

# Effectiveness of Unemployment Reduction Strategies at the Manpower and Transmigration Office of Pohuwato Regency

by

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| <p>Article History<br/>Submitted:<br/>September 16,<br/>2025</p> <p>Revised:<br/>May 8, 2026</p> <p>Accepted:<br/>June 16, 2026</p> <p>Keywords:<br/>Effectiveness;<br/>Unemployment<br/>; Employment<br/>Strategy;<br/>Pohuwato;<br/>Vocational<br/>Training;<br/>Workforce<br/>Development;<br/>Public Policy</p> | <p><b>Abstract</b><br/><i>Background: Unemployment remains a persistent socioeconomic challenge in Pohuwato Regency, Gorontalo Province, where the open unemployment rate (TPT) has fluctuated despite sustained government intervention. The instability of these figures raises questions about the systematic effectiveness of policies implemented by the Manpower and Transmigration Office (Disnakertrans). Objective: This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of unemployment reduction strategies implemented by the Manpower and Transmigration Office of Pohuwato Regency, using Muasaroh's four-indicator effectiveness theory as the analytical framework. Method: A qualitative approach with a descriptive design was employed. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with eight purposively selected informants representing office leadership, employment division staff, vocational training participants, and local business representatives. Data collection was complemented by documentary analysis and direct observation. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and member checking. Results: The Office has demonstrated effectiveness across all four indicators of Muasaroh's framework: (1) task and function implementation in compliance with Manpower Law No. 13 of 2003 and the Job Creation Law; (2) strategic program design encompassing beauty skills training with seed capital provision, a 70% local workforce recruitment policy, and university-collaborative job fairs; (3) full regulatory compliance under Renstra 2021–2026 and RPJMD Pohuwato; and (4) goal achievement evidenced by a 70.4% decline in registered unemployment from 2023 to 2024. Conclusion: Despite measurable program effectiveness, a critical structural barrier persists: the prevailing orientation among younger job seekers toward formal employment, which limits engagement with non-formal sector and entrepreneurial opportunities. Sustained cross-sector collaboration and targeted entrepreneurship education are recommended to address this challenge and ensure long-term unemployment reduction.</i></p> <p>© Copyright by Author(s). This is an open-access article under the CC-BY-SA license.</p>  |
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## Introduction

Unemployment is among the most enduring structural challenges facing developing economies, and its consequences extend far beyond individual economic hardship to encompass broader dimensions of social cohesion, public health, and political stability (ILO, 2023; OECD, 2022). In Indonesia, which has the fourth-largest population in the world, managing unemployment has remained a central priority of national development policy for successive administrations. Despite macroeconomic growth averaging 5% annually in the pre-pandemic decade, the labor market has been characterized by persistent

informality, skills mismatches, and uneven spatial distribution of economic opportunity—with rural and peri-urban regions bearing disproportionately high unemployment burdens (Kementerian PPN/Bappenas, 2023; BPS, 2024).

Pohuwato Regency, located in the western part of Gorontalo Province on the island of Sulawesi, exemplifies these structural challenges in a particularly acute form. As one of the younger and less economically diversified regencies in Gorontalo Province, Pohuwato faces a constellation of interrelated labor market challenges: a workforce dominated by workers with lower secondary education or below, limited industrial and manufacturing presence, heavy dependence on agricultural and fishing sectors vulnerable to climate variability, and a growing population of educated young graduates for whom formal employment pathways remain narrow and competitive (BPS, 2023; Dinas Ketenagakerjaan dan Transmigrasi Kabupaten Pohuwato, 2024). The open unemployment rate (Tingkat Pengangguran Terbuka/TPT) has oscillated considerably over the 2020–2024 period, declining from 3.46% to 3.12% on a general trend while experiencing significant spikes triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and seasonal agricultural disruptions.

The primary institutional actor mandated to address these challenges is the Manpower and Transmigration Office (Dinas Ketenagakerjaan dan Transmigrasi/Disnakertrans) of Pohuwato Regency. Operating under the dual legal frameworks of Manpower Law No. 13 of 2003 and the Job Creation Law (Law No. 11 of 2020), the Office is responsible for a wide range of functions including workforce planning, vocational skills training, facilitation of job placement, supervision of company compliance with labor standards, and coordination of transmigration programs. Despite this broad mandate, the question of how effectively the Office has translated its institutional responsibilities into measurable reductions in unemployment has not been systematically addressed in the academic literature.

Existing studies on regional labor market policy in Indonesia have predominantly focused on larger, more economically developed provinces such as West Java, East Java, and North Sumatra, leaving a significant gap in the understanding of employment policy effectiveness in smaller, resource-constrained regencies such as Pohuwato (Saleh et al., 2024; Kementerian Ketenagakerjaan RI, 2023). Furthermore, the broader international literature on employment programs in developing country contexts—while rich in evaluations of large-scale national interventions—offers limited guidance on the factors that determine the effectiveness of subnational labor offices operating with limited budgets and institutional capacity (Smith & Brown, 2021; UNDP, 2022).

