

Breaking the Chains of Poverty Through the Family Hope Program

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Abstract

This study evaluates the effectiveness of the Family Hope Program (PKH) in Harjamukti District, Cirebon City, where the Family Hope Program (PKH) aims to break the chain of poverty and improve family welfare. The method used is a qualitative approach with a focus on three parameters: clarity of program objectives, success in achieving objectives, and efficiency of implementation. The results of the study show that the Family Hope Program (PKH) in Harjamukti District, Cirebon City has been running effectively, besides that the Family Hope Program (PKH) has had a positive impact, such as increasing the attendance of children at school and regular visits of pregnant women to posyandu. However, there are challenges in terms of the accuracy of the goals and the community's understanding of the program's objectives, therefore it is necessary to strengthen socialization and education for beneficiaries so that the long-term goals of PKH can be understood and implemented properly, so as to support the economic independence of poor families in a sustainable manner.

Keywords : *Poverty; PKH; Effectiveness; Welfare*

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INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a complex and multidimensional problem involving various social, economic, and cultural aspects. In Indonesia, despite a decline in poverty rates in recent decades, this challenge remains a key issue in the country's development policy. The poverty rate in Indonesia, recorded in March 2024, stands at 9.03% according to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS, 2024). This figure reflects deep social disparities, particularly in areas with high levels of vulnerability, such as Cirebon City.

In Cirebon City, poverty continues to be a serious challenge, with the number of poor people reaching 29.17 thousand, or 9.02% of the total population of 344.85 thousand in 2024. Harjamukti District is one of the areas with a high poverty rate. The total population in Harjamukti District is 128,587 people (BPS, 2024), the majority of whom work in the informal sector with irregular incomes.

The local government of Cirebon City has made various efforts to address this poverty issue. One strategic initiative is the implementation of the *Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH)*, or Family Hope Program, in Harjamukti District, which began in November 2014. Through PKH, it is expected that access to basic services can be improved, thereby accelerating the empowerment of poor families.

The Family Hope Program is a conditional social assistance initiative aimed at families and/or individuals classified as poor and vulnerable. PKH seeks to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of the community by providing cash assistance to *Keluarga Penerima*

Manfaat (KPM), or Beneficiary Families, registered in the *Data Terpadu Kesejahteraan Sosial (DTKS)* (*Permensos* No. 1 of 2018).

According to the *Regulation of the Minister of Social Affairs Number 1 of 2018*, PKH beneficiaries must meet several criteria, namely:

1. Poor and Vulnerable Families – Families categorized as poor or socioeconomically vulnerable.
2. Having Specific Family Members, such as:
 - a) Pregnant and/or lactating women,
 - b) School-age children (5–21 years old),
 - c) Elderly individuals or family members with severe and permanent disabilities.

The amount of PKH assistance is adjusted according to the beneficiary category:

1. Pregnant women: Rp. 750,000 per phase or Rp. 3,000,000 per year
2. Early childhood (0–6 years): Rp. 750,000 per phase or Rp. 3,000,000 per year
3. School-age children:
 - a) Primary School: Rp. 225,000 per phase or Rp. 900,000 per year
 - b) Junior High School: Rp. 375,000 per phase or Rp. 1,500,000 per year
 - c) High School: Rp. 500,000 per phase or Rp. 2,000,000 per year
4. Senior citizens (70 years and above): Rp. 600,000 per phase or Rp. 2,400,000 per year
5. People with Severe Disabilities: Rp. 600,000 per phase or Rp. 2,400,000 per year

PKH is not merely financial aid. As a conditional program, it aims to motivate behavior change in beneficiary families. For example, children are required to attend school, which is intended to increase educational participation and enhance future skills and productivity. Similarly, requiring pregnant women and toddlers to undergo regular health check-ups is expected to reduce maternal and child mortality rates and improve overall public health.

