

Original Article

Social Welfare Condition in Indonesia & The Need for Research and Innovation

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Abstract - The purpose of this study is to evaluate the condition of social welfare in Indonesia and the global context, including the impacts of COVID-19 pandemics on Social Welfare. Furthermore, this study also attempts to emphasize the role of research and innovations in improving social welfare policies. The efforts made in social research supports innovation in the social welfare policies. Research is fundamental for innovation to take place in order to implement social welfare policies more effectively and efficiently. The COVID-19 pandemic causes a number of challenges from the perspective of social welfare, both nationally and globally. However, from another point of view, the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic actually open opportunities for further research and innovation in the social welfare field.

Keywords — COVID-19, Innovation, Research, Social Policy, Social Welfare.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Government of Indonesia has stated its "Vision for 2045", which lays an ambitious path that will require fundamental and considerable investments in human capital and social protection. The vision for 2045, when the country celebrates 100 years of its independence, is to achieve high-income status and reduce poverty to nearly zero. It translates into the goal of being a developed country with an annual income of Rp. 320 million per capita. In order to successfully achieve such a vision, establishing policies that focus on developing its human capital, such as providing growth and income opportunities for its citizens and a comprehensive and inclusive social policy, are essential.

According to Deacon (2007), social policy is a set of guidelines and interventions for improving, maintaining, or creating working environments that are conducive to human health. It consists of social safety nets, employment-generating labour market policies, and social expenditures. Social welfare can be considered as a part of a safety nets policy. As such, the dissemination of social welfare facilities heavily depends on the social policies implemented by the

government (Herrick, 2009). Dunn (2015) also supported this argument by stating that all policy-making activities, including social policy, are by nature political processes. This implies that the policies defined by a government are influenced considerably by the political powers in play in the country at a given time.

There are various definitions of social welfare, in which most of them focuses on fulfilling basic individual needs and improving the quality of life. DuBois and Miley (2005) define social welfare as social provisions and processes directly concerned with the prevention and treatment of social problems, the development of human resources and the improvement of quality of life. In a similar tone, Herrick (2009) defines social welfare as what is required to provide individuals with the services and opportunities they need to live happy and healthy lives. On the other hand, the UN defines social welfare as activities organized to help individuals or communities to meet their basic needs and improve their welfare in accordance with the interests of family and society (Suharto, 2006).

In Indonesia, the policies of social welfare are regulated under the Law (Undang-Undang) No 11/2009 regarding Social Welfare. The Law defines social welfare as a condition in which the material, spiritual, and social needs of the citizen are fulfilled in order for them to live properly and be able to develop themselves to perform their social duties. This law was later changed into Law No 14/2019 regarding Social Worker, which modifies the definition of Social Welfare into Social Functioning ("Keberfungsian Sosial"). Social functioning is a condition that allows the individual, family, group, and society to fulfil their basic needs and rights, to perform their social duties and roles, as well as solve their problems in life. This very change in the definition itself marks the change of the government's perspective towards social welfare.

The Indonesian Ministry of Social Affairs (2019) further specifies the subjects of social welfare efforts by the government. They explain that the development of social welfare is focused on touching "socially excluded people" by providing social welfare services. These "excluded groups" who were the subject of social welfare development policies



include the poor, physically or mentally disabled people, the elderly, neglected children and children in conflict with the law, the victims of drug abuse, ex-terrorist prisoners, and other people which requires social welfare services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused major impacts on social welfare conditions in Indonesia and also in countries around the world. Disruption in common social welfare practices caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the governments to pay more attention to social welfare policies and the social works to innovate.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the condition of social welfare in Indonesia and the global context, including the impacts of COVID-19 pandemics on Social Welfare. Furthermore, this study also attempts to emphasize the role of research and innovations in improving social welfare policies. This study is organized as follows: first, the study reviews a number of literature related to social welfare, focusing on social welfare policies in Indonesia. Then the study briefly discusses the methodology used in the research. Afterwards, in the discussion section, the study reviews the condition of social welfare both in Indonesia and Global contexts. Lastly, the study discusses the importance of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the ultimate aim for social works.

II. REGULATIONS AND POLICIES OF SOCIAL WELFARE IN INDONESIA

The Government of Indonesia issued Law No. 14/2019 regarding Social Workers in 2019. In the Law, the Government has laid out fundamental standards and norms

for Social Works. Some notable regulations in the Law include the Principles & Purposes of Social Works, Social Work Standard of Practices, Social Worker Professional Education, Registration, and License, Social Worker Rights and Obligations, and Social Worker Organizations. This Law can be seen as a progressive step towards better governance of Social Works in Indonesia.