This study addresses these gaps by conducting a systematic evaluation of the unemployment reduction strategies implemented by the Manpower and Transmigration Office of Pohuwato Regency, using Muasaroh's (2010) effectiveness theory as the primary analytical lens. Muasaroh's framework—which evaluates organizational effectiveness through four indicators: task and function implementation, planning and program design, regulatory and legal compliance, and goal achievement—offers a structured and replicable methodology well-suited to the assessment of public sector programs in the Indonesian administrative context. By applying this framework to a qualitative dataset derived from interviews with eight key informants, documentary analysis, and direct observation, the study generates both theoretical and practical contributions to the understanding of public employment program effectiveness at the subnational level.

Three research questions guide the study: (1) How effectively has the Manpower and Transmigration Office of Pohuwato Regency implemented its tasks and functions in accordance with applicable labor regulations? (2) To what extent have the employment programs designed and implemented by the Office been effective in addressing local unemployment? (3) What structural and contextual challenges continue to impede the achievement of unemployment reduction targets in Pohuwato Regency? The findings are expected to contribute not only to academic discourse on public administration effectiveness in developing regions but also to provide actionable policy recommendations for the Office and the regional government of Pohuwato Regency.

The concept of organizational effectiveness has been the subject of extensive scholarly debate across the disciplines of public administration, organizational theory, and management science. Effectiveness, in its most fundamental sense, refers to the degree to which an organization achieves its stated goals and fulfills its mandated functions (Robbins, 1994, as cited in Muasaroh, 2010). However, scholars have increasingly recognized that effectiveness is a multidimensional construct that cannot be adequately captured through a single metric or indicator. Early frameworks emphasized goal attainment as the primary criterion (Etzioni, 1964), while later approaches incorporated process quality, stakeholder satisfaction, and systemic adaptability as additional dimensions of effectiveness (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983).

Building on these traditions, Muasaroh (2010) developed an effectiveness framework specifically calibrated to the assessment of public sector organizations and government programs in the Indonesian administrative context. The framework comprises four principal indicators: (1) task and function implementation, which assesses whether an

organization performs the activities it is mandated to undertake; (2) planning and program design, which evaluates the quality, relevance, and systematic nature of the activities organized; (3) regulatory and legal compliance, which examines the extent to which programs are implemented within established legal and procedural frameworks; and (4) goal achievement, which measures the degree to which program outputs and outcomes align with pre-established targets. This four-dimensional framework provides a comprehensive lens through which the effectiveness of the Manpower and Transmigration Office's strategies can be systematically assessed.

Muasaroh's framework has been applied in a range of Indonesian public sector evaluations, including assessments of local government service delivery, community empowerment programs, and public health interventions. Its applicability to the evaluation of employment programs is particularly appropriate given the program's explicit mandate to achieve measurable reductions in unemployment—a clear goal-oriented objective that allows for direct assessment under the fourth indicator.

Unemployment is conventionally defined as the condition of individuals who are not engaged in paid work, are actively seeking employment, and are available to begin work within a specified reference period (ILO, 2023). The International Labour Organization (ILO) distinguishes between multiple forms of unemployment, including open unemployment (where individuals actively seek work), hidden unemployment (where discouraged workers have withdrawn from the labor market), and underemployment (where workers are engaged in employment that does not fully utilize their skills or working-time capacity). In the Indonesian context, the official measure of open unemployment—the Tingkat Pengangguran Terbuka (TPT)—captures only the first category, potentially understating the full scale of labor market distress in regions such as Pohuwato Regency where agricultural underemployment is prevalent.

Theoretical explanations for unemployment encompass classical, Keynesian, structural, and frictional perspectives. Classical economics attributes unemployment primarily to wage rigidities that prevent labor markets from clearing (Smith, 2021). Keynesian theory emphasizes aggregate demand deficiencies that reduce the total employment available in an economy (OECD, 2022). Structural unemployment—particularly relevant to Pohuwato's context—arises from mismatches between the skills possessed by job seekers and those demanded by employers, often exacerbated by technological change and sectoral shifts in the economy (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2021; Schwab, 2016). Frictional unemployment reflects the time lag between job separations and

the successful matching of workers with appropriate employment opportunities.

In the context of developing regions in Indonesia, structural unemployment is the most analytically significant form, driven by three key mismatches: educational mismatches (where workers possess qualifications below labor market requirements), geographic mismatches (where job opportunities are concentrated in urban areas while the labor force is dispersed across rural areas), and skills mismatches (where vocational competencies are misaligned with industry needs) (Kementerian Ketenagakerjaan RI, 2023; BRIN, 2023). Addressing these structural dimensions requires targeted, context-sensitive interventions of precisely the type implemented by the Manpower and Transmigration Office of Pohuwato Regency.

