Villages. Some of the inherent or attributive powers mandated by the law are holding village deliberations; compiling and establishing village plans; stipulating and implementing the Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBDes). Thus, basically the village law has state recognition of the village origin rights (the principle of recognition) and the determination of local-scale authority and local decision-making for the benefit of the village community (the principle of subsidiarity). The principle of recognition and subsidiarity provides an opportunity for the village to realize a common will in the spirit of the village as a subject not an object of development (Budiman *et.al*, 2019).

Picture 1. One-Stop Social Assistance Distribution Chart (Village Government Recommendations)



Source: Author

4. Deliberative Analysis

The village government's recommendations are basically closely related to the theorization introduced by the critical social scientist, Jurgen Habermas. Habermas coined the term "deliberative democracy," emphasizing the importance of dialogical and synthetic public participation that seeks truth rooted in facts, cares about the interests of the community, and is not doctrinaire (Muthhar, 2016). The recommendations submitted by the village government seek to make the truth rooted in facts, namely all information regarding potential recipients of Covid-19 social assistance must be discussed together by all elements of society based on actual conditions in the village. According to Habermas, the deliberative democracy model allows the people to be involved in the process of making laws and political policies. Deliberative democracy ensures that civil society is fully involved in law-making through various kinds of discourse (Muthhar, 2016). According to this theory, basically the BLT DD system has represented deliberative democracy. BLT DD has involved elements of the community or village institutions, so that prospective recipients of Covid-19 social assistance can be decided together with accountable justice.

On the other hand, Habermas' statement regarding the involvement of the people in the process of making laws and political policies contradicts the practice of distributing Covid-19 social assistance other than BLT DD. If you refer to Habermas's theory, it is clear that the cause of the problem with the distribution of Covid-19 assistance (other than BLT DD) was because it did not go through

participatory deliberation that guaranteed justice in the community. The problem of initial data collection that did not involve the village government was an inappropriate first step. This practice is inconsistent with Habermas's statement about seeking truth which is rooted in facts. Data and validation issues also contradict Habermas's statement about the importance of dialogic public participation. Because in practice it is very exclusive which seems to be done by the donor institutions themselves. With this exclusivity, only the social assistance donor has the power to deal with the data. According to Habermas, the liberative power of communicative democracy, plays an important role and is formed through a public discussion forum that is factually recognized for the overall claims, which are open to criticism and achieved discursively (Hardiman, 2009).

According to Habermas, community participation is very important, because this role can only be realized if there is good communication between the community and leaders (Muthhar, 2016). Meanwhile, in this case, communication has become one of the main problems, both communication between government institutions and communication between the community and the government. In fact, according to Habermas, communication has always been a basic characteristic of living together with humans (Hardiman in Muthhar, 2016). The communication applied by the donor institution is one-way and commanding in nature with a very short time limit. The time limit is related to the data validation process instructed to the village government. For Habermas, this practice has indicated

instrumental communication, which is not communication in the true sense because the goal is to achieve predetermined results, not mutual agreement resulting from the communication process (Suseno, 2000).

Instrumental communication is different from the concept offered by Habermas, that is rational communicative. Rational communicative is an action based on a deliberation process, namely when two or more individuals interact and coordinate their actions based on interpretation and agreement on the situation (Habermas, 1984 in Nanuru, 2011). In the process of distributing BLT DD, rational communicative actions have been seen since the official regulations were issued from the Ministry of Villages. Although at first the regulation also reaped contrast regarding its unreasonable requirements, the process of determining the candidate for social assistance was very participatory. Communicative rational action in BLT DD is manifested from elements of village institutions who discuss everything at every meeting at the village hall to determine potential recipients of social assistance and jointly ratify it legally.

In a deliberative democracy, public discourse space must meet two requirements: it must be free and critical. Free means that each party can speak anywhere, gather, and participate in political debates. While critical means being ready and able fairly to account for their opinions rationally (Haliim, 2016). In relation to the Covid-19 social assistance, the data collection process for BLT DD recipients has met both requirements mentioned above. Each element of the village institution has the freedom to

determine their opinions and suggestions. The proposal can be justified in a reasonable manner because it is based on actual facts and conditions. While social assistance other than BLT DD, the donor institutions do not provide space for public discourse so that the two requirements for deliberative democracy are certainly not fulfilled. The community and village government do not have the freedom to express their opinions, let alone be critical because the communication process is only built one way.

In essence, the emphasis of the deliberative democracy model consists of the participation of the people, the availability of space to be involved in the process (public space), and communication between the people as well as between the people and policy makers (Wijaya, 2020). In the practice of distributing Covid-19 social assistance, only BLT DD has applied the important emphasis above. On the other hand, Bansosda, JPS and BST did not implement it at all. This identification shows that in addition to BLT DD, Covid-19 social assistance is experiencing deliberative problems, which means that in the process of distributing social assistance from data collection to distribution, there is no consultation, weighing or deliberation mechanisms. Democracy can be deliberative if the process of giving reasons for a public policy is tested first through public consultation or in Habermas's language called public discourse (Muthhar, 2016).

