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Unemployment and Poverty on Indonesia's Economic Growth in 2002-2022

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Abstract

The capacity of a region or country to improve the well-being of its community reflects its economic growth and overall living standards. However, achieving sustainable economic growth requires monitoring macroeconomic factors such as poverty and unemployment, which significantly impact regional stability. This study, based on data from Statistics Indonesia, analyzed the relationship between these variables and economic growth using multiple linear regression. The findings suggest that unemployment does not significantly influence economic growth, indicating that its role in economic performance may be limited in this context. Conversely, poverty emerged as a critical factor with a significant impact on economic growth, highlighting its importance in shaping economic outcomes. Together, these variables underscore the need for focused efforts to maintain macroeconomic stability, particularly by addressing poverty, to achieve high and sustainable economic growth.

Keywords ; Unemployment, Poverty, Indonesia's Economic Growth

Introduction

The complex relationship between unemployment, poverty, and economic growth in Indonesia significantly shapes the nation's socioeconomic landscape. A key strategy for economic development involves achieving GDP growth that surpasses population growth, as this increases per capita income, fosters prosperity, and reduces poverty. Economic growth is widely recognized as a critical factor in poverty alleviation. However, literature indicates that while Indonesia's economic expansion often correlates with reduced poverty, this relationship varies across regions. Sabur, et al., (2021) highlighted that involving economically disadvantaged groups in the labor market can drive national economic growth and contribute to poverty reduction.

Similarly, Dalimunthe, et al., (2022) emphasized the need for effective economic growth across various sectors to tackle poverty in Indonesia. However, the impact of economic expansion on poverty reduction remains limited. Efendi, et al., (2019) found that while economic growth generally supports poverty alleviation, the relationship is not always statistically significant, suggesting other contributing factors. Additionally, despite economic growth, unemployment continues to be a major issue, indicating that growth alone may not be sufficient to reduce poverty (Utami & Widyastuti, 2023).

Moreover, the findings of Ochi, et al., (2024) However, the impact of economic expansion on poverty is still quite small. Their findings showed that poverty levels usually decline in tandem with increases in economic activity. Conversely, unemployment represents a significant obstacle to economic growth and poverty alleviation. Indeed, a high unemployment rate can exacerbate the poverty rate, thereby impeding overall economic development (Sari, et al., 2023). This conclusion is corroborated by a study was out by Wibowo & Ridha, (2021) who maintained that economic growth and unemployment rates are closely related. They posited that high unemployment rates contribute to an increase in poverty. The role of mediating work opportunities in the relationship between poverty and economic progress is further highlighted by Purnomo & Istiqomah, (2019) who discovered that economic growth can effectively reduce poverty only if it generates sufficient employment opportunities.

In Indonesia, unemployment and poverty rates have exhibited fluctuations over the past two decades, despite an overall increase in economic growth during this period.

Unemployment, Poverty, and Economic Growth Rates in Indonesia (2002-2022)

Year	Unemployment (Milion)	Poverty (Milion)	Economic Growth Rates (000 Rupiah)
2002	9,13	38,40	1.505.216,4
2003	9,53	37,30	1.577.171,3
2004	10,25	36,10	1.656.825,7
2005	10,85	35,10	1.749.546,9
2006	10,93	39,30	1.846.654,9
2007	10,01	37,17	1.964.327,3
2008	9,39	34,96	2.082.315,9
2009	9,26	32,53	2.176.975,5
2010	8,45	31,02	6.864.133,1
2011	8,53	29,89	7.287.635,3
2012	7,55	28,59	7.727.083,4
2013	7,32	28,55	8.158.193,7
2014	7,19	27,73	8.568.115,6
2015	7,50	28,51	8.982.517,1
2016	7,02	27,76	9.434.613,4
2017	7,00	26,58	9.912.928,1
2018	7,01	25,67	10.425.397,3
2019	7,00	24,79	10.949.243,7
2020	8,34	27,55	10.723.054,8
2021	8,92	26,50	11.118.868,5
2022	8,41	26,36	11.710.397,8

Source; Statistics Indonesia - various years of publication, (2022)

Statistics Indonesia data over the past two decades highlights fluctuations in unemployment and economic growth influenced by major events. Unemployment rose significantly from 2002 to 2007, declined gradually until 2019, and spiked again from 2020 to 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to layoffs, reduced household incomes, and increased poverty. Despite these challenges, economic growth, as reflected in gross regional domestic product (GRDP) at constant prices (ADHK), steadily increased from 2002 to 2019. Although the pandemic caused a sharp decline in 2020, the economy showed notable recovery in 2021 and 2022, indicating resilience in the face of adversity.