According to IMF, as mentioned in Deacon (2007), the social welfare strategy of Indonesia can be categorized into three main aspects, the Social Assistance, Community Empowerment, and Micro-enterprise program. Social assistance to the poor is a typical policy included in social welfare policies in numerous countries, which Sachs (2005) and IMF (2014) deemed necessary to support their daily lives and furthermore to help them graduate from the poverty status. Sumodiningrat (2007) argues that direct cash assistance (Bantuan Langsung Tunai, BLT) is an obvious social assistance measure due to being practical and effective, as well as having low operational cost. Furthermore, Irawan & Prihantika (2017) describe the components of social assistance aspects of the Indonesian social welfare strategy. It comprises a set of policies including assistance to the poor household (Program Keluarga Harapan, PKH), subsidized rice (Rastra), non-cash food aid (Bantuan Pangan Non-Tunai, BPNT), assistance for poor students (Program Indonesia Pintar, PIP), and health insurance paid by the government (PBI-JKN). Some features of the social assistance program are described in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Main Social Assistance Programs in Indonesia

Program	Purpose	Targeted Coverage	Budget (IDR billion)	Benefit (nominal/average)	Implementing agency
PKH	Poverty reduction, strengthened human capital	10 million families	34,300	Conditional cash transfers - IDR 315,000 / month / HH (average)	Ministry of Social Affairs
PIP	Lower costs of attending school	10mn HHs / 20 million students	11,200	cash transfers - IDR 100,000 / month / HH (average)	Ministry of education and Religious Affairs
Sembako	Boost food security and improve nutrition	15.6 million HHs	20,800	IDR 150,000 / month / HH for rice, eggs and others (nominal)	Ministry of Social Affairs
PBI-JKN	Preventing health shocks	92.4 million people	26,700	Health service fee waiver (nominal)	BPJS & Ministry of Health

Source: World Bank (2020), compiled from MoF Financial Note and Susenas.

As for community empowerment, the policies include training of practical skills and financial management, village infrastructures program. Furthermore, a project to increase income for farmers, fisheries and coastal communities, empower micro-enterprises through microfinance and microcredit programs for the poor.

Lastly, to support micro-enterprise development, the Indonesian government have launched policies such as microfinance and microcredit program aimed at the poor community to improve their small businesses.

III. METHODOLOGY

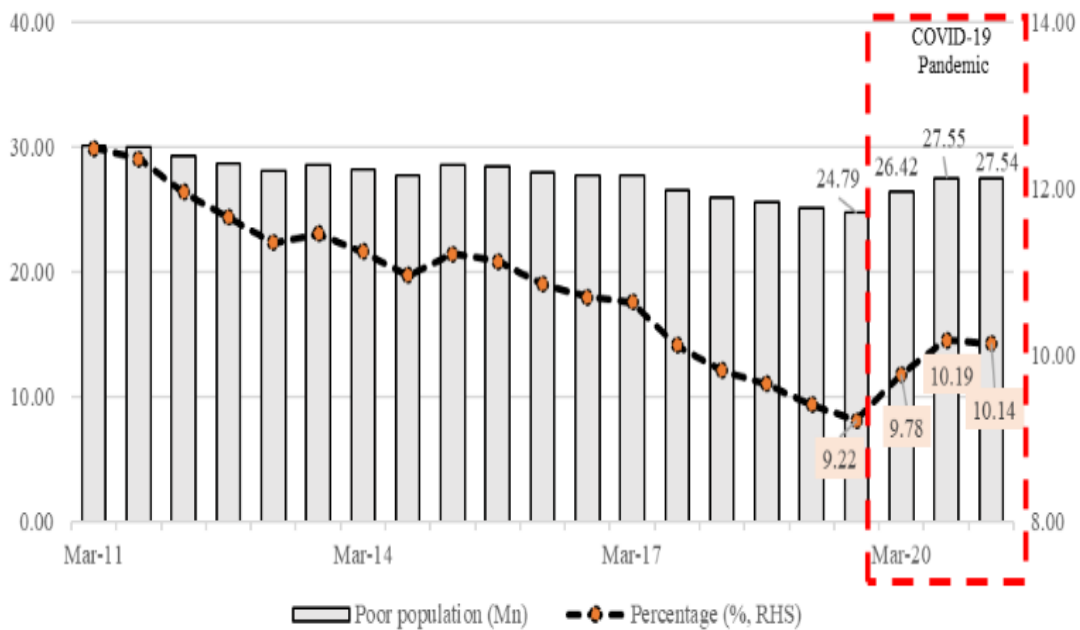
This study aims to evaluate the condition of social welfare in Indonesia and international, especially related to the impacts the COVID-19 had on Social Welfare, and to emphasize the role that research and innovations in Social

