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Assessing local government policies in poverty alleviation: a case study of Pohuwato Regency, Gorontalo

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effectiveness of poverty alleviation policies implemented by the Pohuwato Regency Government between 2019 and 2024. Using quantitative data from official reports and qualitative insights from interviews with policymakers and community members, the study identifies trends in poverty, economic growth, and social outcomes. Findings show a modest reduction in poverty from 18.16% in 2019 to 17.11% in 2024, alongside improvements in poverty depth and severity indices. Economic growth contributed to poverty reduction, but income inequality remains high, as indicated by a Gini ratio of 0.413. Community perspectives highlight that while government programs in infrastructure, microfinance, and skills development have helped, challenges persist in rural areas, especially in agriculture. The study emphasizes the importance of inclusive, community-based approaches, stronger regional economic empowerment, and improved monitoring systems to enhance policy effectiveness. The results provide insights for refining local poverty reduction strategies and promoting sustainable livelihoods in Pohuwato Regency.



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Introduction

Poverty remains a persistent challenge in Indonesia, particularly in regional areas where access to resources and economic opportunities is limited (Noorikhshan and Gunawan 2022). The government has implemented various poverty alleviation programs aimed at reducing income disparities and improving the quality of life for marginalized communities. Despite these efforts, certain regions, including Pohuwato Regency, continue to experience relatively high poverty levels compared to the provincial and national averages. Understanding the effectiveness of these policies is essential to improving program design and targeting.

Pohuwato Regency, located in Gorontalo Province, exhibits unique socio-economic characteristics that influence poverty dynamics. The majority of the population relies on agriculture and small-scale trade, making them vulnerable to market fluctuations and limited economic diversification (Dewi and

Sunarta 2021). Regional-specific strategies are therefore critical to address structural challenges such as limited infrastructure, restricted market access, and seasonal income variations.

Previous studies indicate that economic growth alone does not guarantee poverty reduction, especially if benefits are unevenly distributed (Sugiharti et al. 2023). The Gini ratio, a measure of income inequality, often remains high even in regions experiencing economic growth. This highlights the need for policies that combine income support with measures to enhance productive capacity and economic inclusion (Khomaini 2020).

Community involvement has been recognized as a key factor in the success of poverty alleviation programs. Research by Ahdiyana, Widiyanto, and Pambudi (2020) emphasizes that participatory approaches enable policies to align more closely with local needs and socio-economic realities. Engaging communities in decision-making processes can enhance program relevance, ownership, and long-term sustainability.

Microfinance programs, skills development, and infrastructure investments have been widely used as tools to support poverty reduction (Ernawati, Tajuddin, and Nur 2021; Singh and Chudasama 2020). In Pohuwato, such interventions aim to empower households economically and increase access to markets. However, evidence suggests that without complementary measures, such as agricultural support and entrepreneurship training, these interventions may provide only temporary relief.

The agricultural sector remains central to poverty alleviation in Pohuwato, as it provides livelihoods for a significant portion of the population (Laurens and Putra 2020; Pebriyanti and Alamanda 2021). Challenges such as volatile commodity prices, limited access to modern farming techniques, and inadequate infrastructure constrain the sector's potential. Strengthening agricultural productivity and ensuring better market linkages are therefore critical components of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy.

Effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are essential for assessing the impact of poverty alleviation policies (Gopal et al. 2020; Pelodu and Wahyuni 2024). Existing evaluation frameworks in Pohuwato are limited, making it difficult to determine whether policies achieve their intended outcomes. Incorporating systematic data collection, regular performance reviews, and feedback from local communities can improve policy responsiveness and long-term effectiveness.

Structural and governance factors also influence the success of poverty reduction programs (Giyato and Sridiyatmiko 2022; Noorikhshan and Gunawan 2022). Coordination among local government agencies, decentralization of resources, and the involvement of regional stakeholders are essential to address implementation gaps. Collaborative governance approaches can enhance transparency, accountability, and alignment with local needs (Ikhsan et al. 2022).

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of poverty alleviation policies in Pohuwato Regency between 2019 and 2024. By combining quantitative analysis of poverty trends and economic indicators with qualitative insights from community members and policymakers, the research provides a comprehensive assessment of policy impacts. The findings are intended to inform more targeted, inclusive, and sustainable approaches to poverty reduction in the region.

Method

This study employs a mixed-method approach to evaluate the effectiveness of poverty alleviation policies in Pohuwato Regency between 2019 and 2024. Quantitative data were collected from official government reports, including statistics on poverty rates, economic growth, and income distribution, to analyze trends and measure the impact of implemented policies.