Furthermore, the role of government spending and fiscal policy must be considered. Effective government spending is a crucial element in the reduction of unemployment and poverty in Indonesia (Akhmad, et al., 2022). This is corroborated by the findings of VanSandt & Sud, (2012) who explained that government initiatives aimed at economic growth can have a profound impact on poverty alleviation. However, a key challenge is ensuring that economic growth is inclusive and equitable, so that its benefits reach the most vulnerable groups in society (Zulfia, et al., 2024). Therefore, the interconnections between poverty, unemployment, and economic expansion in Indonesia highlight the necessity for comprehensive policies that not only promote economic growth, but also address unemployment and guarantee the equitable distribution of resources. The evidence indicates that while economic growth is a crucial factor in poverty alleviation, it is essential to implement targeted employment strategies and effective government interventions to achieve sustainable development outcomes.

The findings of previous studies reveal a two-way relationship between economic growth and regional or national development. While economic growth may be influenced by factors such as unemployment and poverty, it can also exhibit no clear correlation with these variables. This complexity makes economic growth a compelling topic for further exploration, particularly in the context of island economies. Accordingly, this study seeks to investigate whether poverty and unemployment have impacted Indonesia's economic expansion over the past two decades (2002–2022).

Literature Review

Economic Growth

Economic theory provides a fundamental framework for understanding a country's growth dynamics. Various theories, such as exogenous growth theory, endogenous growth theory, and human capital theory, offer distinct perspectives on the factors driving economic growth. Exogenous growth theory, developed by Robert Solow, emphasizes capital accumulation and technological progress as primary drivers of growth, highlighting the importance of infrastructure and technology investments in boosting productivity (Panjaitan, Mulatsih, & Rindayati, 2020). Additionally, human capital theory stresses that investment in education and training is crucial for enhancing workforce quality, which in turn supports economic growth (Nurlaili & Sugiharti, 2023).

Endogenous growth theory, in contrast, focuses on internal factors such as innovation and knowledge, arguing that policies supporting research and development (R&D) and higher education can foster sustainable economic growth. Human capital, including education and skills, is a key component of this theory, as it enhances productivity and competitiveness (Nurlaili & Sugiharti, 2023). Additionally, Kuznets' theory provides insights into the relationship between economic growth and income inequality. According to this theory, income inequality tends to rise during the early stages of economic growth but decreases as the economy matures (Firmansyah, 2021).

Poverty and Economic Growth

Poverty has a significant impact on economic growth through various mechanisms, creating a complex relationship that can hinder development. According to existing literature, high levels of poverty lead to reduced economic productivity, lower consumer spending, and increased social instability, all of which negatively affect economic growth (Imanto, et al., 2020). One major way poverty influences growth is through its effect on human capital. People living in poverty often have limited access to education and healthcare, which diminishes their productivity and ability to contribute to the economy. Alleviating poverty, however, can improve education and health, thereby boosting economic growth.

The persistence of poverty leads to a cyclical problem where underinvestment in human capital results in lower economic output. A less educated workforce is less capable of innovation and productivity, which further hampers growth. Additionally, poverty can increase inequality, which has been shown to impede economic progress. High income inequality can lead to social tensions and instability, reducing investment and economic activity. Structural factors within the economy, such as sectors that predominantly employ low-skilled labor, can also limit growth. These sectors often offer lower wages and fewer opportunities for productivity improvements, making it difficult for economic growth in these areas to alleviate poverty (Novitasari & Sari, 2023).

However, the relationship between poverty and economic growth is not straightforward. Dalimunthe et al., (2022) argue that while economic growth may increase wealth, it does not necessarily reduce poverty, especially in contexts of high income inequality. Cheema & Sial, (2012) support this by noting that rising inequality can undermine the benefits of growth, leading to "miserly growth," where the poorest segments of society fail to benefit. This highlights the need for a growth strategy that ensures the benefits of economic advancement are distributed more equitably (Widjaja, e al., 2022). Economic growth, without improvements in income distribution, may fail to alleviate poverty, as noted by Klasen (Cuong & Pham, 2018). Therefore, addressing poverty is not only a moral obligation but also a vital economic strategy for fostering sustainable growth. Effective policies aimed at improving education, healthcare, and income distribution are essential to breaking the poverty cycle and promoting development.