Welfare can fill in order to further improve and strengthen social welfare policies. This study is qualitative in nature and mainly comprises a set of in-depth literature reviews. Supporting data and analysis is also included in some areas of the research.

IV. DISCUSSIONS

A. Condition of Social Welfare in Indonesia & Global

As mentioned before, the government of Indonesia has stated a vision for 2045, which is to achieve high-income status and reduce poverty to nearly zero. As the vision statement implies, one of the most straightforward indicators for success is the number of people living in poverty. On this aspect, as shown in Fig 1, the number of poor population and the percentage of poor people in Indonesia exhibits a decreasing trend from 2011 to 2019.



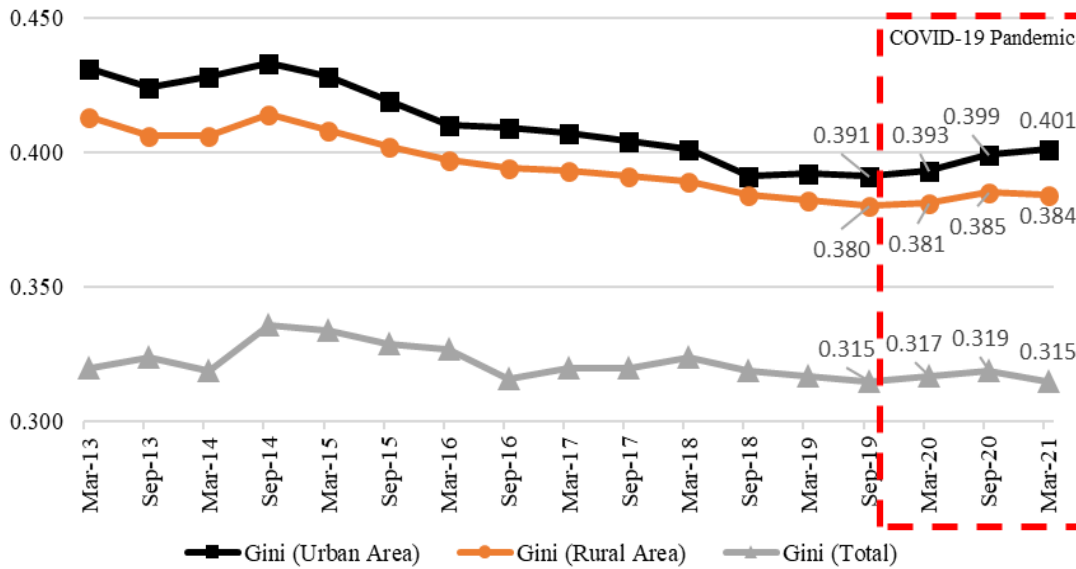
Source: BPS

Fig. 1 Number and Percentage of Poor Population in Indonesia, 2011-2021

However, it is apparent that from the beginning of 2020, the number of the poor population rose for at least 2 semesters (H1 and H2 2020) which pushes the number of the poor population back to where it was in 2017 (around 27,55 million people). This is evidently due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has struck a blow to the Indonesian economy. Interestingly, this is in line with one of the challenges Indonesia faces to achieve its 2045 vision mentioned in the study by Holmemo et al. (2020), i.e. the vulnerability to climate change, disaster, and pandemic. However, there has been a sign of improvement in the first half of 2021, which sees the number of poor population decreases slightly. Based on income per capita, a survey by SMERU (2021a) shows that around 75% of households in

Indonesia experienced a decrease in income during the pandemic. 66% of households that own small businesses also report a drop in the number of buyers and consequently their revenues.

In terms of the gap between the rich and the poor, as rural areas observe a decrease in the Gini ratio after it rose during the pandemic, the Gini ratio in urban areas continues to exhibit an increasing trend. This implies an uneven recovery in expenditure between the citizens in urban and rural areas. SMERU (2021b) shows that the decrease of household expenditure in urban areas was steeper than those in rural areas. They argue that households in urban areas are relatively more affected by the pandemic as compared to households in rural areas.