In addition, qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with policymakers, local government officials, and community members. These interviews aimed to capture perceptions of policy effectiveness, challenges in implementation, and the socio-economic realities faced by the community. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data provides a more comprehensive understanding of policy outcomes.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics for quantitative indicators and thematic analysis for qualitative responses. This approach allowed for the identification of key patterns, successes, and limitations in poverty alleviation programs, as well as insights into community engagement and regional-specific challenges that affect policy effectiveness.

Results and Discussions

This section presents the findings of the study regarding the effectiveness of poverty alleviation policies implemented by the Pohuwato Regency Government between 2019 and 2024. The analysis is based on quantitative data obtained from official reports as well as interviews with policymakers and community members. The data reveals key trends in poverty levels, economic growth, and the social impact of the poverty alleviation policies. Additionally, it explores community perceptions of government interventions and their effectiveness in reducing poverty.

Poverty Trends in Pohuwato Regency

Table 1 illustrates the trends in poverty in Pohuwato Regency from 2019 to 2024. The data shows a significant decline in the percentage of the population living below the poverty line, with poverty levels decreasing from 18.16% in 2019 to 17.11% in 2024. Although this reduction is relatively modest, it indicates progress in the efforts to alleviate poverty in the region.

Table 1. Poverty Data in Pohuwato Regency from 2019 to 2024

Year	Number of Poor People (thousands)	Poverty Rate (%)	Poverty Depth Index (P1)	Poverty Severity Index (P2)	Poverty Line (IDR per capita per month)
2024	28.93	17.11	2.89	0.70	391,236
2023	29.39	17.64	2.69	0.60	370,530
2022	29.32	17.87	3.16	0.82	345,924
2021	29.22	18.08	2.64	0.59	327,587
2020	28.92	17.62	2.64	0.54	309,174
2019	29.13	18.16	3.27	0.87	275,240

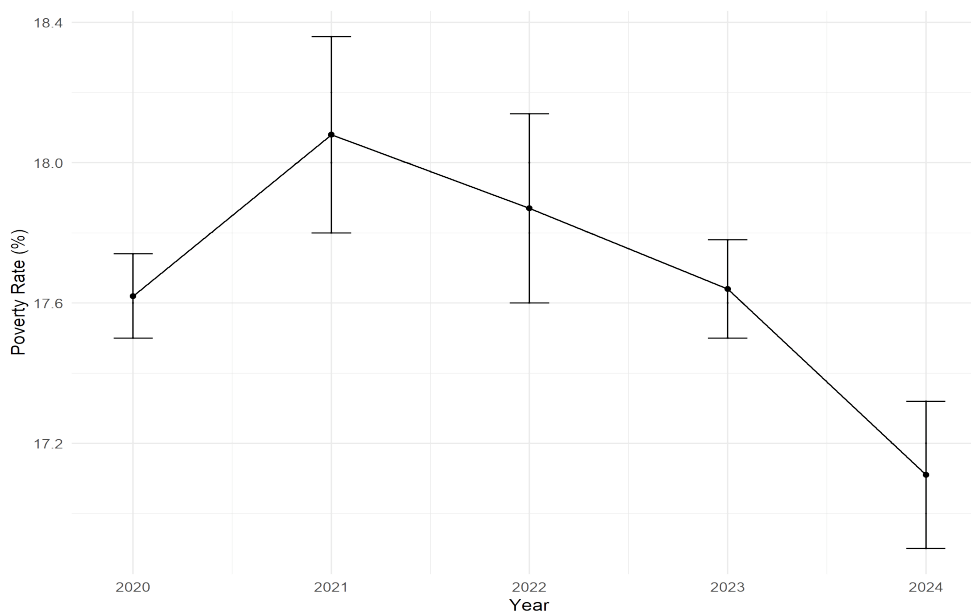


Figure 1. Poverty Trend Percentage in Pohuwato Regency

Source: BPS Data, 2025

The trends displayed in the table 1 indicate a notable improvement in 2023, with the poverty rate decreasing to 17.64% from 17.87% in 2022. However, this figure remains relatively high compared to the national average. The poverty depth and severity indices, which reflect the extent to which the

poor population falls below the poverty line and the inequality among them, also show slight improvements. In 2024, the poverty depth index (P1) decreased to 2.89 from 3.16 in 2022, and the poverty severity index (P2) reduced to 0.70 from 0.82 in 2022. These figures indicate a decline in the intensity of poverty, suggesting that those still living in poverty are suffering less compared to previous years.