The Family Hope Program is governed by several legal regulations. One of the main ones is *Permensos* No. 1 of 2018, which defines the criteria and conditions for receiving assistance. Additionally, *Permensos* No. 262 of 2022 outlines the technical mechanisms for implementing PKH, including procedures for verifying and validating beneficiaries, and the distribution of aid. *Permensos* No. 73 of 2024 updates several provisions related to aid distribution and service improvement for beneficiaries. These three regulations provide essential guidelines for PKH's management and implementation, aiming to reduce poverty and enhance welfare.

Barnard's theory of effectiveness, as cited in Prawirosentono (2008), is a key foundation for analyzing program success. According to Prawirosentono, program effectiveness can be assessed through three main aspects: clarity of objectives, achievement of goals, and efficiency in implementation. Each must function effectively for the program to be deemed successful.

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of PKH in Harjamukti District by focusing on those three parameters. Using a qualitative approach, the research explores community perceptions of the program and its impact on poor families' welfare (Fitri & Zubaedah, 2020).

The relevance of this research lies in the crucial role PKH plays in poverty alleviation in Indonesia. Understanding its effectiveness in both goals and execution will provide constructive input to improve program quality. Hence, the study not only offers a comprehensive picture of PKH implementation in Harjamukti District but also provides

valuable recommendations for local and national policymakers to improve future social programs.

According to Barnard, effectiveness is a dynamic condition that involves processes of carrying out tasks and work functions aligned with the objectives and mechanisms of policy programs. From this concept arises the dimension of program effectiveness (Khumayah et al., 2020), which consists of the following indicators:

1. Clarity of Program Objectives – Understanding what is to be achieved and how to achieve it.
2. Successful Goal Achievement – Measuring to what extent the goals are met using available resources.
3. Implementation Efficiency – How well resources are managed to maximize outcomes.

Program success is measured by the extent to which goals are achieved, comparing results with initial objectives and participant input. This evaluation forms the core indicator of program effectiveness (Setiyowati, 2022).

Effective policy implementation requires strong communication between program implementers and target groups. Increased program knowledge among participants reduces rejection and errors in real-world application (Bharoto & Nursahidin, 2021).

According to Khumayah, Hardjowikarto, and Yulistiani (2020), in their study “*Analysis of Family Planning Village Policy as an Effort to Alleviate Poverty in Cirebon City*,” the Family Planning (*Keluarga Berencana*) Program is a strategic step in poverty alleviation through population control and family development. This policy highlights the importance of community empowerment in addressing socio-economic problems, particularly structural poverty. The study demonstrates that integrated community-based policies can effectively improve public welfare. This aligns with PKH’s dual role—providing cash assistance and raising awareness about education, health, and population issues.

Lubis and Zubaedah (2020), in their research “*The Effectiveness of Family Hope in Poverty Alleviation*,” concluded that PKH in Tenayan Raya District, Pekanbaru City, was effective, with an effectiveness score of 74%. This was evident through the adherence to guidelines by program facilitators, appropriate distribution, and accurate targeting of beneficiaries. However, challenges remain, such as insufficient aid amounts, weak coordination among implementers, and limited supervision. Thus, enhanced supervision and coordination are necessary to optimize PKH benefits.

The *Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH)*, a conditional cash transfer policy, is one of the government’s flagship programs designed to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty by encouraging poor families to invest in health and education. While PKH has been studied nationally, this research offers a novel, context-specific evaluation of its effectiveness in Harjamukti—a district with unique socio-cultural and geographical conditions. The novelty lies in its micro-level analysis involving three types of participants: active beneficiaries, applicants on waiting lists, and program graduates. This multi-layered perspective allows deeper insight into both program design and community reception.

The urgency of this research stems from the ongoing mismatch between PKH’s policy goals and the community’s understanding and behaviors. While PKH is designed for long-term empowerment, many beneficiaries perceive it merely as short-term financial assistance.

Moreover, with only 442 of 4,043 recipients graduating from the program over a decade, the intended empowerment outcomes remain elusive in Harjamukti. This highlights a significant research gap: previous studies have inadequately explored how local implementation barriers—such as labeling stigma, limited accessibility, and social resistance—contribute to delayed economic independence.