Source: BPS

Fig. 2 Gini Ratio in Urban and Rural Areas in Indonesia, 2011-2021

From the global perspective, the COVID-19 pandemic has adversely damaged the rapport of the whole world in terms of its progress to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Due to its nature of being a health issue, the pandemic has hit SDG 3 (Good Health and Well Being) the hardest (Lancet, 2000; Ancona, 2020; Khetrpal, Bhatia, 2020). As of December 2021, the total reported deaths from COVID-19 has reached more than 5.2 million globally.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused major disruptions in basic health services in many countries and has caused a considerable setback in progress made in achieving SDG 3 objectives. According to UN SDG Report (2021), in 2020, 35% of countries reported interruptions in reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health services, along with nutrition services. The report went on to state that these disruptions in health services may have contributed to 228,000 additional child deaths and around 11,000 additional maternal deaths during 2020 in South Asia alone.

The pandemic also adversely impact SDG 1 (Poverty) (Lancet, 2000; Ancona, 2020; Khetrpal, Bhatia, 2020). In line with the case of Indonesia, which shows an increase of poor population during a pandemic, many countries have also experienced similar situations. SDG Report 2021 has estimated that the pandemic has led to an additional 119-124 million people globally being pushed back into extreme poverty in 2020. The report also notes that governments have put in place social protection measures but estimates that around 4 billion people are still not covered by such schemes.

Aside from SDG 3 and 1, it also impacts the global achievement in SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and 10 (Reduced Inequalities). In the SDG Report 2021, it is apparent that the capability and inclusiveness of social welfare policy are crucial in order for the society to resolve the pandemic in the short term and in successfully achieve the SDGs in the long term. For example, the social protection scheme is essential in battling the impact of COVID-19 in SDG 1 (Poverty), scaling up investment in universal health care is key to solving problems in SDG 3 (Good Health and Well Being) and establishing a social safety net for 1.6 billion informal workers is important to support the achievement of SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

B. The Need for Research and Innovation in Social Welfare

Proper design and implementation of social welfare policy are fundamental to gradually improving the well-being of society. However, the rapidly changing environment and previously unthinkable disasters brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic requires social welfare policies to undertake innovation. Parpan-Blaser & Hutteman (2020) studies the capability of social work to innovate. The study proves its innovative potential to be substantial, for example, in terms of school social work, supported education and employment for persons with cognitive disabilities or other handicaps, women’s shelters, and crisis intervention services. Some of the examples of the innovative power of social work include social planning, family counselling, prevention, or the paradigm shift from integration to inclusion.

However, producing beneficial innovation and breakthroughs requires substantial investment and dedication in research, most importantly academic ones. As demonstrated in technological fields, close links between academic research and practice are widespread. Research in technological fields typically starts from basic science, which then, after some time, transitions into applied sciences. The research conducted in applied sciences brings about innovation that is readily implemented in practice.

Similarly, in social welfare research, suitable forms of social research have proven to adequately support innovation in the social system (Gredig & Sommerfield, 2008). Science and practice are structurally related and work together in cycles (Parpan-Blaser & Hutteman, 2020).

Furthermore, as devastating the impact of COVID-19 as it may be, it could also be seen as an opportunity for social research to innovate and find a breakthrough that would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of social welfare policies, including social works. As mentioned by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW, 2021), Social Work plays a key role in managing the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery efforts.

Some of the tangible efforts include 1) ensuring that the most vulnerable are included in planning and response; 2) organizing communities to ensure that essentials such as food and clean water are available; 3) advocating within social services and in policy environments that services adapt, remain open and pro-active in supporting communities and vulnerable populations; 4) facilitating physical distancing and social solidarity; and 5) advocating for the advancement and strengthening of health and social services as an essential protection against the virus, inequality and the consequent social and economic challenges. The challenges to perform all these efforts excellently raises the needs and opportunities for further research and innovation in the social welfare field.

C. Global Policy Innovations in Social Welfare Field

For the purpose of battling the pandemic, the governments in numerous countries have enacted a number of policies that were unfamiliar before. At the central government level, this could be considered policy innovations in social welfare. The following policies are recorded in the IMF database for policy responses to COVID-19.

