

Impact of Social Protection Programs on West Kalimantan Poverty amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to determine how much influence Cash Transfer Assistance (BLT) and the Family Hope Program (PKH) have on the poverty rate in West Kalimantan Province during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study uses panel data regression analysis with the help of the EViews application, using data from 2020 to 2023. The panel data consist of observations across districts and cities within West Kalimantan Province. Data for the variable poverty rate were obtained from the West Kalimantan Central Bureau of Statistics, while data for the variables Cash Transfer Assistance and the Family Hope Program were sourced from the West Kalimantan Provincial Social Affairs Office. The results of the study show that the BLT variable has a significant and statistically significant effect on the poverty rate in West Kalimantan Province. Each 1% increase in BLT causes a decrease in the poverty rate by 0.021% Meanwhile, the PKH variable does not have a statistically significant effect on the poverty rate in West Kalimantan Province. The findings of this study escalate the importance of increasing social protection in the form of BLT, especially during times of crisis, to help reduce poverty rates. It is recommended that the local government in West Kalimantan maintain the BLT program by ensuring its proper and targeted distribution. Additionally, the optimization of BLT should be supported by providing complementary assistance, such as sanitation facilities, housing, and workforce training, to foster economic self-reliance among recipients and support sustainable economic development.

Keywords: *Poverty Rate, Social Protection, Cash Transfer Assistance, Family Hope Program, COVID-19 Pandemic*

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian adalah mengetahui seberapa besar pengaruh Bantuan Langsung Tunai (BLT) dan Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH) terhadap tingkat kemiskinan di Provinsi Kalimantan Barat dalam situasi pandemi COVID-19. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis regresi data panel dengan bantuan aplikasi EViews, menggunakan data dari tahun 2020-2023. Data panel terdiri atas observasi dari seluruh kabupaten dan kota di Provinsi Kalimantan Barat. Data untuk variabel tingkat kemiskinan diperoleh dari Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Kalimantan Barat, sedangkan data untuk variabel Bantuan Langsung Tunai dan Program Keluarga Harapan bersumber dari Dinas Sosial Provinsi Kalimantan Barat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa variabel BLT memiliki pengaruh negatif dan signifikan secara statistik terhadap tingkat kemiskinan di Provinsi Kalimantan Barat. Setiap kenaikan BLT sebesar 1% menyebabkan penurunan tingkat kemiskinan sebesar 0,021%. Sementara itu, variabel PKH tidak memiliki pengaruh signifikan secara statistik terhadap tingkat kemiskinan di Provinsi Kalimantan Barat. Temuan penelitian ini mengeskalasi pentingnya peningkatan perlindungan sosial dalam bentuk BLT, khususnya di masa krisis, untuk

membantu mengurangi tingkat kemiskinan. Pemerintah daerah di Kalimantan Barat disarankan untuk mempertahankan program BLT dengan memastikan penyalurannya tepat sasaran. Selain itu, optimalisasi BLT dapat dilakukan melalui penyediaan bantuan penunjang, seperti fasilitas sanitasi, perumahan, dan pelatihan keterampilan kerja, guna mendukung kemandirian ekonomi masyarakat serta mendorong pembangunan ekonomi berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Tingkat Kemiskinan, Perlindungan Sosial, Bantuan Langsung Tunai, Program Keluarga Harapan, Pandemi COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

To address poverty and improve welfare, government intervention programs are crucial as they represent key objectives of national development (Resina, Kamarni, & Putra, 2023). This perspective is supported by Nouvan, Aida, Gunarto, & Suparta (2023), who highlight the significance of government intervention programs in addressing poverty. Similarly, Ambya, Nairobi, & Rizqiandri (2019) emphasize that poverty alleviation is a critical issue for achieving societal welfare and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals.

However, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic had an unexpected impact on Indonesia, disrupting the government’s efforts to reduce the poverty rate (Suryahadi, Izzati, & Suryadarma, 2020). The pandemic hindered progress in poverty alleviation (Elisandi, Huruta, & Basukianto, 2023) and even exacerbated the poverty rate (Khosla & Jena, 2023). However, poverty rates in West Kalimantan show a different trend. During the COVID-19 pandemic, poverty rates in West Kalimantan declined (see Table 1). Table 1 illustrates that from 2020 to 2023, the poverty rate in West Kalimantan province decreased from 7.17% to 6.71%. Remarkably, during the pandemic, the poverty rate in West Kalimantan was even lower than the targeted poverty rate of 6.92% set by the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) of West Kalimantan Province for 2023.