Previous studies can be used as a reference that show how public participation has been used in formulating solutions to various public problems.

Maruhun and Asmony's research (2018) revealed that the reality of managing Dana Desa (DD) or Village Fund in East Lombok Regency is the practice of communication colonization, which is manifested in the dominance of the village head's power, budget mark-ups, fictitious accountability reports, lack of community involvement and non-transparency. The solution to this problem is to apply a transparent and process-oriented DD management pattern that involves the active role of the community. The solution in this research can be used as a reinforcement for the solution to the problem of distributing Covid-19 social assistance, that in overcoming problems that involve the community directly, participatory action from the community is needed.

According to Rahardjo Adisasmita in Yamin (2021), there are several reasons why people need to be invited to participate and encouraged to participate: (1) people really understand the state of their social and economic environment; (2) the community is able to analyze the causes and effects of various events that occur in society; (3) the community is able to formulate solutions to overcome the problems and obstacles faced by the community; (4) the community is able to utilize the development resources (SDA, human resources, funds, technology) they have to increase productivity in order to achieve the development goals of their community; and (5) the community, in effort to increase its capacity, is able to eliminate most of their dependence on outside parties. Based on this argument, it can be concluded that any policy, including social assistance, must prioritize the community's perspective.

According to Mankuebe & Nanicom (2020), community participation contributes to building an effective, efficient, responsive, transparent, and accountable government. Public policy formulation refers to the process by which different actors or role players come together to negotiate and exchange views on how public problems can be handled. Therefore, effective policy making or formulation is enhanced by strong collaboration between various relevant stakeholders. In terms of formulating recipients of Covid-19 social assistance, it will be more effective if various stakeholders are involved, such as RT/RW, BPD and community leaders.

Apriani's research (2016) stated that community participation in village budgeting in three provinces in Indonesia is still low, both in terms of attitude and knowledge. The way to achieve an increase in both is to encourage community participation in spatially based forums aimed at solving common problems. This can improve the argumentative ability in fighting for common interests, so that it can increase the degree of community participation from mere tokenism to citizen control. In relation to the Covid-19 social assistance, the hope of the distribution process being participatory has the aim that the community is not only the proponent but also as a controller (citizen control). Joint involvement in the discussion of determining recipients of social assistance has an aspect of mutual control regarding the eligibility to be proposed.

According to Putra A. S. (2017), village deliberations contribute to consensus-based issues and collective interests, such as poverty, local village-

scale economic enterprises, and others, while village head leadership offers an integral relationship between elites and interest groups. However, this argument cannot be applied in the process of distributing Covid-19 social assistance because it is constrained by the regulation of the government structure above it. Furthermore, according to Winarno (2017), the determination of public policies requires techniques and a technocratic comprehensive approach, while the implementation needs to be carried out in a democratic manner that prioritizes deliberative and participatory principles to provide optimal results for the community. This research further shows that democratic and participatory deliberation is the way that should be taken in dealing with a problem that is directly related to the community.

What needs to be considered from the process of community participation in the village is the dominance of certain parties who have "power" in which they often silence the opinions of small communities. According to Cahyono et al (2020) in deliberative democracy in the village, one of the main problems is how a deliberation can produce consensus, when sometimes there is intervention, starting from culture (patrimonial), village head leadership, intervention by strong people in the village, and intervention by super village government. One of the difficulties in reaching an agreement is how the people in deliberation can determine which ones are the most important to be immediately handled by the village government. This argument must be a concern and readiness when the problem of social assistance can be fully managed by the village government.

Conclusion

Based on the discussions above, it can be concluded that the problem of distributing Covid-19 social assistance faced by the village government in Blitar Regency can be classified into two groups, namely accompanying and derivative problems. Accompanying problems in each social assistance were unclear recipient criteria, non-transparent data collection, inaccurate data on target, short data validation and one-way communication. Meanwhile, derivative problems occur as a result of a series of existing social assistance distribution processes, such as differences in distribution time, differences in the type and amount of assistance, quotas, changes in initial goals and communication problems in the community. All of these problems have caused conflicts, both vertically and horizontally. Based on the problems above, the village government provides a recommendation that social assistance will be better distributed if it is through one-door with the APBDes mechanism. Village government recommendations are leaning towards participatory methods, which has been exemplified by BLT DD. This method in Habermas' critical study is closely related to the theory of deliberative democracy.

The theoretical analysis identified that among all social assistance involving the village government, only BLT DD used a participatory-democratic approach. Meanwhile Bansosda, JPS and BST used a top-down command method. In terms of communication, BLT DD has implemented rational communicative actions. Meanwhile, other social assistance used instrumental communication. Several relevant studies have also strengthened

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