In the UK, the government provides additional funding for social welfare efforts, including the National Health Services (NHS), public services, and charities (£48.5 billion). To uphold and support small businesses, the UK government also enacts £29 billion worth of property tax holidays, direct grants for small firms and firms in the most-affected sectors, and compensation for sick pay leave. The government is also strengthening the social safety net to support vulnerable people (£8 billion).

In Turkey, a new omnibus law was passed in April 2021 that includes additional temporary measures to support employment in selected sectors hit the hardest by the pandemic. The short-term work allowance system for all sectors was also extended through June 2021. On the other hand, the Turkish government also bans companies from layoff any of their employees. However, as compensation, the government provides grant packages for tradesmen and small businesses and establishes loan deferral programs for farmers.

In Indonesia, the government disbursed a total of IDR 579.8 trillion (about 3.8 per cent of GDP) as part of a national economic recovery program (Program Pemulihan Ekonomi Nasional, PEN). The government also provides support to the health care sector to boost testing and treatment capacity for COVID-19 cases. One of the policies includes increased benefits and broader coverage of existing social assistance schemes to low-income households such as food aids, conditional cash transfers, and electricity subsidies. Furthermore, it also expanded unemployment benefits, including for workers in the informal sector.

In the US, through American Rescue Plan in March 2021, the government provides another round of coronavirus relief with an estimated cost of \$1,844bn. It extends the unemployment benefits programs (including supplemental unemployment benefits), sends direct stimulus payments of \$1,400 to eligible individuals, provides direct aid to state and local government, adds resources to the vaccination program and increases funding for school reopening.

Aside from the social welfare policies to resolve the pandemic, examples of innovation could also take place in other aspects of social welfare. One of such aspects is the use of tax money to fund social welfare efforts. In this regard, Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Sweden and Norway) tend to be considered as the benchmark for their policies in social welfare. On the one hand, the governments in those countries tend to tax personal income highly, with most having more than a 50% effective tax rate (Tax Foundation, 2021). However, on the other hand, they also spend a huge amount of the revenues on social welfare policies. In fact, the Scandinavian countries have the highest percentage of tax revenues spent on social benefits within OECD countries, with all of them spending more than 25% of GDP (World Economic Forum, 2021). The huge and impactful spending of tax money on social benefits causes their citizens to not mind paying high taxes because they feel the benefit of their taxes in their daily lives. The key is to manage the tax funds with accountability, to make sure they are spent wisely and for the sake of their citizens.

D. The SDGs and Social Works

As mentioned before, according to the SDG Report 2021, the proper establishment of social welfare policy is essential in battling the impacts of the pandemic and in maintaining the track to achieve the SDGs. IFSW (2021) sees the

relationship between social works and SDGs as two-way, in which SDGs would serve as the aim of social works, while at the same time the social workers could become the partners of the governments to implement SDGs.

SDGs can be seen as the ultimate global goals (as it was agreed among 193 nations) that all levels and parts of societies must be aiming to. Social works efforts in the countries could integrate the UN SDG guidelines into their social work educations, schools and training curriculum.

On the other hand, the social workers could serve as the partners of the government for implementing SDGs effectively and efficiently. Social workers have the potential to bridge the gaps between governmental regulatory efforts (i.e. policy papers, global agendas) and practice (i.e. daily work with people and civil societies, operational implementation). Social work promotes people's rights (bottom-up approach) by providing the communities with information and education for transparency and participation. Social works also facilitate and foster partnerships within communities and between various partners, at local, national and international levels, to translate UN SDGs in various ways

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the efforts made in social research supports innovation in the social welfare policies. Research is fundamental for innovation to take place in order to implement social welfare policies more effectively and efficiently.

The COVID-19 pandemic causes a number of challenges from the perspective of social welfare, both nationally and globally. However, from another point of view, the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic actually open opportunities for further research and innovation in the social welfare field.

As demonstrated during the COVID-19 episode, some countries have undergone innovations in terms of social welfare policies and have established novel approaches in battling the pandemic from a social welfare perspective.

In the case of Indonesia, to tackle the challenges in achieving the 2045 vision, several social welfare policy recommendations can be adopted from the experiences in other countries:

1. Encourage the social researcher communities to develop a culture of innovation in the field of social welfare.
2. Explore the innovation/schemes implemented by other countries in order to improve social welfare in Indonesia, such as the accountability of the spending of tax funds for social welfare.
3. Integrate the SDGs 2030 as one of the objectives of the social welfare innovation and policies, and they contain guidance and measures for keeping track of improvement in social welfare.

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