Accordingly, this study evaluates PKH's effectiveness in Harjamukti through the lens of Barnard's effectiveness theory, focusing on goal clarity, goal attainment, and implementation efficiency. By anchoring the analysis in this specific context, the research contributes empirical evidence to localized poverty policy effectiveness while offering practical recommendations to enhance PKH's implementation in other underserved urban areas. In doing so, it provides actionable insights for policymakers to recalibrate strategies and for implementers to strengthen outreach and sustainability frameworks.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach based on the views of Creswell and Poth (2018), which aims to understand social phenomena through individual experiences in real-life contexts. This approach is used to explore in depth the effectiveness of the implementation of the *Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH)* in Harjamukti District, Cirebon City. The focus of the research is directed at the clarity of program objectives, the success of achieving those objectives, and the efficiency of program implementation.

The research subjects consisted of three groups: prospective beneficiaries who had registered but had not yet received assistance, to explore their expectations and understanding of the program; active beneficiary families, to evaluate their experiences while receiving assistance; and former beneficiaries who had graduated from the program, to understand PKH's contribution to their economic independence. In addition, *PKH* facilitators and the Cirebon City *PKH* coordinator were also included to provide information related to program implementation, policy, and oversight.

The research locations included the Cirebon City Social Service Office, for interviews with the Cirebon City *PKH* coordinator; the Harjamukti District *PKH* Secretariat, for interviews with facilitators and the collection of official documents; and the homes of beneficiaries, for in-depth interviews and direct observations.

Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews using semi-structured interview guides containing open-ended questions to explore the experiences and perspectives of research subjects. In addition, a documentation study was conducted to analyze official documents such as beneficiary data, program reports, and government policy documents. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, with the inclusion criteria being: (1) an active or former *PKH* beneficiary in Harjamukti District, (2) a registered prospective recipient who had not yet received assistance, or (3) a *PKH* facilitator or city-level coordinator. This selection ensured a diverse representation of experiences and roles within the program.

For data analysis, the study adopted a thematic analysis approach. Interview transcripts were manually coded to identify emerging themes aligned with the three core aspects of effectiveness. Codes were refined iteratively and grouped into categories following Braun and

Clarke's thematic analysis procedure. This process allowed the researchers to extract recurring patterns and interpret meanings from the experiences of informants. To ensure validity, triangulation was conducted across data sources (interviews, observations, and documents), and member checking was applied by confirming key findings with selected informants.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), data analysis in qualitative research is conducted inductively, where researchers identify themes and patterns that emerge from the collected data without imposing prior theories. This research aims to produce an in-depth and comprehensive description to understand the effectiveness of *PKH* within the social context of Harjamukti District. This analysis process enables researchers to understand the meanings that research subjects assign to their experiences in the *PKH* program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the Family Hope Program (*PKH*) in Harjamukti District, Cirebon City, has a positive impact on the welfare of poor families, but faces several problems that hinder its effectiveness. Based on the results of the interviews, the main problems in breaking the poverty chain include target accuracy, social and cultural resistance, geographical access, fund management, *the COVID-19 pandemic*, as well as socialization and understanding of programs. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of *PKH* based on the clarity of goal achievement, success in goal achievement, and efficiency in program implementation.

In terms of clarity of objectives, even though socialization has been carried out through regular meetings and educational modules, there are still recipients who do not fully understand the goals and obligations of the program. This is in accordance with Permensos No. 1 of 2018 which aims to improve the quality of life of poor families through education and health, as well as Permensos No. 262 of 2022 which regulates the receipt of assistance. Socialization needs to be strengthened so that the long-term goals of the program are well understood.

In terms of the success of achieving goals, data shows an increase in the field of education, children's attendance at school reaches 85%, as well as pregnant women and toddlers who visit posyandu more regularly. However, KPM's internal issues, such as target accuracy, fund management, cultural resistance, and the impact of the pandemic, remain a challenge.