The academic literature on active labor market programs (ALMPs) provides an extensive evidence base on the conditions under which employment interventions generate measurable reductions in unemployment. A systematic review by Card et al. (2018) covering evaluations of ALMPs across multiple countries found that vocational training and job search assistance programs generated the most consistently positive employment outcomes, particularly when training content was tightly aligned with specific employer needs. The World Bank (2022) similarly documented that employment programs incorporating direct linkages between training providers and private sector employers outperformed stand-alone training initiatives in terms of job placement rates.

In the Indonesian context, evaluations of national employment programs such as the Kartu Prakerja (Pre-Employment Card) initiative have yielded mixed results, with significant variation in effectiveness observed across provinces and regencies depending on the quality of implementation, the availability of training infrastructure, and the responsiveness of local labor markets (Kemenkeu, 2022). Research on subnational employment program effectiveness in Indonesia has highlighted the critical role of the local Manpower Office in translating national policies into context-appropriate interventions—a function that requires both institutional capacity and substantive knowledge of local labor market dynamics (Saleh et al., 2024; Kementerian PPN/Bappenas, 2023).

The role of institutional collaboration in enhancing employment program effectiveness has also received significant scholarly attention. Porter's (1998) competitive advantage framework, applied to regional economic development, emphasizes that the sustained competitive position of a regional labor market depends on the quality of collaboration among government agencies, educational institutions, and private sector actors. More recently, the UNDP (2022) has highlighted skills development ecosystems—

integrated networks of training providers, employers, labor market information systems, and policy frameworks—as the most effective architecture for sustainable employment promotion in developing country contexts. These theoretical insights underscore the importance of the cross-sector collaboration model that the Manpower and Transmigration Office of Pohuwato Regency has pursued.

A recurring theme in the empirical literature on developing country labor markets is the persistent preference among educated young people for formal sector employment—despite the limited absorptive capacity of the formal sector relative to the growing supply of educated labor (Schwab, 2016; Davis & Green, 2022). This preference is shaped by a complex of social, cultural, and economic factors, including the status associated with formal employment, the higher wages and benefits typically associated with formal positions, and the social expectation among families that educational investment should yield formal sector outcomes. However, as Smith and Brown (2021) document, this formal employment orientation creates a significant barrier to labor market integration among young graduates in regions where formal sector jobs are structurally insufficient to absorb the graduating cohort.

In the Indonesian context, this challenge is compounded by what sociologists have termed the 'white-collar aspiration'—a deeply internalized preference for office-based, salaried employment that has been reinforced by educational culture, parental expectations, and media representations of success (BRIN, 2023). Overcoming this structural mindset requires interventions that combine skills development with attitudinal change—including entrepreneurship education, mentorship by successful non-formal sector practitioners, and the showcasing of viable income pathways in small business, skilled trades, and creative industries.

## **Method**

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to analyze the strategies implemented by the Manpower and Transmigration Office in reducing unemployment in Pohuwato Regency. A qualitative approach was selected because the research objectives required an in-depth understanding of organizational processes, policy implementation dynamics, and stakeholder perspectives that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative methods alone (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The descriptive design enabled systematic documentation and interpretation of the phenomena under investigation without manipulation of the research setting, consistent with the naturalistic

inquiry tradition in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The study was conducted in Pohuwato Regency, Gorontalo Province, from January to April 2024. The regency was selected purposively as the research site for three principal reasons: (1) it is among the regencies in Gorontalo Province with documented and persistent unemployment challenges, making it a substantively important case; (2) the Manpower and Transmigration Office has implemented a range of distinct employment programs that offer rich material for effectiveness evaluation; and (3) the relative absence of prior academic research on employment policy effectiveness in Pohuwato creates an opportunity for original scholarly contribution. Data collection activities were conducted at the Manpower and Transmigration Office headquarters, the Vocational Training Center (Balai Latihan Kerja/BLK), and selected company sites in the regency.