Growth in the Economy and Unemployment

The relationship between unemployment and economic growth is a critical area of study in economics, often characterized by an inverse correlation as explained by Okun's Law. This principle posits that economic expansion typically leads to lower unemployment, while rising unemployment impedes growth. Empirical evidence supports this notion, with studies like Hidayat, et al., (2023) demonstrating a significant negative relationship between unemployment and economic growth in South Sulawesi Province. Similarly, research by Hjazeen, et al., (2021) confirmed this inverse correlation in Jordan, aligning with findings from other regions such as Pakistan (Shah, et al., 2022) and Nigeria (Nnachi, 2023). These studies consistently highlight the detrimental impact of higher unemployment rates on GDP growth, affirming the broader consensus in the literature.

However, the relationship between unemployment and economic growth is not uniformly negative. Imran, et al., (2015) found that rising unemployment significantly reduces GDP per capita growth in several Asian countries, while Zaman, et al., (2016) observed similar adverse effects in the European Union. Yet, some studies suggest that unemployment may have positive effects in specific contexts. For instance, the theory of creative destruction proposed by Schumpeter suggests that unemployment can drive innovation and economic restructuring, fostering long-term growth (Fanati & Manfredi, 2003). This variability underscores the need for policymakers to consider the nuanced dynamics of unemployment and its impact on economic growth when formulating strategies to stimulate development.

Method

This study employed a quantitative research method with a descriptive approach to explain the effect of poverty and unemployment on Indonesia's economic expansion over a 20-year period (2002-2022). This study utilized secondary information sourced from the Statistics Indonesia in the form of time series data. The data were collected through a review of relevant literature, including publications from various years, which were downloaded from the Statistics Indonesia website. Additionally, articles that were pertinent to the subject matter were also used as a source of information.

The data analysis techniques employed included traditional tests of assumption, such as normality test, heteroscedasticity test, multicollinearity test, autocorrelation test, and multiple regression test. The objective of employing these tests is to examine whether the dependent variable is influenced by the independent variable. This study employed the use of computer software, specifically EViews 10, to facilitate data analysis. Subsequently, the multiple linear regression model incorporates more than one independent variable, with the objective of determining the direction and extent to which the independent variable influences the dependent variable (Ghozali, 2017).

$Y = f(X_1, X_2)$

$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon$

$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 \log X_1 + \beta_2 \log X_2 + \varepsilon$

Note;

Y = Economic Growth

α = Constanta

β_1 = Regression Coefficient of X_1

β_2 = Regression Coefficient of X_2

X_1 = Unemployment

X_2 = Poverty

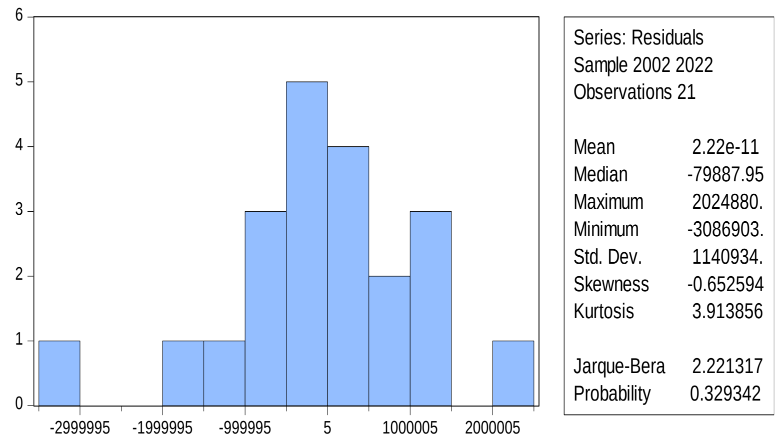
ε = Standard Error

Discussion

The dynamics of economic growth were shaped by a multitude of factors, including poverty and unemployment. However, poverty and unemployment may not have a significant effect on economic growth. This condition implied that even the economy of a region or country was a dynamic factor. In other words, economic growth was not a static factor operating in isolation. The primary objective of economic development was to enhance the well-being of a region or country within a specified timeframe. In this regard, to investigate how unemployment and poverty affect Indonesia's economic growth over a 20-year period, from 2002 to 2022, it was essential to initially test the classical assumptions, as follows:

Normality Test

Results of Normality Test



Source; Processed data, (2024)

The results of the normality test, as illustrated in that figure, indicate that the distribution of the data is normal. This is evidenced by the Jarque-Bera value of 2.221317 and the probability of 0.329342, which is greater than 0.05

Multicollinearity Test

Results of Multicollinearity Test

Variable	Coefficient Variance	Uncentered VIF	Centered VIF
C	3.46E+12	50.28101	NA
POVERTY	0.011650	165.7969	3.567026
UNEMPLOY	0.153202	166.2461	3.567026

Source; Data processing, (2024)

The results of the multicollinearity test, as illustrated in table above, demonstrate that all centered variance inflation factor (VIF) values between variables are less than 10, thereby indicating that the model is free from multicollinearity.

