

Formal Procedures for Poverty Alleviation Based on Mulgan's Public Strategy Theory in Singgahan District, Tuban

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ABSTRACT

Rural poverty in Indonesia, particularly in agrarian regions, remains a complex and multidimensional development challenge, one of which is in Singgahan District, Tuban Regency. This study aims to analyze the dynamics of poverty in Singgahan District, Tuban Regency using the Mulgan Public Strategy Theory framework, which encompasses five elements: purpose, environment, direction, action, and learning. The research employs a qualitative method with an exploratory participatory approach to explore the complexity of the poverty phenomenon through in-depth interviews with six informants, field observations, and documentation. The results indicate that although the village government has established strategic objectives for poverty alleviation through the enhancement of the agricultural sector and the distribution of social assistance, implementation faces various structural obstacles. The environment is marked by crisis-prone practices such as usury that entrap communities, lack of transparency in social assistance distribution, and limited access to education and healthcare services. Poverty occurs due to structural conditions within the government that are not focused on revolutionary efforts to eradicate poverty. Empowerment programs such as catfish farming and sewing training have yet to achieve optimal results, while Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDES) and Village Cooperative Units (KUD) do not function effectively as capital solutions. Program evaluation reveals a significant gap between government claims of success and community perceptions regarding target accuracy and program sustainability. The phenomenon of brain drain, characterized by high youth migration to urban areas, indicates limited opportunities for productive economic activities in the village. This research recommends reformulating strategic objectives with measurable targets, developing climate risk mitigation infrastructure, strengthening data verification systems for aid recipients based on technology, and increasing accountability and community participation in development decision-making.

Keywords: *Structural poverty, public strategy, community empowerment, Singgahan District, agricultural sector.*



INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a multidimensional development issue that remains a global challenge, including for Indonesia. Although Indonesia has successfully reduced the poverty rate from 24.6% in 2024 to 23.85% in March 2025 (BPS, 2025), the pace of decline has been slowing, and vulnerability to falling back into poverty remains high. This challenge becomes even more complex in rural areas, where the poverty rate (11.03%) is still significantly higher than in urban areas (6.73%) (Robi, 2025). The agricultural sector, which serves as the backbone of the economy in many rural regions, contributes 28.15% (Antara News, 2025) to the total rural workforce but is often characterized by low productivity, high dependence on climate, and weak bargaining power of farmers within supply chains.

Tuban Regency, East Java, exemplifies the paradoxes of Indonesia's development. On one hand, this regency is known as a food basket and a significant tobacco producer in East Java (Tuban Regency Government, 2017). On the other hand, Tuban has become a hub for large-scale economic transformation, with the presence of the Mega Grass Root Refinery (GRR) Project and an LNG plant, claimed to be among the largest in Southeast Asia (Oil and Gas Training Center, 2023). These projects are expected to act as engines of new economic growth, create jobs, and increase Local Revenue (PAD). However, the reality on the ground is often more complex. Land acquisition processes for industrial development have altered the agrarian landscape and potentially marginalized small landowner farmers, while the jobs created in the industrial sector require specific skills that local labor—previously engaged in agriculture—may not possess. This phenomenon is often referred to in development studies as "economic growth without inclusive job creation."

Singgahan District, located in the southern part of Tuban Regency, provides a highly relevant context for examining these poverty dynamics. Most of the community's livelihoods depend on agriculture, particularly rice, secondary crops, and tobacco cultivation on dry and rain-fed land. Such agricultural patterns are highly vulnerable to climate anomalies, such as El Niño, which triggers prolonged droughts, or La Niña, which causes floods and pest outbreaks. Studies by Prasetyo et al. (2022) (Mariyanto, 2025) in East Java's agrarian regions show that fluctuations in production due to climate change are a primary trigger of seasonal poverty cycles among farming households. Additionally, limited access to capital, post-harvest technology, and fair markets exacerbates this vulnerability (Panda, 2024).