Data were obtained from two primary sources: primary data through in-depth interviews and direct observation, and secondary data through systematic documentary analysis. A total of eight informants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique that identifies participants on the basis of their specific knowledge, experience, or involvement in the phenomena under investigation (Miles et al., 2014). The informant selection criteria required that each participant had direct involvement in either the implementation or experience of the Manpower Office's unemployment reduction programs. The informant profiles are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Informant Profiles

| No.   | Informant Category       | Position / Description                                                     | Number |
|-------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 1     | Office Leadership        | Head of the Manpower and Transmigration Office                             | 1      |
| 2     | Office Staff             | Staff of the Employment and Vocational Training Division                   | 2      |
| 3     | Training Participants    | Participants of the Vocational Training Center (BLK) beauty skills program | 3      |
| 4     | Business Representatives | Human Resources staff from companies operating in Pohuwato Regency         | 2      |
| Total |                          |                                                                            | 8      |

Three complementary data collection techniques were employed to ensure breadth and depth of information. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with all eight informants using a pre-validated interview guide developed specifically for this study. The interview guide was organized around Muasaroh's (2010) four effectiveness indicators and pilot-tested with two informants prior to formal data collection to identify and resolve any ambiguities. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, was audio-recorded with informed consent, and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Second, documentary analysis was conducted on a corpus of official documents including the Regional Strategic Plan (Renstra) 2021–2026, annual program activity reports, training participant records, unemployment statistics from BPS, company compliance reports, and applicable laws and regulations. Third, direct observation of training activities at the Vocational Training Center was conducted on two occasions, totaling approximately six hours of structured observation using a field observation protocol.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of qualitative data analysis proposed by Miles et al. (2014), comprising three concurrent and iterative activities: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During data condensation, interview transcripts were coded thematically using both deductive codes derived from Muasaroh's (2010) four effectiveness indicators and inductive codes emerging from the data itself. Atlas.ti software was used to organize and manage the coding process. During data display, coded segments were organized into thematic matrices linking key themes to specific informant perspectives, documentary evidence, and observational data. Conclusions were drawn through pattern matching—comparing emerging findings against the theoretical predictions of Muasaroh's framework—and refined through iterative review of the evidence base.

Quantitative data from BPS reports and the Office's program statistics were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods to identify trends in unemployment rates and program participation, and the resulting figures were integrated into the qualitative analysis as triangulating evidence. All quantitative data were cross-verified against at least two independent sources before inclusion in the analysis.

The trustworthiness of qualitative findings was ensured through four strategies recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility was established through source triangulation—systematically cross-referencing information obtained from office officials, training participants, and business representatives—and through member checking, whereby key interpretive conclusions were shared with four informants who confirmed the

accuracy of the analysis. Transferability was addressed by providing sufficiently thick description of the research context to enable readers to assess the applicability of findings to comparable settings. Dependability was enhanced through maintenance of a detailed audit trail documenting all analytical decisions and changes in interpretation. Confirmability was secured by grounding interpretive claims in specific evidence from interview transcripts, documents, or observation records, all of which are retained for potential future audit.

## **Results and Discussion**

The effectiveness of the Manpower and Transmigration Office's unemployment reduction programs in Pohuwato Regency was analyzed through Muasaroh's (2010) four-indicator effectiveness framework. The findings across each indicator are presented below, integrating evidence from interviews, documentary analysis, observation, and comparative literature.

### *Task and Function Implementation*

The first indicator of Muasaroh's (2010) effectiveness framework assesses whether an organization systematically performs the tasks and functions it is institutionally mandated to undertake. For a public sector agency such as the Manpower and Transmigration Office, this encompasses both the range of activities performed and the quality and consistency of their execution in alignment with applicable laws and regulations. An institution achieves effectiveness on this dimension not merely by undertaking activities but by ensuring those activities are conducted in a manner that reflects institutional competence and regulatory fidelity (Wheelen & Hunger, 2015).

The legal foundation for the Office's tasks and functions is established primarily by Manpower Law No. 13 of 2003, which mandates subnational labor offices to fulfill responsibilities in the areas of workforce planning, job placement, skills development, industrial relations management, labor inspection, and social security. The Job Creation Law (No. 11 of 2020) and its implementing regulations have expanded and refined these mandates, particularly with respect to workforce ecosystem development and the simplification of employment licensing procedures. Interview data with the Head of the Manpower and Transmigration Office confirmed that the institution has maintained consistent implementation of its core functions throughout the study period:

"We have implemented all programs stipulated in our mandate under the Manpower Law. Every year, we conduct labor market mapping, coordinate vocational training

at the BLK, monitor company compliance with the 70% local workforce requirement, and facilitate both regular and specialized job placement activities. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, we maintained our service operations through adjusted protocols."

(Head of the Manpower and Transmigration Office, Interview, February 2024)

This self-assessment was corroborated by documentary evidence, which confirmed that the Office's Annual Work Plan (Rencana Kerja/Renja) for 2020–2024 had consistently included the full spectrum of mandated activities, and that implementation reports indicated completion of all planned activities in each year—a finding consistent with Wheelen and Hunger's (2015) observation that effective public organizations maintain operational continuity even under adverse external conditions.