Heteroscedasticity Test

Results of Heteroscedasticity Test

Heteroskedasticity Test: White

F-statistic	0.852961	Prob. F(5,15)	0.5340
Obs*R-squared	4.648940	Prob. Chi-Square(5)	0.4602
Scaled explained SS	4.976208	Prob. Chi-Square(5)	0.4188

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	-2.15E+13	3.52E+13	-0.612003	0.5497
POVERTY^2	-0.043368	0.058396	-0.742650	0.4692
POVERTY*UNEMPLOY	0.260716	0.450116	0.579219	0.5710
POVERTY	297276.2	2457850.	0.120950	0.9053
UNEMPLOY^2	-0.608107	1.047219	-0.580688	0.5701
UNEMPLOY	3647158.	7061716.	0.516469	0.6131

R-squared	0.221378	Mean dependent var	1.24E+12
Adjusted R-squared	-0.038163	S.D. dependent var	2.17E+12
S.E. of regression	2.21E+12	Akaike info criterion	59.92040
Sum squared resid	7.32E+25	Schwarz criterion	60.21884
Log likelihood	-623.1642	Hannan-Quinn criter.	59.98517
F-statistic	0.852961	Durbin-Watson stat	2.343986
Prob(F-statistic)	0.534020		

Source; Data processing, (2024)

The findings of the heteroscedasticity test, conducted using the White model and displayed in table above, indicate that the Obs*R-squared value is 4.648940, which is greater than 0.05. The null hypothesis (H0) of this heteroscedasticity test is supported by the observed values of Prob. Chi-Square (5) and Prob. F (5.15), which are 0.4188 and 0.5340, respectively. These values exceed the critical value of 0.05, indicating that there is no heteroscedasticity in the study's data.

Autocorrelation Test

Results of Autocorrelation Test

Breusch-Godfrey Serial Correlation LM Test:

F-statistic	0.853931	Prob. F(2,16)	0.4443
Obs*R-squared	2.025377	Prob. Chi-Square(2)	0.3632

Test Equation:
Dependent Variable: RESID
Method: Least Squares
Date: 01/07/24 Time: 21:58
Sample: 2002 2022
Included observations: 21
Presample missing value lagged residuals set to zero.

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	-38670.35	1876566.	-0.020607	0.9838
POVERTY	-0.001694	0.109087	-0.015526	0.9878
UNEMPLOY	0.007944	0.395553	0.020082	0.9842
RESID(-1)	0.158586	0.249319	0.636078	0.5337
RESID(-2)	-0.301844	0.254743	-1.184897	0.2534

R-squared	0.096447	Mean dependent var	2.22E-11
Adjusted R-squared	-0.129442	S.D. dependent var	1140934.
S.E. of regression	1212530.	Akaike info criterion	31.05857
Sum squared resid	2.35E+13	Schwarz criterion	31.30727
Log likelihood	-321.1150	Hannan-Quinn criter.	31.11255
F-statistic	0.426966	Durbin-Watson stat	1.932723
Prob(F-statistic)	0.787027		

Source; Data processing, (2024)

In the EViews 10 application, The LM Test for Breusch-Godfrey Serial Correlation was employed, with the value displayed in table representing the probability value. There is a higher Chi-square value than 0.05, indicating that autocorrelation is not a concern.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	31329085	1860937.	16.83511	0.0000
POVERTY	-0.820670	0.107935	-7.603406	0.0000
UNEMPLOY	0.068164	0.391411	0.174151	0.8637

R-squared	0.916786	Mean dependent var	6496248.
Adjusted R-squared	0.907540	S.D. dependent var	3955152.
S.E. of regression	1202650.	Akaike info criterion	30.96952
Sum squared resid	2.60E+13	Schwarz criterion	31.11873
Log likelihood	-322.1799	Hannan-Quinn criter.	31.00190
F-statistic	99.15531	Durbin-Watson stat	1.626087
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000000		

Source; Data processing, (2024)

The results of this study show that the adjusted R-squared value is 0.916786, or 91.67%, which indicates that the independent variables (poverty and unemployment) exert a concurrent impact on the dependent variable (economic growth) to the extent of 91.67%. The remaining 8.33% is attributable to other variables not addressed in this study.

