

Evaluation of the Labor-Intensive Program in Poverty Alleviation in Wonokromo District, Surabaya City

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the Labor-Intensive Program (Padat Karya) in Wonokromo District, Surabaya City, as a poverty alleviation strategy. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving the Head of District and Head of Welfare Section. The analysis uses Wirawan's evaluation theory focusing on Utility, Feasibility, Propriety, and Accuracy. The results indicate that the program has high utility and feasibility, evidenced by increased participant income (reaching IDR 2.7 million/month) and efficient budget management. However, propriety and accuracy aspects face challenges, particularly in equitable distribution for the elderly and disabled, as well as participant data validity. Inhibiting factors include low participant commitment and inadequate equipment facilities. It is concluded that while the program is economically effective, it requires intensified mental guidance for participants and facility revitalization to ensure sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

Community empowerment is a vital concept in development aimed at enhancing the capacity of disadvantaged groups to meet their daily needs independently (Suhendra, 2006). In a macro context, Surabaya City, as the center of economic growth in East Java with an economic growth rate reaching 5.76% in 2024, still faces the residual challenge of development in the form of poverty. Although data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows a downward trend in the poverty rate from 5.23% (2021) to 3.9% (2024), reality at the micro-level reveals complex dynamics.

The Surabaya City Government responded to this issue through Mayor Regulation Number 83 of 2023 regarding the Labor-Intensive Program, an intervention based on asset and labor empowerment for Poor Families (*Gamis*). This program utilizes government assets (idle land) for productive activities such as paving block manufacturing, vehicle washing services, and culinary centers. However, implementation in the Wonokromo District reveals a problematic phenomenon: a program that was initially welcomed with enthusiasm and high income has gradually experienced a decline in participation and income instability over time. Issues of sustainability and participant commitment are crucial matters that underpin the urgency of this research.

A review of previous studies presents various perspectives on the effectiveness of poverty programs. Research by Ramadhani, Mustofa, and Haryati (2023) analyzed the Cash Labor-Intensive Program (*Padat Karya Tunai - PKT*) in Surabaya and found that while the program was able to improve short-term welfare, its success was heavily dependent on synergy among stakeholders at the sub-district level. A study by Putricia and Prathama (2023) on the *Rumah Padat Karya Viaduct by Gubeng* highlighted that the success of pilot programs is often driven by strategic location innovation; however, challenges in replication in other areas are often hindered by differing participant demographic characteristics. In their latest research, Maemunah and A (2024) provided a sociological perspective, noting that structural and cultural poverty in urban areas is often perpetuated by rigid institutional orders and a societal mentality of complacency with aid, which hinders the transformation toward economic independence.

Based on the literature review, a gap analysis of existing research is evident. The majority of previous literature tends to capture the success of pilot programs like *Viaduct Gubeng* or macro-statistical impacts but remains limited in dissecting the dynamics of performance decline during the sustainability phase in specific loci such as Wonokromo District, which possesses distinct characteristics. The novelty of this research lies in the use of a comprehensive evaluation approach to diagnose why there is a decline in participant participation and commitment after the initial phase of the program an area that has not been explored in depth.

To analyze these issues comprehensively, this study uses a qualitative approach with Wirawan's evaluation theory framework as the primary analytical tool. This approach was strategically chosen to excavate deep data (thick description) regarding structural and cultural obstacles, such as the participants'

dependency mindset and technical facility constraints, which are often not captured by quantitative data alone. The use of Wirawan's evaluation theory, covering four dimensions Utility, Feasibility, Propriety, and Accuracy allows the researcher to conduct a holistic diagnosis. This involves not only measuring economic aspects (income) but also investigating aspects of distributive justice (whether it is elderly/disability-friendly) and target validity, which are often weak points in empowerment programs.