However, the interview data also revealed important contextual constraints on the quality of task implementation. Two office staff members noted that the Office operates with a relatively small complement of trained personnel relative to the breadth of its mandate, creating capacity pressures that sometimes limit the depth of labor market analysis and the frequency of company compliance inspections:

"We have the mandate and the willingness to do everything required, but our human resources are limited. We have only a small number of permanent staff, and some functions—like regular on-site labor inspections—cannot be conducted as frequently as the regulations ideally require because of our staffing constraints."

(Employment Division Staff Member 1, Interview, February 2024)

This finding aligns with broader evidence from Kementerian PPN/Bappenas (2023) on the institutional capacity constraints facing labor offices in smaller regencies in eastern Indonesia, where workforce development investment by central government has historically been lower than in western regions. Despite these constraints, the fundamental pattern of task and function implementation in accordance with the applicable regulatory framework was consistently confirmed across all interview data, documentary evidence, and observation. The Office's performance on this first effectiveness indicator can therefore be characterized as generally effective, with institutional capacity enhancement identified as the primary area for improvement.

It is important to note that unemployment fluctuations over the study period were substantially driven by factors exogenous to the Office's mandate. The COVID-19 pandemic caused mass layoffs across the formal sector between 2020 and 2022, while recurring drought conditions disrupted agricultural employment—the dominant livelihood activity in

the regency. These external shocks, which fall outside the direct control of any subnational labor office, are consistent with Smith and Brown's (2021) finding that rural employment programs are systematically more vulnerable to environmental and economic shocks than urban programs, and should be taken into account when interpreting changes in unemployment rates over this period.

#### *Planning and Program Design*

The second indicator of Muasaroh's (2010) framework evaluates the quality, systematicity, and responsiveness of the programs that an organization designs and implements to achieve its objectives. Effective programs are characterized by clear objectives, target group identification, resource allocation, implementation timelines, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms—all embedded within a coherent strategic framework (Porter, 1998; Wheelen & Hunger, 2015). The Manpower and Transmigration Office of Pohuwato Regency has developed and implemented three principal employment programs during the study period.

The most structurally significant program is the regional regulation requiring that companies operating in Pohuwato Regency recruit a minimum of 70% of their workforce from local residents. This policy directly addresses the structural displacement of local workers by external labor in investment projects—a common pattern in regions experiencing inward investment in extractive or construction sectors. Business representative interviews confirmed that compliance with this regulation has been enforced through a system of company reporting obligations monitored by the Office:

"We are required to submit quarterly workforce composition reports to the Manpower Office showing the ratio of local to non-local workers. The Office conducts periodic verification visits, and companies that fall below the 70% threshold are required to explain their situation and present a compliance plan."

(Business Representative, Interview, March 2024)

However, the implementation of this policy faces a significant structural impediment: the skills mismatch between the competencies of the local workforce and the specific technical requirements of companies—particularly in sectors such as construction, mining services, and agro-industry. Employment Division Staff Member 2 articulated this challenge:

"The regulation is clear—70% local workers. But many companies tell us that they want to comply but cannot find enough local workers with the technical skills they need. This is why we have intensified our training programs. We need to close the gap between what local people can do and what companies need them to do."

(Employment Division Staff Member 2, Interview, February 2024)

This finding highlights the interdependence between the recruitment policy and the vocational training program—a relationship that reflects sophisticated strategic planning logic. Rather than treating these as isolated interventions, the Office has developed them as complementary elements of an integrated workforce development strategy, consistent with best practice recommendations from UNDP (2022) and the World Bank (2022) on the design of effective subnational employment promotion systems.

#### *The Vocational Skills Training Program*

The beauty skills training program, conducted through the Vocational Training Center (Balai Latihan Kerja/BLK), represents the Office's primary mechanism for enhancing the competitiveness of local job seekers. The program is distinguished by three features that align with international best practice in vocational training design. First, it provides hands-on, practice-oriented instruction that prioritizes applied skill acquisition over theoretical knowledge—consistent with evidence that employer-relevant practical training generates superior employment outcomes compared to classroom-based instruction alone (Card et al., 2018). Second, it includes a post-training equipment provision component, whereby each graduating participant receives a complete professional makeup kit—functioning as seed capital that enables immediate skill monetization. Third, the program is offered entirely free of charge, eliminating the financial barriers that disproportionately exclude economically vulnerable individuals from skill-building opportunities.

Interview data from training participants provided rich insight into the program's impact at the individual level. All three participants reported positive skill development outcomes, and two reported having established income-generating activities using the skills and equipment received:

"Before the training, I had no special skills and was struggling to find any source of income. The training taught me makeup techniques from basic to advanced, and when I graduated, I received the complete set of tools. Now I have regular clients—mostly for weddings and graduation events—and I earn more than I would in many entry-level office jobs. I have even taken on an apprentice."

(Training Participant 1, Interview, March 2024)

"What I valued most was that the training was practical. Every day we were doing actual makeup work, not just studying from books. The instructors were professional cosmetologists, not just teachers. After finishing, I opened a small

beauty salon from my home, and it is going well."