Table 1.

Poverty Rates in West Kalimantan Province, 2020–2023

Year	Percentage (%)
2019	7.49
2020	7.17
2021	7.15
2022	6.73
2023	6.71

Source: (BPS, 2024)

The economic challenges faced by many households in Indonesia contributed to persistent low income levels, which constrained savings, purchasing power, and investment (Udi, Restiatun, & Rosyadi, 2023). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Indonesia and the Provincial Government of West Kalimantan, as in the pre-pandemic period, implemented social protection programs to alleviate poverty. These included the Cash Transfer Assistance (Bantuan Langsung Tunai or BLT) and the Family Hope Program (Program Keluarga Harapan or PKH), both aimed at assisting households in meeting their basic needs (Yulianto, 2021). Several prior studies have examined the influence of these social assistance programs, particularly BLT and PKH, on the poverty rate reduction. For examples the research by Firdaus, Rafiuddin, & Mukrabin (2021); Noor, Fibriyanita, & Subhan (2024); Retnaningsih, Rahayu, Gitya, & Zulkarnaen (2024) demonstrated that BLT significantly boosted household consumption, contributing to the poverty

rate reduction. However, these findings differ from studies by Suparman, Washillah, & Juana (2021) and Dewi & Andrianus (2021) which suggested that BLT had no significant effect on poverty alleviation. Meanwhile, studies on PKH conducted by Fadhli & Nazila (2023); Humairoh (2021); Najwa, Amanda, Fatmawati, Al-Kalam, & Wahyudi (2024); Salsabila, Muna, Pradana, & Nurcahya (2024); Setyawardani, Paat, & Lesawengen (2020) Sitepu (2022) generally found that PKH reduced the poverty rate. However, these findings have been contested. Batubara (2023) argued that PKH had no significant impact on poverty reduction, while Suarni, Sylvia, & Sultan (2022) even claimed that PKH contributed to an increase in the poverty rate.

Most prior studies, as outlined above, focused on the long-term impact of social protection programs on poverty rate reduction. Only a few studies, such as Cecchini (2014), have examined their short-term effects. Cecchini (2014) highlighted that social protection programs, such as conditional cash transfers and non-contributory pensions for the elderly and persons with disabilities, were key factors in short-term poverty reduction. Cecchini (2014) emphasized that the expansion and enhancement of social protection in Latin America significantly reduced poverty and inequality, addressing key government challenges in the region. The Cecchini (2014) model underscores the importance of social protection programs in poverty alleviation, predicting that government policies in this area can reduce poverty in the short term. The Cecchini (2014) model underscores the importance of social protection programs in poverty alleviation, predicting that government policies in this area can reduce poverty in the short term.

However, Cecchini's model has not accounted for the implementation of such programs during a pandemic—a unique short-term phenomenon. Moreover, there is a lack of research examining the effectiveness of these government policies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, this study seeks to test the applicability of Cecchini's model in explaining the short-term reduction in the poverty rate in West Kalimantan during the pandemic. The primary research question addressed in this study is whether the decline in the poverty rate in West Kalimantan Province resulted from social protection programs, namely BLT and PKH, as predicted by Cecchini's model. This research focuses on these two social protection programs because they were specifically implemented to support communities during the COVID-19 pandemic in West Kalimantan Province.

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the research objective, which is to estimate the impact of BLT (Cash Transfer Assistance) and PKH (Family Hope Program) on the poverty rate in West Kalimantan Province during the COVID-19 pandemic, this study employs an empirical model based on Cecchini (2014) framework as follows:

$$P_{it} = a_0 + a_1BLT_{it} + a_2PKH_{it} + e_{it} \quad (1)$$

Where P represents the poverty rate, BLT denotes the Cash Transfer Assistance program, and PKH refers to the Family Hope Program. The symbol i represents the district or city, while t represents the year. Furthermore, a_0 is the constant term, and e is the residual. The parameters of primary interest in this study are a_1 and a_2 . The parameter a_1 indicates the magnitude of the negative effect of BLT on P , where $a_1 < 0$ is expected. Similarly, a_2 represents the magnitude of the negative effect of PKH on P , where $a_2 < 0$ is anticipated.