In terms of implementation efficiency, the main challenges are related to geographical access and the house labeling process. Limited access in Argasunya Village slows down the distribution of aid and supervision, while home labelling often puts psychological pressure on beneficiaries.

Clarity of Program Objectives

The clarity of the purpose of the *PKH* program in this study aims to ensure that the objectives of the program have been clearly conveyed and understood by all parties involved, both by the Beneficiary Families (KPM) and the companions responsible for the implementation of the program. Clarity of objectives is very important so that the entire implementation process runs according to expectations and KPM can follow the provisions that have been set properly.

However, in Harjamukti District, there are still some KPM who do not understand the full essence of the *PKH* program. Many of them only see *PKH* as temporary financial

assistance, without realizing that its main purpose is to empower the community and guide them towards economic independence. PKH does not only provide cash assistance to meet daily needs, but aims to break the cycle of poverty that has taken root in beneficiary families.

For most KPMs, especially in areas with a limited level of understanding, the assistance is often seen as a short-term solution to meet consumptive needs, such as children's school fees or other household needs. In fact, they are less aware that this program is also designed to open up opportunities for them to manage aid wisely and sustainably. PKH also provides an opportunity to create business opportunities and improve family welfare in the long term, aiming to break dependence on social assistance.

One of the challenges found is that even though the goals of the program have been socialized, there are still some KPM who have difficulty understanding their obligations as program participants, such as the importance of children's attendance at school and visits to posyandu. Although PKH facilitators routinely conduct socialization, the public's understanding of the information conveyed is sometimes limited, especially due to differences in the level of understanding and response that exist. This shows that the socialization process still needs to be improved so that information can be more easily understood by the public. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen more in-depth education about the long-term goals of PKH, especially related to how the assistance received can be used for family economic empowerment, and not just for momentary needs.

Facilitators are expected to be able to adjust the socialization approach to the local context and the level of community understanding, so that the program objectives can be well accepted and implemented optimally. More in-depth and systematic socialization on the long-term benefits of this program is needed to help KPM understand that PKH is the first step towards economic independence and sustainable improvement of their family's quality of life. With a better understanding of the goals of PKH, it is hoped that participants can make the most of the assistance, not only to survive, but also to plan for a more prosperous future. If education and understanding of this program are strengthened, it is hoped that families will be created who are more economically independent and not dependent on social assistance in the long term.

Successful Goal Achievement

The success of achieving the program goals in this study is intended to assess the extent to which the Family Hope Program (PKH) has succeeded in achieving its goals, especially in breaking the poverty chain and improving the welfare of poor families. After conducting research with in-depth interviews with various parties, there are problems in achieving this aspect, including the accuracy of the target, social and cultural resistance, *the COVID-19 pandemic*, and the management of aid funds also affect the success of the program's goals.

The Family Hope Program (PKH) has contributed to reducing the poverty rate, this program is still not able to completely break the chain of poverty. The poverty trend in Cirebon City from 2013 to 2024 shows significant changes, especially after the strengthening of the Family Hope Program (PKH) through Permensos No. 1 of 2018. To understand the dynamics of poverty in Cirebon City before and after the implementation of the Family Hope Program (PKH), the following data is presented regarding the poverty line, the number of poor people, and the percentage of poor people from 2013 to 2024.

Table 1. Poverty Trends in Cirebon City in 2013-2024

Year	Number of Poor People (Thousands)	Percentage of Poor Population (%)
2013	31.90	10.54 (Before PKH was implemented)
2014	30.60	10.03 (PKH applied)
2015	31.74	10.36
2016	30.15	9.73
2017	30.19	9.66
2018	28.03	8.88 (PKH strengthened by Permensos No.1 of 2018)
2019	26.80	8.41
2020	30.61	9.52 (<i>COVID-19 Pandemic</i>)
2021	31.98	10.03
2022	31.47	9.82
2023	29.49	9.16
2024	29,17	9.02

Source: BPS, March National Socio-Economic Survey

In 2013, the percentage of poor people was recorded at 10.54% and experienced a gradual decline until it reached 9.66% in 2017. Despite fluctuations, such as the increase again in 2015, the general trend shows a decline, although it is still not optimal due to a variety of factors, including the limitations of social assistance programs that were not as effective at the time after clearer regulations.