Poverty alleviation policies that have been implemented, such as the Family Hope Program (PKH), Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT), and various other social aid programs, although they have helped maintain purchasing power and reduce household expenditure burdens among the poor, are considered insufficient to break the structural poverty cycle. These charitable approaches (in the form of aid) often do not address the root problems, namely the low productive capacity and limited access to economic resources. On the other hand, empowerment programs from the Ministry of Villages, PDT, and Transmigration, such as the People's Prosperous Poverty Renovation Program (BKRS) in East Java, which should be transformative in nature, often face implementation challenges such as coordination issues, overlaps, and uniform approaches that fail to consider local contexts (Pemerintah Kab Ciamis, 2024).

This is where Public Strategy Theory offers a powerful perspective to analyze this complexity. In Geoff Mulgan's book "The Art of Public Strategy" (Mulgan, 2009) public strategy theory focuses on how public organizations and governments can think and act strategically to achieve common goals within complex and often unclear environments. Mulgan emphasizes that public strategy differs from ordinary business strategy because it is not driven by market competition but involves mobilizing power, knowledge, and public commitment. This research will analyze how the local government of Tuban Regency, at the sub-district and village levels



in Singgahan, formulates and implements its public strategies to combat poverty in the agricultural sector. The focus of the analysis will be on the alignment between deliberate strategies (such as agricultural intensification programs or diversification efforts) with the social-economic realities of the community, local institutional capacity, and the impacts of industrial transformation. Thus, this study aims to contribute academically and practically in designing more strategic, contextual, and sustainable poverty alleviation interventions in rapidly transforming agrarian regions like Singgahan District, Tuban Regency.

2. LITERATUR REVIEW

2.1 Public Strategy Theory

Public strategy involves the systematic utilization of public resources and strengths by public agencies to achieve specific goals. In this context, the public refers to the people or communities of a nation. Mulgan also states that public strategy provides direction on how governments think and act with the best strategies, meaning providing clarity on what is to be achieved and how to achieve it. According to Mulgan (2009), public strategy is divided into five stages (Shefika Candra Kirana & Mawar Mawar, 2024)

1. Purpose; The effort to identify and determine why the goal is important and valuable, why it must be carried out by the agency, and what expectations are hoped to be achieved from implementing the goal. The purpose defines what the agency aims to achieve and what actions will be taken by the government.
2. Environment; The internal and external conditions influencing the environment of governance, requiring the evaluation of threats and opportunities that may emerge in the future, as well as assessing the capacity of the government organization to respond to these changes.
3. Direction; Leaders provide guidance or instructions to mobilize their subordinates, including coordination, communication, and motivation, to perform what needs to be done.
4. Action; The effort to determine what actions should be taken to achieve the previously set goals. This includes the strategies to be used to reach these objectives, along with the implementation of existing policies and work programs.
5. Learning; The process of analyzing the responses to the strategies that have been implemented from political and public perspectives, how these strategies are responded to, and evaluating what adjustments need to be made for future strategy implementation.

2.2 Public Administration Theory

Based on the journal “Thomas Woodrow Wilson’s Contributions to Administrative Thought and Its Critique” (Sokoh, 2020) by Gbosien Chris Sokoh (2020), Woodrow Wilson is regarded as the pioneer of public administration as a distinct discipline. Wilson emphasized that public administration must be separated from politics to make governance effective, rational, and based on scientific principles. He believed that administration is a technical part of government responsible for implementing policies and laws without political interference. This theory led to a distinction between politics and administration, with the political realm solely responsible for decision-making and public officials executing policies. Although this idea forms the foundation of modern bureaucratic reform, Wilson has been criticized for overemphasizing technocratic efficiency and neglecting the political dynamics and social complexities involved in policy implementation, especially in the context of poverty (Haeruddin et al., 2018; Yuliani & Santoso, 2024).



A rigid separation between politics and administration can actually weaken the effectiveness of poverty alleviation policies. In practice, policy implementation is always influenced by political realities, elite interests, and the needs of the poor at the local level. Policies may fail to address the root causes of poverty if public administration focuses only on efficiency and technical procedures without understanding the social context. Therefore, Wilson's ideas need to be contextualized: modern public administration should not only be efficient but also adaptive to community aspirations and sensitive to social inequalities to ensure that poverty reduction programs are truly effective and just(Susantinah Wisnujati Nugrahini, 2017).