In figure 1, the trend of poverty rates in Pohuwato Regency is visually represented from 2020 to 2024, based on data provided by the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (BPS). The chart clearly shows the gradual decline in poverty rates over the period, reflecting the impact of poverty alleviation efforts in the region.

Economic Growth and Its Impact on Poverty Reduction

Table 2 presents the economic performance indicators of Pohuwato Regency. Despite global economic challenges and Regional fluctuations, the region has shown positive growth in key economic indicators, although not all targets have been met.

Table 2. Economic Performance Indicators of Pohuwato Regency

Indicator	Unit	Goal	Realization	Goal	Realization	Goal	Realization
		2022	2022	2023	2023	2024	2024
Economic Growth	%	3.7	3.08	4.5	4.40	5.5	4.03
PDRB ADHK	IDR Trillion	4.712	4.40	4.932	5.062	6.421	5.579
PDRB ADHB	IDR Trillion	7.002	5.579	7.365	7.655	8.65	8.579
Gini Ratio	%	0.400	0.413	0.413	0.413	0.400	0.413
Poverty Rate	%	17.01	17.62	17.01	17.64	17.01	17.11

The economic growth rate in Pohuwato Regency slightly fell short of its target in 2022, with a realization of 3.08%, compared to the target of 3.7%. In 2023, the growth rate reached 4.40%, nearly achieving the target of 4.5%. However, in 2024, the growth rate was recorded at 4.03%, which did not meet the target of 5.5%. Despite this, Pohuwato's economic growth remains relatively strong compared to the provincial average, indicating the resilience of the Regional economy. This economic performance is crucial for poverty reduction, as economic growth directly influences job creation, income levels, and overall economic opportunities.

Both the Regional Domestic Product (PDRB) at constant prices (ADHK) and at current prices (ADHB) showed steady improvement. In 2023, PDRB ADHK was recorded at IDR 5.062 trillion, slightly below the target of IDR 5.201 trillion. In 2024, this figure increased to IDR 5.579 trillion, although still far from the target of IDR 6.421 trillion. This increase reflects solid economic growth, though there remains a gap between the target and actual performance.

The Gini Ratio, which measures income inequality, showed a slight increase in 2024, with a value of 0.413, surpassing the target of 0.400. This indicates that, despite economic growth, income inequality in Pohuwato remains relatively high. The rise in the Gini Ratio suggests that the benefits of economic growth are not evenly distributed, with certain segments of the population, particularly in rural areas, still experiencing significant economic disparities.

Community Perceptions of Poverty Alleviation Policies

Interviews conducted with policymakers and community members provided a clearer picture of the effectiveness of poverty alleviation policies. Policymakers highlighted several key strategies that have been implemented in recent years to reduce poverty, including investments in infrastructure, microfinance programs, and skills training. These efforts aim to improve both the physical and economic environments of communities, thereby creating greater opportunities for income generation and job creation.

However, community members expressed mixed feelings regarding the impact of these policies. Many acknowledged that although the government had invested in infrastructure development,

particularly in rural areas, the pace of progress remained slow. They noted that despite improvements in public services and economic opportunities, poverty levels remain high, with many individuals still struggling to meet basic needs. Some interview participants also emphasized the importance of community-based initiatives and the need for greater community involvement in the decision-making process regarding poverty alleviation policies.

One significant aspect of the interviews was the recognition that poverty alleviation policies must be tailored to Regional needs (Didi 2024). For example, many participants pointed out that the agricultural sector, which remains the primary livelihood for a large portion of the population, continues to face challenges such as volatile commodity prices and limited access to markets. This aligns with the findings of, (Dewi and Sunarta 2021) who emphasized the importance of human capital development through education and healthcare programs to support sustainable economic development.

Furthermore, several participants argued that while financial assistance and micro-credit programs have provided temporary relief, long-term poverty reduction requires a more comprehensive approach that integrates job creation, Regional entrepreneurship, and educational empowerment. This viewpoint is also supported by (Ernawati, Tajuddin, and Nur 2021), who assert that community involvement in poverty alleviation programs is crucial for their success.

Policy Recommendations and Government Responses

Based on the findings, several key recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of poverty alleviation efforts in Pohuwato Regency. First, there should be a stronger focus on Regional economic empowerment, particularly through support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are essential for providing sustainable livelihoods for the community. Government programs focused on skills training and entrepreneurship can help individuals develop skills that are relevant to the regional economy (Singh and Chudasama 2020).