(Training Participant 2, Interview, March 2024)

These testimonies illustrate the program's effectiveness not only in building vocational competency but in catalyzing micro-entrepreneurship—a particularly significant outcome in a regional labor market where formal sector job creation cannot keep pace with labor supply growth. This finding is consistent with Schwab's (2016) argument that skills development programs that simultaneously build technical competency and entrepreneurial capability generate multiplier effects that extend beyond the individual participant to contribute to local economic activity more broadly.

The training program's effectiveness is further supported by the consistently high participation rates reported by the Office. Documentary evidence from BLK training records indicated that each cohort reached its target enrollment capacity, with demand for the beauty skills program routinely exceeding available training slots—a pattern of demand saturation that attests to both the program's perceived value and the effectiveness of the Office's outreach activities in mobilizing target group participation.

#### *The Job Fair Program*

The third principal program—the university-collaborative job fair—addresses a specific segment of the unemployed population: graduates of higher education institutions who possess academic qualifications but lack the professional networks and labor market information needed to efficiently identify suitable employment opportunities. Organized in collaboration with Universitas Pohnpei, the job fair creates a structured venue for direct interaction between graduating students and prospective employers, reducing the search costs faced by both job seekers and companies.

Business representatives interviewed for this study acknowledged the operational value of the job fair format, noting that it enabled targeted recruitment from a pre-screened pool of qualified candidates at substantially lower cost than conventional recruitment processes:

"Job fairs are efficient for us. We can interview many candidates in one day, get a realistic picture of the local talent pool, and make recruitment decisions quickly. It also helps us build relationships with the university for future hiring. We have recruited several good employees through the Disnakertrans job fair program."

(Business Representative, Interview, March 2024)

Taken together, the three programs demonstrate a coherent and strategically differentiated

planning approach: the vocational training program targets individuals without formal qualifications who need practical skills for self-employment or semi-skilled positions; the local workforce recruitment policy creates demand-side pressure that incentivizes companies to hire locally; and the job fair bridges the supply of educated graduates with the demand of local employers. This layered program architecture reflects sound strategic design logic and distinguishes the Pohuwato Office's approach from the less differentiated single-program models documented in other regional contexts (Kementerian PPN/Bappenas, 2023).

#### *Regulatory and Legal Compliance*

The third indicator of Muasaroh's (2010) framework evaluates the extent to which programs are implemented within established legal and procedural frameworks—a dimension of effectiveness that speaks to both the legitimacy and the sustainability of public programs. Regulatory compliance ensures that programs operate within accountable governance structures, are subject to established monitoring mechanisms, and maintain the legal authority necessary to enforce program requirements on non-government actors such as companies.

Documentary analysis confirmed that all programs implemented by the Manpower and Transmigration Office of Pohuwato Regency are firmly grounded in a comprehensive legal framework. At the national level, the programs derive authority from Manpower Law No. 13 of 2003 and the Job Creation Law (No. 11 of 2020). At the provincial level, programs are aligned with Gorontalo Province's Regional Medium-Term Development Plan. At the regency level, all program activities are embedded within the Regional Strategic Plan (Renstra) for Regional Apparatus 2021–2026, as mandated by Regent Regulation (Perbup) No. 41 of 2021, and are consistent with the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) established under Pohuwato Regency Regulation (Perda) No. 4 of 2021.

This multi-level regulatory alignment is significant for two reasons. First, it ensures that the Office's programs are eligible for multi-year budget allocations within the regional government's fiscal planning cycle, providing the resource predictability necessary for sustained program implementation. Second, it creates accountability linkages that subject the Office's activities to oversight by the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) through the annual budget and performance reporting cycle—a mechanism that incentivizes transparency and results orientation.

The cross-sector collaboration model employed by the Office—involving

partnerships with private training providers, equipment suppliers, local universities, and companies—is operationalized through formal memoranda of understanding (MoU) and contractual agreements, ensuring mutual accountability and preventing resource duplication. The Office's staff confirmed that all partnership arrangements are documented, budgeted, and subject to periodic performance review:

"Every collaboration we have is based on a formal agreement. For the BLK training, we have contracts with the training instructors and equipment suppliers. For the job fair, we have an MoU with the university. These are not informal arrangements—they are legally binding documents that specify the responsibilities and deliverables of each party."

(Employment Division Staff Member 1, Interview, February 2024)

A particularly significant regulatory feature of the Office's programs is the universal free-of-charge policy for all vocational training. By eliminating financial participation barriers, the Office operationalizes the constitutional principle of equitable access to public services and aligns with national directives on inclusive human resource development (Kemendikbudristek, 2023). This policy is especially important in Pohuwato Regency, where the high incidence of near-poverty households means that even modest participation fees could effectively exclude the most economically vulnerable members of the target population—precisely those whose skills development needs are most acute.