2.3 Structural Poverty

In the journal "Etiology of Poverty: A Critical Evaluation of Two Major Theories" published by Stoeffler and Joseph (2020) (Stoeffler & Joseph, 2020), structural theory is considered to have a greater epistemological capacity than individualistic theories in explaining the causes of poverty. The structural perspective states that social, economic, and political structures that systematically create and maintain inequality are the root causes of poverty(Maulana Rifqi & Hasanah Dera Izar, 2024). From this perspective, poverty is seen as the result of oppressive social mechanisms such as discrimination in access to employment, low wages, unequal educational opportunities, and public policies that favor dominant groups. This indicates that neoliberal policies and capitalist systems exacerbate inequality by creating economic dependency and marginalizing low-income groups, thus making poverty a persistent and cyclical phenomenon across generations.

When economic, social, and political policies consciously or unconsciously benefit certain groups while oppressing others, this is referred to as structural poverty (Yuliani & Santoso, 2024). In this situation, poverty is not a natural condition; it results from structures and policies that sustain inequality in access to resources. According to the research by Stoeffler and Joseph (2020), this process of impoverishment is active because it is carried out by institutions and systems that regulate the uneven distribution of wealth and power. Therefore, a structural approach is crucial in poverty studies because it can reveal the main systemic causes of poverty and demonstrate that, rather than individual interventions, structural change is necessary to address poverty(Aliefia Vony & Wibawani Sri, 2025).

2.4 Policy Evaluation Theory

Policy evaluation is a scientific process aimed at assessing the extent to which a public policy has achieved its set objectives and has had a tangible impact on society. In social policy, evaluation is essential to ensure that programs genuinely address the issues they target, such as poverty alleviation(Amelia Cindy et al., 2023). Poverty reduction programs, as a strategic form of public policy, must be comprehensively evaluated to determine how effectively government interventions can improve community welfare and reduce inequality. William N. Dunn's model is a commonly used framework in policy evaluation and consists of six main elements: effectiveness, efficiency, adequacy, justice, responsiveness, and appropriateness (Rupiarsieh et al., 2025).

1. Efficiency; Assesses how effectively resources—such as budgets, personnel, and time—are used to maximize impact.
2. Adequacy; Emphasizes the program's capacity to adequately meet the needs of the poor, both in terms of the amount of assistance provided and the relevance of interventions.
3. Justice Ensures that the benefits of the program are distributed proportionally among target groups without discrimination or geographic inequality.
4. Responsiveness; Describes the program's ability to adapt to social and economic dynamics within the poor community, including the capacity to identify emerging needs.



5. Appropriateness; Assesses how targeted and precise the poverty alleviation program is in reaching the vulnerable groups without misuse or misallocation of assistance.

Thus, applying these six components of policy evaluation not only helps assess the technical performance of the program but also ensures that poverty reduction policies are effective, efficient, just, and oriented toward the sustainable empowerment of impoverished communities.

3. METHOD

This research employs a qualitative method with a case study approach to uncover the dynamics of poverty in Singgahan District, Tuban Regency. The qualitative approach was chosen because it can explore the complexity of the poverty phenomenon in depth while also attempting to understand the community's mindset to grasp the meanings, values, and social logic underlying the poverty conditions that occur.

The focus of this research is to analyze the dynamics of poverty in Singgahan District using Mulgan's public strategy theory. Specifically, this study emphasizes five elements of public strategy: purpose, environment, direction, action, and learning within the context of poverty alleviation policies. This focus is crucial to identify why various poverty reduction programs have not succeeded in breaking the poverty cycle in the area. It also examines the differences between policy design and implementation on the ground, as well as factors that hinder the success of public strategies in overcoming poverty in Singgahan District.