Additionally, more attention should be given to improving agricultural productivity and market access for farmers, who constitute a significant portion of the economically vulnerable population. Better infrastructure development, including roads and transportation networks, will facilitate access to markets and enhance overall economic conditions.

Furthermore, poverty alleviation policies must be more inclusive by actively involving communities in the planning and implementation of programs. This involves engaging Regional stakeholders at every stage of policy-making, ensuring that the programs are more responsive to the real needs of the community. As noted by (Chen, Zhu, and Fan 2020; Toumpakari et al. 2023) gender-sensitive, community-based approaches can significantly improve the effectiveness of poverty alleviation policies.

The findings of this study show that poverty alleviation policies in Pohuwato Regency between 2019 and 2024 have achieved modest success, with the poverty rate declining from 18.16% in 2019 to 17.11% in 2024. This reduction demonstrates that government interventions, such as microfinance programs, skills training, and infrastructure development, have had a positive impact on improving livelihoods (Yuliany, Roswiyanti, and Widiawati 2024). However, the poverty rate remains above the provincial average, indicating that more targeted efforts are needed to support the most vulnerable populations.

Despite these improvements, structural economic challenges continue to limit the effectiveness of poverty reduction strategies. Issues such as reliance on the agricultural sector, limited access to markets, and insufficient infrastructure restrict opportunities for substantial income growth among rural households (Noorikhzan and Gunawan 2022). These factors underscore the need for policies that address root causes of poverty rather than only providing short-term financial assistance.

Economic growth in Pohuwato has contributed to reducing poverty by generating jobs and raising household incomes, even though the growth rate fell short of the planned targets. The fluctuation of growth from 3.08% in 2022 to 4.40% in 2023, and a drop to 4.03% in 2024, indicates both progress and the fragility of economic development in the region (Khomaini 2020). These figures highlight the importance of consistent growth that can support sustainable poverty alleviation efforts.

Income inequality remains a major concern, as shown by the Gini ratio of 0.413 in 2024, exceeding the targeted 0.400. This suggests that economic benefits are concentrated among certain groups, leaving many households with limited improvements in their living standards (Sugiharti et al. 2023). Policies must therefore incorporate mechanisms to ensure more equitable distribution of economic gains to achieve inclusive growth.

Community engagement emerged as a critical factor for successful poverty alleviation. While government programs have provided resources and training, participation from local communities in planning and implementing these policies remains limited (Aulia and Wulansari 2020). Greater involvement of community members would ensure that interventions align more closely with local needs and socio-economic realities.

The agricultural sector continues to be central to the livelihoods of many residents. Participants emphasized that improving productivity, market access, and training for farmers is essential for reducing poverty in rural areas (Laurens and Putra 2020; Pebriyanti and Alamanda 2021). Although microfinance and entrepreneurship programs support small businesses, more comprehensive measures are needed to strengthen the agricultural economy and provide sustainable income opportunities (Hidayat and Dariyanto 2023).

SMEs and regional economic development also play a vital role in long-term poverty reduction. Temporary financial assistance alone is insufficient, and policies must integrate agricultural support with SME development to foster resilience and economic growth among vulnerable populations (Garba et al. 2022). This approach encourages communities not only to survive but to thrive economically, creating a more sustainable poverty alleviation framework.

Finally, evaluating policy effectiveness remains a challenge. Although progress is visible, current monitoring systems are limited in capturing the long-term impact of interventions (Gopal et al. 2020; Pelodu and Wahyuni 2024). Strengthening collaboration between government agencies and local stakeholders, along with better monitoring and adaptive strategies, is necessary to ensure that poverty alleviation programs are effective, inclusive, and responsive to evolving regional needs (Idrus, Arfianty, and Hatta 2023; Machmud et al. 2023).

Conclusions

This study concludes that poverty alleviation policies in Pohuwato Regency between 2019 and 2024 have contributed to a modest reduction in poverty from 18.16% to 17.11%, supported by economic growth and targeted interventions such as microfinance, skills training, and infrastructure development, yet persistent income inequality and structural challenges remain. The findings highlight that community involvement, regional economic empowerment, and support for the agricultural sector are essential for achieving sustainable poverty reduction. To enhance effectiveness, policies should adopt a more inclusive, community-based approach, strengthen coordination across government levels, and implement robust evaluation mechanisms to ensure interventions address local needs and improve long-term livelihoods, aligning with the study's objective of assessing the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs in the region.

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