Based on the empirical model in equation (1), the hypotheses in this study are as follows: (1)

Cash Transfer Assistance (BLT) has a negative impact on the poverty rate. (2) The Family Hope Program (PKH) has a negative impact on the poverty rate.

The research utilizes secondary data, which are structured as panel data by combining data from 12 districts and 2 cities in West Kalimantan Province for the period 2020–2023. The data include the poverty rate statistics obtained from the West Kalimantan Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) and BLT and PKH data sourced from the West Kalimantan Provincial Social Affairs Office. For analytical purposes, all data are transformed into their natural logarithmic forms.

The analysis technique employed is panel data regression analysis using E-Views software. To estimate the model parameters in the above empirical model, three analytical techniques are applied: Ordinary Least Squares (OLS), Fixed Effects (FE), and Random Effects (RE).

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Based on the panel data model selection tests, the Random Effect Model (REM) was selected as the most appropriate specification for further analysis. The decision was made by comparing Common Effect, Fixed Effect, and Random Effect models using standard statistical tests, including the Chow Test, Hausman Test, and Breusch-Pagan Test. A summary of the test reluts is provided in Table 2.

Table 2.
Summary of Panel Data Model Selection

Test Type	Models Compared	p-Value	Decision	Selected Model	
Chow Test	CEM vs FEM	0.9995	$p > 0.05$; Choose CEM	Common Model	Effect
Hausman Test	FEM vs REM	0.4339	$p > 0.05$; Choose REM	Random Model	Effect
Breusch-Pagan Test (LM)	CEM vs REM	0.0081	$p < 0.05$; Choose REM	Random Model	Effect

Note: CEM = Common Effect Model; FEM = Fixed Effect Model; REM = Random Effect Model. Source: Data Processed by Authors

To ensure the validity of the regression model, classical assumption tests were performed, including normality, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, and autocorrelation tests. The normality test was conducted using the Jarque-Bera method (Madany, Ruliana, & Rais, 2022), while the multicollinearity test examined the correlation coefficient between independent variables. According to Meiryani (2021), a correlation coefficient (r) greater than 0.8 indicates the presence of multicollinearity. Heteroscedasticity was tested using the Glejser test, meanwhile autocorrelation was assessed through the Durbin-Watson statistic. The summary of these tests is presented in Table 3.

All classical assumptions have been fulfilled. The Jarque-Bera test produced a p-value greater than 0.05, confirming the normal distribution of data. The correlation coefficients among independent variables were well below 0.8, indicating no multicollinearity. The Glejser test returned p-values above the 5% threshold, confirming that the model is free from heteroscedasticity. Lastly, the Durbin-Watson statistic value lies between the lower (dU) and upper (4-dU) bounds, indicating no signs of autocorrelation.

Table 3.
Summary of Classical Assumption Tests

Assumption	Test Method	Key Statistic/Criteria	Result/Value	Conclusion
Normality	Jarque-Bera	Probability (p-value)	0.0666	Data is normally distributed ($p > 0.05$)
Multicollinearity	Correlation Matrix	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Max $r = 0.2099$	No multicollinearity ($r < 0.8$)
Heteroscedasticity	Glejser Test	Probability (p-values)	BLT = 0.1004; PKH = 0.2225	No heteroscedasticity ($p > 0.05$)
Autocorrelation	Durbin-Watson Statistic	DW Value	1.7326	No autocorrelation (between dU and 4-dU)

Source: Data Processed by Authors

After selecting the Random Effects Model as the best-fitting model and ensuring it meets the BLUE (Best Linear Unbiased Estimator) criteria through classical assumption testing, the empirical model can be estimated. Hypothesis testing is conducted through the F-test and t-test. The F-test evaluates the joint significance of all independent variables on the dependent variable (Otheliansyah & Hizwar, 2023), while the t-test examines the individual contribution of each predictor variable. The goodness-of-fit of the model is assessed using the adjusted R-squared value (Ghozali, 2016). The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4.
Summary of Regression Results