Singgahan District, Tuban Regency, East Java. This location was chosen because it represents the complexity of poverty issues in the northern coastal region of East Java. The selection was based on the specific characteristics of the area, which faces multi-dimensional poverty problems, including limited access to productive resources, environmental vulnerability, and the impacts of non-inclusive industrialization. Primary data are obtained directly from the field sources. Data collection begins with in-depth interviews. The main data sources are from interviews with the Head of Laju Kidul Village and several community members in Singgahan District, Tuban. Secondary data are collected from previous research articles, official government websites of Tuban Regency, and credible news articles supporting the research.

Interviews are a data collection technique used to investigate preliminary studies and informants to identify issues to be examined and researched. This technique is based on self-reporting or self-reporting according to individual wealth (Sugiyono, 2013). In this study, the researcher interviewed six informants: Pak Nur Amin, the Head of Laju Kidul Village; Nenek Sakilah; Devi; Sumiati; Bu Mu'awanah; and Santi Rahayu. Observation involves watching the object or phenomenon being studied. The researcher observes the poverty cycle conditions in Singgahan District, Tuban. The aim is to identify government actions related to the high poverty level and analyze subjective factors responsible for education and pre-infrastructure that are counterproductive. Observation is conducted through interviews with politicians, literature from government websites, previous journals, and books. Documentation is a process for obtaining specific data, including images, documents, and printed evidence. This focuses on documentation in the field.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

According to Mulgan (2009), the country's ability to identify and respond to community needs, especially those affected by economic deprivation, is a crucial component of public strategy. The systematic process of communicating collective goals, rationally allocating resources, and implementing targeted interventions to address complex public issues is known as public strategy (Perti Mudo et al., 2024). Three main components form the public strategy: the ability to analytically identify problems, mobilize resources, and respond to local situations. The first two dimensions relate to bureaucratic levels and political commitment. Factors influ-



encing the effectiveness of public strategies for poverty alleviation include accurate poverty data, consistent budget allocation, and sustainable intervention programs (Mulgan, 2009:38).

The government has a constitutional duty to formulate and implement broad poverty alleviation policies to ensure welfare and social justice for all. One of the government's priority public strategies is to create a prosperous, independent society that escapes structural poverty (Ilham Muhammad et al., 2023). To achieve this, resource redistribution, social protection programs, and capacity building of the poor through productive economic empowerment are essential. This aims for upward social mobility and a sustainable reduction of economic disparity (Lego Devianti et al., 2025). According to Mulgan's public strategy theory, access to productive resources and social security provided by the Tuban Regency government in Singgahan District and Laju Kidul Village contributes to the effectiveness of poverty alleviation strategies, as illustrated below:

4.1 Purpose

The purpose within the poverty reduction strategy in Singgahan Village is vital because it aims to reduce the likelihood of persistent structural poverty and create equitable community welfare. Interviews with the village head, who has served for six years since 2019, show that the main goals of the local government are to improve the economy and create jobs. Considering the socio-economic conditions of the 16 RTs (only RT 9 has relatively good economic conditions, while the rest are still categorized as underprivileged), the Singgahan Village Government must develop poverty alleviation strategies. This is reinforced by Bu Mu'awanah's statement indicating that the government does not give enough attention to the community, especially the elderly who are entitled to assistance but do not receive it (Aurelia Pramudita Rohmah & Sukmana Hendra, 2025).

Welfare is the primary development goal as the government strives to address poverty. The village head stated that the community faces many issues, such as rising living costs, high prices for basic needs, high unemployment, and low wages that do not meet basic needs. From this presentation, the objectives of the poverty reduction strategy become clearer (Suprianto & Chandra Septiary Pivit, 2023). The Singgahan Village Government hopes that the implemented plans will include fair distribution of social assistance, the formation of Village-Owned Enterprises (KUD) to help the lower-middle community meet basic needs, job creation—especially in agriculture—and the eradication of exploitative practices like usury or “bank setan” that trap the community in debt cycles.