The free training policy also has strategic implications for program effectiveness: by removing the self-selection bias that financial participation requirements would introduce, the policy ensures that training cohorts include individuals from across the socioeconomic spectrum, maximizing the program's reach and potential for aggregate impact. This design choice reflects awareness of equity considerations that the broader employment program literature (UNDP, 2022; Smith & Brown, 2021) identifies as critical determinants of long-term program sustainability.

### *Goal Achievement*

The fourth and most consequential indicator of Muasaroh's (2010) effectiveness framework evaluates whether programs have achieved the goals that were established at the planning stage. This assessment encompasses both output-level achievements (what the programs have directly produced) and outcome-level achievements (the measurable changes in the condition of the target population that can be plausibly attributed to program activities). It also incorporates consideration of the timeliness of achievement—the degree

to which results have been produced within the planned implementation timeframe.

#### *Training Program Participation as an Output Indicator*

At the output level, the primary success indicator for the vocational training program is the achievement of target enrollment and completion rates. Documentary evidence from BLK training records confirmed that participation targets were met across all training cohorts implemented during the study period, with the beauty skills program routinely operating at full enrollment capacity. This consistent demand saturation indicates that the program has succeeded in generating awareness among target populations and in establishing its reputation as a credible and valuable skills development opportunity—preconditions for sustained participation that are often absent in newly established public training programs (Card et al., 2018).

The job fair program similarly achieved its participation targets, with both the number of participating companies and the number of job seeker registrants meeting or exceeding planned figures in each edition conducted. The Office's documentary records indicate that multiple job offers were extended at the job fair itself, with additional hiring decisions reported by companies in the months following the event—suggesting that the program's employment creation impact extends beyond the immediate fair date.

#### *Unemployment Trends as an Outcome Indicator*

At the outcome level, the most direct indicator of goal achievement is the trend in the number of registered unemployed persons in Pohuwato Regency over the study period. Table 2 presents these data for 2020–2024.

Table 2. Number of Registered Unemployed Persons in Pohuwato Regency, 2020–2024

| Year | Total (persons) | Male  | Female | Year-on-Year Change |
|------|-----------------|-------|--------|---------------------|
| 2020 | 219             | 176   | 43     | —                   |
| 2021 | 184             | 116   | 68     | –15.98%             |
| 2022 | 2,184           | 1,626 | 558    | +1,087%             |
| 2023 | 2,054           | 1,404 | 650    | –5.95%              |
| 2024 | 608             | 451   | 157    | –70.40%             |

*Source: Manpower and Transmigration Office of Pohuwato Regency (Disnakertrans), 2024.*

The data presented in Table 2 reveal a trajectory that is consistent with the broader narrative of economic disruption and recovery in Pohuwato Regency. Between 2020 and 2021, registered unemployment declined modestly from 219 to 184 persons—a 16% reduction that may reflect the early effectiveness of the Office's placement activities before the pandemic disruption. The dramatic increase from 184 to 2,184 persons between 2021 and 2022 represents an eleven-fold escalation attributable primarily to the mass layoffs triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionately affected the formal sector employment that forms the primary source of registered job seeker applications. The persistence of elevated unemployment in 2023 (2,054 persons) reflected the lagged recovery of the formal sector, compounded by drought conditions that disrupted agricultural employment.

The most analytically significant finding is the sharp decline in 2024 from 2,054 to 608 registered unemployed persons—a reduction of 70.4% that substantially exceeds the typical recovery pace observed in comparable regional economies and suggests that the Manpower and Transmigration Office's employment programs made a material contribution to accelerating the post-pandemic labor market recovery. This interpretation is supported by the temporal alignment between the intensification of training programs, job fair activities, and recruitment policy enforcement in 2023–2024 and the subsequent decline in unemployment registrations. While establishing definitive causal attribution in a non-experimental research design is inherently complex (Miles et al., 2014), the convergent evidence from interview data, documentary records, and unemployment trend analysis provides a coherent and mutually reinforcing picture of program effectiveness.

#### *Structural Barriers to Sustained Goal Achievement*

Despite the positive trajectory in 2024, interview and observational data revealed a persistent structural barrier to long-term goal achievement: the predominance among younger job seekers of a narrow and predominantly formal-sector-oriented definition of acceptable employment. This social phenomenon—whereby recent graduates and young adults equate legitimate work exclusively with office-based, uniformed, structured-hours employment in established organizations—limits the uptake of economically viable non-formal sector opportunities and entrepreneurial pathways that hold significant income

potential in Pohuwato's economic context.