After the enactment of Permensos No. 1 of 2018, which strengthened PKH with an approach based on education, health, and social welfare obligations, the poverty rate fell to 8.88% in 2018 and continued until it reached the lowest point in 2019, which was 8.41%. However, the *COVID-19* pandemic in 2020 caused the poverty rate to increase back to 9.52% and even rose to 10.03% in 2021, due to the economic impact felt by the poor. After the pandemic began to subside, the poverty trend decreased again to 9.82% in 2022 and then to 9.02% in 2024.

The change in poverty trend in Cirebon City shows that the Family Hope Program (PKH) has a significant impact in reducing the poverty rate, especially after being strengthened with a more targeted policy through Permensos No. 1 of 2018. However, although the overall trend shows a decline, there are various challenges that affect the success of achieving the PKH goals.

One of the areas in Cirebon City that is the focus of PKH implementation is Harjamukti District. As a sub-district with a large population, Harjamukti has a significant number of PKH recipients.

Table 2. Number of PKH Recipients in Harjamukti District, Cirebon City

Neighborhoods	Sum
Harjamukti	872
Stuttgart	1369
São Paulo	1105
Harp	517
Prohibition	180

Sum

4043

Source: PKH Coordinator of Harjamukti District

One of the main obstacles to the success of PKH in Harjamukti District is the problem of target accuracy. *Inclusion errors* and *exclusion errors* still occur due to inaccurate and not updated beneficiary data regularly. This causes assistance to sometimes be received by families who are actually able to afford it, while families who really need it are missed. As a result, the effectiveness of the program in distributing aid to the most vulnerable groups has been reduced, as well as triggering social jealousy in the community.

In addition, social and cultural resistance is also a challenge in the implementation of PKH. In some areas, such as Argasu Village, resistance to health programs, such as immunization, has an impact on achieving welfare goals. People who refuse health services for cultural reasons or certain beliefs hinder the effectiveness of programs in improving the quality of life of beneficiaries. The efforts of PKH companions who take a personal approach by providing real examples are one of the solutions that are quite successful in overcoming this challenge.

The *COVID-19 pandemic* is also a factor that hinders the achievement of PKH goals, especially in the graduation process of Beneficiary Families (KPM). Many families who should have been economically independent remain dependent on assistance due to job and income losses during the pandemic. This economic instability has caused the number of families who have successfully exited the program to decrease drastically compared to before the pandemic.

In addition to external factors, the success of the PKH program is also influenced by how KPM manages the assistance funds they receive. Although most MOEs utilize assistance for children's basic needs and education, there are also challenges in long-term financial planning. Some beneficiaries still have bad habits in financial management, such as using funds for consumptive purposes or even unproductive activities, so the long-term benefits of social assistance are limited.

During the period 2014 to 2024, there were 442 Beneficiary Families (KPM) in Harjamukti District who had graduated from the Family Hope Program (PKH). This figure reflects that the program has succeeded in encouraging some beneficiaries to achieve economic independence. However, when compared to the total number of PKH recipients in Harjamukti District which reached 4,043 KPM, the number of graduates is still relatively small.

This KPM graduation data shows that PKH contributes to reducing poverty rates, but has not been fully able to break the chain of poverty as a whole. Factors such as target accuracy, social and cultural resistance, and suboptimal management of aid funds are still challenges in achieving the program's long-term goals. Therefore, although PKH has had a positive impact, a more comprehensive follow-up strategy is needed so that beneficiaries can achieve sustainable economic independence and reduce dependence on social assistance.