4.2 Environment

Many interconnected structural problems remain unresolved; Singgahan Village is considered to be in a state of crisis. Bu Mu'awanah mentioned residents' complaints about frequent illnesses without access to the Indonesia Health Card (KIS). She also revealed that her husband, who had a KIS, suddenly could not use it because the validity period had expired, indicating that the health service system is not functioning properly. The village government conducts environmental analysis to avoid exploitative practices like “bank setan,” which have become common. The village head stated that residents usually borrow for daily needs, not for business, and must turn to other banks when due dates pass, leading to a phenomenon of “gali lubang tutup lubang” (digging holes to fill holes). In fact, three families left the village to escape debt to loan sharks. The lack of transparency in social assistance distribution is also a threat, as recipient data is considered unchangeable and mostly given to those close to village officials, causing residents to fear losing future aid rights.

In addition to identifying threats, analyzing environmental opportunities is also essential for evaluating strategy success. For example, trading in cut chickens has increased community prosperity and created economic opportunities for the local government. The younger



generation's increased entrepreneurial spirit, especially through MSMEs, is significant. The availability of social assistance programs from the central government, such as the Family Hope Program (PKH), Direct Cash Assistance (BLT), and KIS, although unevenly distributed, along with training in fish farming and sewing courses, provides strategic opportunities.

Furthermore, the Singgahan Village Government has organizational capacity to respond, including through village consultations involving the community with oversight from the district, increasing the number of Beneficiary Families (KPM) receiving BLT funds to 35, implementing empowerment programs such as catfish farming and sewing training, and establishing Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDES) as economic drivers. However, the village head admits a dilemma: the government cannot close access to legally registered loan sharks, and it cannot meet all community needs.

4.3 Direction

As explained by the village head, the government's strategy in Singgahan to combat poverty centers on improving the agricultural sector by converting forest land into farmland and planting corn. The strategic objectives include boosting the economy, creating jobs, and equitable distribution of social assistance, with an achievement target of over 80%. Strategic actions planned include evaluating aid recipients with the DT SCAN mechanism, purchasing forums to gather creative ideas from youth, conducting village consultations about three times a year, and organizing village clean-up campaigns in January and February (Desil 1-5). However, Bu Mu'awanah and Santi Rahayu noted that the implementation of these measures has not fully aligned with the strategic direction and targets. There are discrepancies between ongoing programs and community expectations, especially regarding aid evaluation and job creation efforts.

4.4 Action

To support the strategies or programs, Singgahan Village Government has taken several steps, such as: Social Assistance Distribution: A total of 35 KPM (recipient households) received BLT funds from the local government, but there was no specific focus beyond the allocated budget for BLT. The village head reported that targeting accuracy reached 80%. However, residents' stories indicated uneven distribution, with many recipients who were not eligible to receive aid, leading to conflicts and social jealousy. Community Empowerment Programs: Due to issues with location and facilities, programs like catfish farming and sewing training have not achieved significant results. Aid for trading businesses and youth-managed cooperatives has been implemented, but success depends on individual interest, with some choosing to migrate instead(Alyas Anggun Putri et al., 2025).

Management of BUMDES (Village-Owned Enterprises): BUMDES was established to promote local small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Consequently, KUD (cooperative) which should serve as a financing solution is not functioning properly. The village government faces challenges in shutting down formal loan sharks still operating. Public Services (Education and Health): Services are still very concerning. Poor access to quality education facilities and the often slow and expensive health clinic (Puskesmas) services are issues. Meanwhile, village deliberation forums (musrenbang) are less active and have limited impact on empowering the poor due to low participation and residents' fear of voicing their aspirations. On the other hand, mutual aid activities continue periodically, driven by a strong social solidarity spirit, but mostly limited to economic support. The youth organization (Karang Taruna) tends to be irregular and less creative.



4.5 Learning

4.5.1 Program Success Rate:

According to the village head, the targeting accuracy of social assistance reached 80%. However, community comments show significant differences. Bu Sumiati mentioned that aid is very helpful for the poor but is distributed unfairly, with many capable individuals receiving aid while more needy ones are overlooked. Mbak Santi stated that the distribution system causes conflicts due to unfairness and lack of transparency.

Bu Sumiati also said that the community empowerment programs "are not very effective," with mixed results. Bu Mu'awanah claimed that the PKK program has not significantly increased income. This indicates that the poor community members have not yet gained substantial economic benefits from existing programs.