The main objective of this article is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Labor-Intensive Program in alleviating poverty in Wonokromo District and to identify the inhibiting factors in its implementation. The results of this study are expected to provide strategic recommendations for policymakers to reformulate program mentoring strategies to be more sustainable and well-targeted.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Public Policy Evaluation Theory

Evaluation is a critical instrument in the public policy cycle used to assess the merit, worth, and significance of a program. In this study, the evaluation framework adopts the theory proposed by Wirawan (2016), which posits that evaluation is a process of collecting and presenting information regarding the object being evaluated, assessing it against specific standards, and using the results for decision-making. Wirawan (2016) synthesized the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation standards into four main dimensions:

- 1) Utility Standard: This dimension assesses whether the program serves the practical information needs of targeted users. It ensures that the evaluation is informative, timely, and influential. In the context of poverty alleviation, utility measures whether the program truly meets the economic needs of the poor.
- 2) Feasibility Standard: This standard evaluates whether the program is realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and frugal. It focuses on the efficiency of resource utilization (budget, time, and assets) and whether the program is implementable within the existing political and social constraints.
- 3) Propriety Standard: This dimension concerns the legality and ethics of the program. It ensures that the program is conducted legally and protects the rights and welfare of the human subjects involved. It also examines aspects of justice and equitable distribution of benefits among vulnerable groups (e.g., the elderly and disabled).
- 4) Accuracy Standard: This standard determines whether the evaluation produces technically adequate information regarding the features that determine the worth or merit of the program being evaluated. It relies heavily on the validity and reliability of data, such as the accuracy of the target recipient database.

Concepts of Poverty and Community Empowerment

Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon not only defined by a lack of income but also by limited access to basic rights and powerlessness. Poverty can be categorized into two perspectives: Structural Poverty and Cultural Poverty. Structural poverty arises from external factors such as limited access to resources, rigid social structures, and biased policies that prevent the poor from improving their status (Maemunah & A, 2024). Conversely, cultural poverty, as described by Oscar Lewis, refers to a set of values and behaviors transmitted across generations—such as resignation, dependency on aid, and lack of future orientation—that trap individuals in poverty.

To combat these, Community Empowerment is employed as a strategy to enable the poor to escape both structural and cultural traps. Sumaryadi (2005) defines empowerment as an effort to increase the dignity of the community who are in a condition of inability to escape the poverty trap and underdevelopment. The goal is to transform beneficiaries from passive recipients of charity into active, independent economic actors.

Labor-Intensive Program (Padat Karya) as a Poverty Alleviation Strategy

The Labor-Intensive Program (*Padat Karya*) is a specific poverty alleviation scheme that prioritizes the absorption of a large amount of labor rather than capital-intensive technology. According to Mayor Regulation Number 83 of 2023, the Surabaya City Government defines this program as an activity utilizing local resources and empowering poor families (*Gamis*) to provide temporary employment and increase purchasing power.

Unlike conventional social assistance (*Bansos*), the Labor-Intensive Program emphasizes Cash for Work, where income is conditional on productive work. This approach aligns with the concept of asset-based community development, where government assets (such as idle land) are lent to community groups to be managed productively. The ultimate goal is sustainable economic independence, where the program serves as an incubator for the poor to develop technical skills and work ethics before entering the formal job market.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs descriptive research with a qualitative approach. This approach was chosen to describe natural objective conditions and interpret program evaluation phenomena in depth (Sugiyono, 2014). The research location is Wonokromo District, Surabaya City, which is one of the administrative areas implementing the Labor-Intensive Program.

Data sources are divided into primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with key informants, namely the Wonokromo District Head (*Camat*) and the Head of the Welfare Section of Wonokromo District, as well as direct observation at Labor-Intensive activity sites such as the paving block production house. Secondary data were obtained from regulatory documents, district performance reports, and data from the Surabaya City Government's Labor-Intensive application.

Data collection techniques included structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation. The data analysis technique uses the interactive model from Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data

condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. Data validity was tested using source triangulation, comparing interview results with documents and field observations to ensure the validity of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The policy evaluation of the Labor-Intensive Program in Wonokromo District is analyzed based on four policy evaluation criteria according to Wirawan's theory (2016): Utility, Feasibility, Propriety, and Accuracy.