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob. Value
C (Constant)	7.61239	0.00343	2222.3310	0.0000
BLT	-0.00021	5.63000	-3.7849	0.0004
PKH	0.00018	0.00014	1.2908	0.2024
R-squared	0.2592			
F-statistic	9.2742			
Prob (F-stat)	0.0004			

Note: Dependent variable = Poverty Rate. Source: Data Processed by Authors

The regression results show that the BLT variable has a statistically significant negative effect on poverty rate, as indicated by its t-statistic and probability value ($p = 0.0004 < 0.05$). In contrast, the PKH variable has a positive but statistically insignificant effect ($p = 0.2024 > 0.05$). The overall model is significant based on the F-test ($p = 0.0004 < 0.05$), and the R-squared value indicates that 25.92% of the variation in poverty rate is explained by BLT and PKH. The remaining 74.08% is influenced by factors outside the scope of this model.

Based on the hypothesis testing of the Random Effect Model in Table 4, the BLT variable shows a statistically significant negative effect on the poverty rate in West Kalimantan Province. This finding aligns with previous studies (Batubara, 2023); (Najwa et al., 2024); (Otheliansyah & Hizwar, 2023); (Putra, Dirli, Andriani, & Reza, 2023); (Wati, Basuki, & Suriadi, 2023). It also corroborates the theory and observations of Cecchini (2014), which suggest that government assistance in the form of BLT (Cash Transfer Assistance) can reduce the poverty rate, indicating a negative effect. The significant negative influence of BLT on the poverty rate could be attributed to the program's efficiency compared to other forms of assistance, such as PKH (Family Hope Program). BLT allows recipients greater control over how the assistance funds are utilized, enabling them to allocate the money according to their specific needs. Moreover, BLT demonstrates a quicker response to crises, such as natural disasters or pandemics (Putra et al.,

2023). Additionally, BLT has the potential to boost the purchasing power of beneficiaries, thereby stimulating regional economic growth. These findings highlight the relative effectiveness of BLT in reducing the poverty rate, particularly in the short term during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

In contrast to the significant impact of BLT, the results from the Random Effect Model in Table 4 indicate that the PKH variable does not have a statistically significant effect on the poverty rate in West Kalimantan Province. This finding aligns with previous research by Batubara (2023) and Resina et al. (2023). However, most prior studies found that social assistance programs like PKH (Family Hope Program) play a role in alleviating the poverty rate (Fadhli & Nazila, 2023); (Humairoh, 2021); (Najwa et al., 2024); (Salsabila et al., 2024); (Setyawardani et al., 2020); (Sitepu, 2022). Poverty arises due to the inability of households to meet their basic needs. Social assistance programs like PKH aim to address this issue by providing resources to fulfill those needs. The lack of significant impact from PKH on the poverty rate in West Kalimantan Province may be due to various factors, including program design, stringent eligibility requirements, frequency of assistance, and administrative management. Because PKH has a structural character, its effects tend to manifest over the long term. Despite its potential, the impact of PKH appears insufficient to significantly improve the situation of poor households. Furthermore, the nominal value of assistance provided is relatively small and does not keep pace with the escalating needs of the community. These limitations may explain why PKH does not significantly influence the poverty rate reduction in this context.

To better understand these differing impacts, it is useful to compare the characteristics and mechanisms of BLT and PKH programs. BLT and PKH are fiscal instruments within Indonesia's social spending framework. Both share similarities, particularly in reflecting the redistribution and economic stabilization functions of fiscal policy. They are tools for poverty alleviation. However, they also differ in key aspects. On one hand, BLT is situational, flexible, and funded by both central and regional governments, including through Village Funds. The BLT program serves as a crucial poverty alleviation measure, providing a solution to maintain household consumption levels (Wati et al., 2023). Specifically, BLT represents government expenditure aimed at improving the purchasing power of poor and vulnerable populations so they can fulfill their basic needs, including food, education, and other essential services (Carolina & Andini, 2021). BLT is expected to bring transformative changes by enhancing human quality, thereby enabling individuals to serve as vital assets in economic development aimed at improving societal welfare (Nina & Rustariyuni, 2020). On the other hand, PKH is structural and long-term, and it is funded by the APBN (State Budget) by the central government.