4.5.2 Community Economic Conditions:

Bu Mu'awanah, who has lived in the village for 52 years, assesses her family's economic condition as better than before, but many challenges remain. Most women in the village are unemployed and lack businesses. One resident mentioned that young families in Laju Kidul are relatively well-off because most are engaged in trading chickens, showing that economic success mainly comes from individual initiative rather than government programs.

The village head admitted that out of 16 RTs (neighborhood units), only RT 9 is doing well, while most are still struggling. The biggest challenge is the practice of usury, which has caused three families to flee the village, highlighting systemic failure in providing healthy access to capital.

4.5.3 Education Access:

Most children in Laju Kidul only attend high school. Many drop out and do not continue to university due to economic constraints, lack of information, and access to programs like KIP Kuliah (Indonesian College Student Assistance).

Devi, who successfully enrolled in college with KIP Kuliah, shows that access to information and educational aid is crucial, but its socialization remains very limited.

4.5.4 Migration and Brain Drain:

The village head mentioned that most young people migrate to cities, rarely becoming farmers. Field research shows that many residents of Singgahan move to Jakarta to trade and develop businesses. This phenomenon indicates that the village has yet to provide adequate economic opportunities to accommodate the potential of its youth.

4.5.5 Community Feedback:

Various community members provided feedback on the approaches used. Bu Mu'awanah explicitly stated that because many parents do not receive aid, village officials are expected to conduct more frequent and comprehensive evaluations of aid recipients. She also hopes KUD can support the lower middle class.

One resident expressed concern that parents might become dependent on aid, and the hope is for everyone to succeed and progress without falling into the vicious cycle of bank credit dependency. Mbak Santi sharply criticized that residents are afraid to protest because data is claimed to come from above and cannot be changed, highlighting serious issues of transparency and accountability.

Devi, representing the educated youth, conveyed that the biggest problem is economic, and while the community supports, they also feel underestimated. After saving money working in the city, Devi hopes to share knowledge with her younger siblings.

Approach to Feedback:

Based on interviews, the Village Government of Singgahan responds to criticism by holding village deliberations involving the community, facilitating creative ideas from youth,



and striving to improve transparency in aid distribution, although some obstacles remain due to limited data availability.

However, community complaints have not been adequately addressed. Mbak Santi stated that the village officials do not respond well to residents' grievances.

5. CONCLUSION

This research finds that the implementation of poverty alleviation strategies has not yet been effective or optimal, based on the analysis of the dynamics of poverty in Singgahan District, Tuban Regency, using Mulgan's Public Strategy Theory. The village government has set clear goals to improve community welfare through economic development and job creation, but numerous structural obstacles hinder the achievement of these objectives. Environmental analysis indicates that Singgahan Village is in a state of crisis due to interconnected issues, including the harmful practice of usury, lack of transparency in social assistance distribution, and limited access to healthcare and education. Although ventures such as chicken trading and the entrepreneurial spirit of the youth offer economic opportunities, the capacity of the village government organization remains insufficient to address these problems comprehensively, particularly in providing healthy access to capital and closing practices of illegal lending that harm the community.

Programs that have been implemented, such as social assistance, sewing training, catfish farming, and the establishment of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDES), have not significantly improved the welfare of the poor from a guidance and action perspective. Community perceptions that aid distribution is unfair, non-transparent, and causes social conflicts contradict the claim by the village head that social assistance targeting accuracy reaches 80%. Due to issues related to location, facilities, and lack of program sustainability, existing empowerment programs have not succeeded in significantly increasing income. There are discrepancies between planning and implementation of strategies, as evidenced by the learning process from strategy execution; the village officials have not responded well to community feedback. Phenomena such as youth migration to outside areas, high dropout rates, and dependence on social assistance indicate that the poverty reduction strategies applied have not yet addressed the root causes of structural poverty. Therefore, a more comprehensive, transparent, and participatory approach is required—one that goes beyond charitable aid and focuses on productive economic empowerment, improved access to education and healthcare, and strengthening village institutions to sustainably break the chain of poverty.

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