Utility

The utility indicator measures the extent to which the program provides real benefits in meeting the needs of the target group, particularly in economic aspects. Based on field findings at the paving manufacturing business unit, the Labor-Intensive Program in Wonokromo District has proven to have high economic utility. Income data from October 2025 shows that program participants, such as the Team One group, were able to generate average individual incomes ranging from IDR 2,600,000 to IDR 2,700,000 per month. This figure is significant as it stands above the poverty line and approaches the standard of decent living in Surabaya, providing real purchasing power for poor families who previously did not have a fixed income.

In addition to direct financial impact, the program's utility is also manifested in job creation and technical skill enhancement. Participants do not merely receive cash assistance (charity) but are trained to produce economically valuable goods (K200 paving blocks) absorbed by city development needs. This transformation from unemployment to a productive workforce is an indicator of empowerment success. This aligns with Sumaryadi's (2005) opinion emphasizing that the core of empowerment is enabling the poor to be socio-economically independent through skill mastery.

These findings corroborate previous research by Ramadhani, Mustofa, and Haryati (2023), who evaluated the Cash Labor-Intensive Program in Surabaya. They found that such programs effectively improve short-term welfare through income injection (cash for work). However, this study adds a new finding that in Wonokromo District, the program's utility is not merely hit and run (temporary) but has the potential for sustainability through a paving production scheme that has a fixed market from government projects, provided that production management is maintained.

Feasibility

The feasibility aspect reviews the efficiency of resource use (assets, budget, and time) in policy implementation. Implementation in Wonokromo District is considered highly feasible because it applies a strategy of optimizing idle assets. Utilizing idle land owned by the Surabaya City Government as a paving production house is a strategic step that eliminates land rental costs, making the production cost structure highly efficient. The Wonokromo District Head emphasized that efficiency is also achieved through procuring raw materials

directly from main producers, which cuts the distribution chain and significantly reduces operational costs.

In addition to cost efficiency, operational feasibility is supported by solid cross-sector collaboration. The involvement of community leaders and neighborhood associations (RT/RW) in supervision, as well as synergy with relevant agencies for the absorption of production results (off-takers), makes this program realistic to run in the long term. There is no waste of resources because supply (residents' paving production) meets demand (sub-district development projects) directly. This integrated business model ensures that the budget spent by the government circulates back to the community in the form of wages.

This condition aligns with the findings of Putricia and Prathama (2023) in their study on the *Rumah Padat Karya Viaduct Gubeng*. They concluded that the feasibility of labor-intensive programs is determined by strategic location and asset utilization innovation. Research in Wonokromo confirms these results: when public assets are utilized for productive functions with efficient supply chain management, the program's feasibility level increases drastically compared to mere conventional social assistance programs.

Propriety

The propriety indicator highlights aspects of ethics, justice, and the equitable distribution of benefits among various target groups. In this aspect, the evaluation shows structural challenges in achieving total inclusivity. Although the program is open to all Poor Families (*Gamis*), the types of work available, such as paving manufacturing and construction, are physically and emotionally biased toward masculine traits. Consequently, vulnerable groups such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, and female heads of households are often hindered from participating due to physical limitations, so the distribution of program benefits tends to be concentrated on the productive-age male group.

This inequality raises issues of distributive justice. Interviews with the Head of the Welfare Section revealed that despite socialization efforts, participation from disability groups remains minimal due to the lack of diversification of business types friendly to their limitations. The labor-intensive program in Wonokromo District has not fully met the principle of propriety in serving a diverse spectrum of poverty; rather, it is currently optimal only for the poverty segment possessing physical labor capital.

This is relevant to the analysis by Maemunah and A (2024) regarding structural poverty, where marginalized groups are often left behind not because they do not want to work, but because the structure of job opportunities is not designed to accommodate their limitations. If Maemunah's research highlights the causes of poverty, findings in Wonokromo show that poverty alleviation solutions can also be trapped in the same bias if there is no affirmative action in the form of light (non-physical) job designs for these vulnerable groups.

Accuracy

The accuracy indicator relates to targeting accuracy and the validity of beneficiary data. The program uses the *Si Keluarga Miskin* (Poor Family System) application database from the Social Service as the primary reference. However,

field findings show dynamic phenomena of exclusion error and inclusion error. Some registered participants turned out to have low motivation and resigned halfway (psychological targeting inaccuracy), while other poor residents were not recorded due to administrative residency constraints. Data validity becomes a crucial issue because urban poverty data is highly fluctuating.