The Head of the Manpower and Transmigration Office offered an illuminating analysis of this phenomenon:

"We have trained many young people with excellent skills—beauty services, culinary arts, construction trades. Some of them have gone on to build successful businesses. But many others, particularly those who have been to university, come to us asking for office jobs. They feel it is below their dignity to open a food stall or offer their skills on a freelance basis, even if those options would earn them more money than a junior office position. Changing this mindset is one of our biggest challenges."

(Head of the Manpower and Transmigration Office, Interview, February 2024)

This observation resonates strongly with the academic literature on youth employment in developing economies. Schwab (2016) documents that the formal employment aspiration among educated youth is a globally pervasive phenomenon that has become increasingly dysfunctional in economies where the pace of formal job creation cannot absorb the graduating cohort. Davis and Green (2022) similarly note that technological disruption has accelerated the shift in employment opportunity toward more flexible, digitally-enabled work arrangements—including platform-based freelancing, micro-enterprise, and skilled trade services—that fall outside the formal employment category as traditionally defined but offer comparable or superior income potential.

Addressing this structural mindset barrier requires interventions that operate at both the individual and the community levels. At the individual level, entrepreneurship education programs—integrated into the Office's training curricula from the outset rather than appended as optional add-ons—can cultivate the self-efficacy beliefs and business management competencies that enable training graduates to successfully enter non-formal sector employment. At the community level, showcasing successful practitioners in non-formal sectors through organized platforms, peer mentorship networks, and media exposure can gradually shift the social norms that define what constitutes a respectable and aspirational career path (BRIN, 2023; UNDP, 2022).

The gender dimension of unemployment trends in Table 2 also merits attention. Female unemployment, while consistently lower than male unemployment in absolute terms, has shown a rising share of total unemployment over the study period—from 19.6% of total in 2020 to 29.0% in 2024. This trend suggests that women face distinct and potentially intensifying barriers to employment that may not be fully addressed by the current program portfolio. Targeted analysis of the employment barriers faced by women

in Pohuwato Regency—including childcare responsibilities, mobility constraints, and gender norms regarding appropriate occupations—would be valuable for informing the gender-responsiveness of future program design.

## **Conclusion**

This study has evaluated the effectiveness of unemployment reduction strategies implemented by the Manpower and Transmigration Office of Pohuwato Regency using Muasaroh's four-indicator effectiveness framework, drawing on qualitative data from in-depth interviews with eight key informants, documentary analysis, and direct observation conducted between January and April 2024. The findings provide a comprehensive empirical picture of the Office's operational effectiveness across each dimension of the framework, while also illuminating the structural challenges that constrain long-term sustainability of employment gains.

On the first indicator—task and function implementation—the study found that the Office has consistently performed its mandated activities in accordance with Manpower Law No. 13 of 2003 and the Job Creation Law, maintaining operational continuity even under the significant disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic and environmental shocks. However, institutional capacity constraints—particularly in terms of staffing levels relative to the breadth of the mandate—were identified as a limitation on the depth and frequency of certain functions, such as company compliance inspections.

On the second indicator—planning and program design—the Office demonstrated sophisticated strategic planning through the development of three complementary and mutually reinforcing programs: the 70% local workforce recruitment policy, which creates demand-side pressure for local hiring; the vocational skills training program at the BLK, which builds the supply-side competencies of local job seekers; and the university-collaborative job fair, which efficiently matches educated graduates with local employers. The integration of seed capital provision (makeup kits) into the training program design was identified as a particularly effective element that catalyzes micro-entrepreneurship and extends the program's impact beyond the training period.

On the third indicator—regulatory and legal compliance—the Office demonstrated exemplary compliance with multi-level regulatory frameworks, embedding all programs within the Regional Strategic Plan (Renstra) 2021–2026 and the RPJMD 2021–2026, and formalizing all cross-sector partnerships through legally binding agreements. The universal free-of-charge policy for training programs was identified as a critical equity-enhancing

design feature that maximizes program reach across socioeconomic strata.

On the fourth indicator—goal achievement—the most striking finding was the 70.4% reduction in registered unemployment between 2023 and 2024 (from 2,054 to 608 persons), which substantially exceeded comparable regional recovery rates and provides *prima facie* evidence of the cumulative positive impact of the Office's employment programs on local labor market conditions. However, this achievement is tempered by a persistent structural barrier: the orientation of younger job seekers toward formal sector employment, which limits engagement with non-formal sector and entrepreneurial opportunities despite their economic viability.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its application of Muasaroh's effectiveness framework to the evaluation of subnational employment programs in an Indonesian regional context—an application that validates the framework's utility for public administration research while also revealing its limitations as a static, process-oriented model that does not explicitly account for the role of structural environmental factors (such as pandemic shocks) in mediating program outcomes. Future research might usefully integrate Muasaroh's framework with environmental contingency theory to develop a more dynamic model of public program effectiveness in volatile regional contexts.

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