Examining the budget allocations provides additional context to understand the scale and prioritization of these programs. At the national level, the government of Indonesia has made significant efforts to distribute BLT, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, in 2023, the Ministry of Social Affairs allocated a budget of IDR 78 trillion, of which IDR 45.3 trillion was directed toward BLT (Kemensos, 2023). In West Kalimantan Province, during the period 2020-2023, the government distributed, on average, around IDR 1.59 trillion annually in BLT. This assistance aims to reduce the burden on poor families, particularly in fulfilling food and health needs and supporting village-level economic recovery. In contrast, at the national level in 2023, the Family Hope Program (PKH) received an allocation of IDR 8.7 trillion for 10 million beneficiary households. In West Kalimantan Province, during the same period (2020-2023), the government distributed, on average, around IDR 495.51 billion in PKH funds annually. The PKH program functions as a tool for the social and economic empowerment of poor families, with the

goal of breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

PKH implementation involves facilitators and education groups and includes periodic supervision to ensure long-term impact. When comparing the average distribution values over the study period, notable trends emerge. Overall, during the 2020-2023 period, the average value of BLT distributed in West Kalimantan Province was 3.3 times greater than that of PKH. In terms of trend, the ratio decreased from 4.48 in 2020 to 4.35 in 2023. However, in 2022, the opposite occurred, as the value of PKH was 2.51 times greater than that of BLT.

Given these fluctuations and the relative scale of allocations, it is important to evaluate their impacts carefully. The more substantial impact of BLT compared to PKH in reducing the poverty rate in West Kalimantan Province during the study period suggests that these allocations warrant further evaluation. Moving forward, the government should prioritize direct subsidies or assistance in the form of BLT to enhance the purchasing power of poor households. Such an approach could contribute more effectively to poverty alleviation while stimulating economic growth in vulnerable regions.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to analyze the effects of Cash Transfer Assistance (BLT) and the Family Hope Program (PKH) on the poverty rate in West Kalimantan Province. The results indicate that only the BLT variable has a statistically significant effect on the poverty rate, with a negative direction. Meanwhile, PKH shows a positive but statistically insignificant effect. These findings suggest that an increase in BLT distribution leads to a reduction in the poverty rate. However, despite its potential, the effectiveness of BLT as social assistance cannot fully guarantee or serve as a definitive solution to poverty alleviation. In the long term, government subsidies in the form of social assistance spending may even foster dependency. Therefore, the government should focus its attention on the distribution of BLT as well as its integration as an investment in human resource development to sustain improvements and foster development.

These empirical patterns align with existing literature on the role of cash transfer programs in poverty alleviation. The findings of this study generally support previous research indicating that BLT (Cash Transfer Assistance) significantly reduces poverty through its flexible and rapid disbursement mechanism. This suggests that BLT plays a key role as a direct and immediate determinant in lowering poverty levels. In contrast, consistent with several prior studies, this research does not find strong evidence that PKH (Family Hope Program) significantly reduces the poverty rate within the observed short-term period, possibly due to its structured design and focus on long-term human development outcomes, which may require more time to materialize.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed. First, the local government of West Kalimantan should maintain the BLT program because recipients have greater control over the use of the assistance, enabling them to spend it according to their specific needs. Second, the local government of West Kalimantan should reach impoverished populations in remote and underdeveloped areas by providing complementary support to BLT, such as improved sanitation, housing facilities, and continuous awareness campaigns about the importance of health. Third, the local government of West Kalimantan should promote BLT support initiatives, such as expanding access to capital and providing workforce skill development training, to foster entrepreneurial spirit among communities.

For future research, this study recommends examining the differential impacts of BLT during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Comparative studies between pandemic and post-pandemic conditions would help determine whether the effectiveness of BLT is consistent over time or context-dependent. Additionally, this study suggests integrating the analysis with qualitative approaches, including interviews and focus groups with beneficiaries, to offer deeper insights from the quantitative results.

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