In addition to administrative data issues, accuracy is also tested by participant commitment. It was found that targeting accuracy is not just about who is poor, but who is poor and willing to work hard. Many participants who are administratively eligible (poor) are mentally unprepared to follow a productive work rhythm, causing the program's goal of making them independent to fail. Factual verification conducted by the district often clashes with a permissive culture and social stigma in the community.

This accuracy problem supports Wirawan's evaluation theory (2016), which states that policy accuracy depends heavily on initial data quality. In a broader context, this also reflects Ariyani's (2016) findings on the Rappoverty method, which emphasizes that the accuracy of candidate data and target determination mechanisms are the main leverage factors for program sustainability. Without real-time data updating mechanisms and strict commitment screening, the accuracy of the Labor-Intensive program will continue to be eroded by the social dynamics of the residents.

Inhibiting Factors

The main inhibiting factors stem from human resource aspects, namely a dependency mentality and low participant commitment. Many participants accustomed to charitable social assistance patterns experience difficulty adapting to labor-intensive schemes that demand physical productivity, triggering high labor turnover rates. This phenomenon affirms Maemunah and A's (2024) findings regarding cultural poverty, where a resigned mental attitude and complacency become barriers to economic transformation. Additionally, the social stigma that manual labor like paving manufacturing is less prestigious also weakens the motivation of young participants, aligning with Putricia and Prathama's (2023) analysis that participant characteristics and internal motivation are determinant variables for program success, often more crucial than financial incentives alone.

Other inhibiting factors are technical and structural, including the degradation of production facilities and the dynamic validity of target data. Production equipment suffering from obsolescence (aging) without responsive maintenance mechanisms causes inefficiency and production downtime, which directly cuts participants' potential income. This supports the thesis of Ramadhani, Mustofa, and Haryati (2023) that the success of economic empowerment absolutely requires reliable infrastructure support. On the other hand, data inaccuracy due to the mobility of the poor causes inclusion and exclusion errors, hindering program targeting accuracy. As emphasized by Ariyani (2016), without a precise database, policy interventions become inefficient and prone to failure in ensuring the sustainability of poverty alleviation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis using Wirawan's evaluation theory, it can be concluded that the Labor-Intensive Program in Wonokromo District has excellent performance in terms of Utility and Feasibility from economic and managerial perspectives. The program succeeded in increasing the income of poor residents up to IDR 2.7 million per month and efficiently utilized government idle land assets. However, the program faces serious challenges in the aspects of Propriety and Accuracy. The distribution of benefits is not yet inclusive for the elderly and disability groups due to the dominance of physical work, and targeting accuracy is disrupted by dynamic data validity and low participant commitment. The main obstacles lie in the participants' dependency mentality and the degradation of production facilities, which hinder sustainability.

As a recommendation, the Surabaya City Government and Wonokromo District need to take two strategic steps. First, Diversification and Revitalization: expanding labor-intensive business types to non-physical sectors (such as sewing services, catering, or crafts) to accommodate the elderly and disabled, as well as allocating a special budget for the rejuvenation of paving production tools. Second, Participant Mindset Revolution: mentoring must not be solely technical but must include intensive psychosocial coaching (character building) to change the beneficiaries' mindset from a help-seeker mentality to that of an independent worker. This can be done by collaborating with psychologists or social motivators in routine group evaluation sessions.

FURTHER STUDY

Future research may broaden the scope of analysis by including labor-intensive programs implemented in different districts, cities, or regions. Expanding the geographical coverage would enable comparative studies and enhance the generalizability of findings related to poverty alleviation programs.

In addition, future studies are encouraged to incorporate longitudinal data to assess the long-term effectiveness of labor-intensive programs in reducing poverty, improving income stability, and increasing sustainable employment opportunities for beneficiaries.

Furthermore, future research may adopt mixed-method approaches by combining quantitative and qualitative data. In-depth interviews with beneficiaries, policymakers, and program implementers could provide deeper insights into program implementation challenges, policy effectiveness, and social impacts.

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