Efficiency in Program Implementation

Efficiency in the implementation of the Family Hope Program aims to ensure that assistance is timely, on target, and used according to the goals that have been set. However, research shows that there are still obstacles that hinder the efficiency of the program, especially

related to geographical access and the house labeling process (Khumayah et al., 2020; Usman, 2015).

The smooth task of the companion in conducting verification and socialization has a great influence on the effectiveness of PKH. In Argasu Village, difficult geographical conditions are a major challenge, due to inadequate transportation infrastructure, such as steep, rocky, and damaged roads, especially during the rainy season (Lestari, 2017; Bharoto & Nursahidin, 2021). This hinders the mobility of companions in verifying, validating data, and socializing the use of assistance for education, health, and family welfare. In addition, the long distance between the beneficiary's residence and the companion's activity center further slows down the mentoring process. As a result, the time required to carry out tasks becomes longer, which has an impact on uncertainty for beneficiaries in understanding their rights and obligations. The lack of optimal socialization can cause beneficiaries difficulties in planning the use of the funds they take at the nearest post office (Lubis & Zubaedah, 2020; Apando et al., 2014).

The effectiveness of PKH is highly dependent on smooth verification, data validation, and socialization. If this process is hampered, then PKH's main goal of improving welfare and reducing poverty can be disrupted. Therefore, efforts are needed to improve the accessibility of companions so that the program can run more optimally and on target (Setiyowanti, 2022; Cirebon City Government, 2024).

The labeling of Beneficiary Family (KPM) houses is a step to increase efficiency and transparency in the implementation of PKH so that social assistance is right on target. This process is carried out by spraying pilox on the walls of the KPM house to map the people who meet the criteria for the poor in accordance with the Ministry of Social Affairs No. 146/HUK/2013, so as to ensure that assistance is received by those who are eligible (Ministry of Social Affairs RI, 2024)

Labeling helps officers in collecting data and verifying beneficiaries' homes so that the program reaches people who really need it. In addition, labeling also supports the optimal use of assistance for PKH's goals in poverty alleviation. This step also serves to remove beneficiaries who are no longer eligible to keep the program in line with the original goal. The labeling is carried out by the village apparatus, the Bhayangkara Security and Public Order Supervisor (Bhabinkamtibmas), and the PKH Companion team with the approval of the homeowner. The use of pilox aims to reduce inclusion errors and increase transparency. However, labeling must be accompanied by effective data updates and good socialization to avoid psychological impacts for beneficiaries (Prawirosentono, 2008; Khomsatun, 2024; Annisa, 2024). Overall, KPM house labeling can increase efficiency in the implementation of the PKH program, reduce the potential for errors, and ensure that assistance reaches the right parties, while supporting the smooth distribution of aid more optimally.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the *Program Keluarga Harapan* (PKH) in Harjamukti District has contributed significantly to improving the welfare of poor families, particularly in enhancing access to education and health services. However, when assessed through Barnard's theory of effectiveness—goal clarity, achievement, and implementation efficiency—the program's performance reveals several limitations. While the program has clear objectives, its

long-term vision is not fully understood by many beneficiaries, who often perceive the aid as temporary financial relief rather than a stepping stone toward economic independence. Although increased school attendance and health checkups are notable successes, challenges persist in accurate targeting, data verification, and fostering sustainable self-reliance among recipients. With only 442 out of 4,043 beneficiaries graduating from the program since its inception, the low graduation rate signals a need for stronger empowerment mechanisms and exit strategies.

Suggestions for future research include conducting longitudinal studies to track the life trajectories of PKH graduates and measure sustained economic independence over time. Future research could also explore the integration of entrepreneurship support or vocational training within PKH to foster long-term empowerment. Additionally, studies that compare PKH effectiveness across urban and rural districts may provide insights into contextual implementation barriers and inform region-specific policy refinements. Lastly, incorporating participatory evaluation methods involving KPMs themselves could yield a deeper understanding of perceived barriers and foster greater community ownership of the program's objectives.

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