Statistical Tests

Partial Test (t-Test)

The t-Test results reveal that unemployment (X_1) has no significant effect on economic expansion, as indicated by a t-statistic of 0.174151 and a probability value of 0.8637 (≥ 0.05). Conversely, poverty (X_2) significantly influences economic growth, with a t-statistic of -7.603406 and a probability value of 0.0000 (≤ 0.05).

Simultaneous Test (f-Test)

The study's findings demonstrate that the F-statistic value is 99.15531 with an F-statistic probability value of 0.000000 (≤ 0.05). This leads to the conclusion that the independent variable exerts a significant effect on the dependent variable, namely economic growth (Y), in a simultaneous manner.

The Effects of Unemployment and Poverty on Indonesia's Economic Growth in 2002-2022

How unemployment, poverty, and economic growth are related was such a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that had attracted considerable attention in the field of economic research. A substantial corpus of literature indicated that poverty and unemployment had a detrimental impact on economic growth, thereby creating a vicious cycle that perpetuated socio-economic challenges. It had been widely acknowledged that unemployment represented a significant impediment to economic growth. The Okun's Law confirmed there is a negative relationship between unemployment and and GDP, indicating that higher unemployment correlated with lower economic output (Febriyanti, et al., 2024). This relationship was further supported by findings indicating that unemployment not only reduced individual income, but also increased the burden of social services, thus straining public resources and limiting economic development (Burlacu & Lühiste, 2021; Irawan, 2022). For example, The number of unproductive citizens in high-unemployment areas increased poverty levels, resulting in a vicious cycle of poverty where a lack of investment and consumer spending impeded economic growth (Desmawan, et al., 2021; Rusneni et al., 2023).

Furthermore, Unemployment's impact on economic expansion was intensified by its correlation with poverty. The extant literature demonstrated that an increase in unemployment contributed to an elevation in poverty levels, which in turn could precipitate further economic stagnation (Anggoro, 2022; Aureli & Juliprijanto, 2022). For instance, in Indonesia, it was demonstrated that economic growth and unemployment rates exerted a considerable influence on poverty rates. In some instances, high economic growth had resulted in heightened inequality, which had subsequently led to an increase in poverty (Sari, et al., 2023). This indicated that while economic growth was a crucial factor, it must be inclusive in order to effectively mitigate poverty. Furthermore, the relationship between unemployment and poverty was shaped by a multitude of factors, including educational attainment and the human development index (HDI). Reduced unemployment rates were linked to higher educational attainment levels, which could stimulate economic growth by increasing the number of skilled workers available to the economy (Arismaya, 2023; Putri & Yuliana, 2023; Zahro & Dewi, 2019). Conversely, elevated unemployment rates could cause social unrest and an uptick in criminal activity, thereby further destabilizing the economic environment and impeding growth (Burlacu & Lühiste, 2021; Irawan, 2022).

According to the study's findings, there is no statistically significant correlation between economic growth and unemployment. The t-statistic value for variable X1 (unemployment) is 0.174151, with a probability value (significance) of 0.8637 (≥ 0.05), indicating that unemployment does not have a significant effect. In contrast, the poverty variable yields disparate results. According to the findings of the experiments, poverty significantly affects economic growth, considering that it the t-statistic value for variable X2 (poverty) is -7.603406, with a probability value (significance) of 0.0000 (≤ 0.05).

The study's findings support the idea that there was more than a linear relationship between poverty and economic progress. Furthermore, external factors, such as inflation and investment levels, might exert an influence. Economic growth had the potential to enhance living standards; however, if it was not accompanied by an equitable distribution of wealth, it could exacerbate poverty (Desmawan et al., 2021; Rahmadi, et al., 2024). This evidence indicates that targeted poverty alleviation programs could significantly enhance economic development, particularly in developing countries where unemployment remained a significant concern (Rahmadi, et al., 2024).

Thus, comprehensive government policy. Government policy in overcoming unemployment and poverty is an important aspect that can influence a country's economic growth. In Indonesia, various policies have been implemented to overcome this problem, with a focus on increasing financial inclusion, government spending in the fields of education and health, as well as social programs aimed at improving people's welfare. One significant policy is the National Financial Inclusion Strategy (SNKI) which was stipulated through Presidential Regulation Number 82 of 2016. This policy aims to increase public access to financial services, which is expected to reduce poverty and unemployment. Financial inclusion can contribute positively to economic growth through reducing income inequality and increasing domestic investment.

Apart from that, social programs such as the Family Hope Program (PKH) and Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT) are also part of the government's strategy to overcome poverty. Research shows that these programs are effective in improving the welfare of poor families and reducing poverty rates in certain areas (Nugraha, 2024). Apart from that, efforts to empower Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) also need to be an important focus in government policy. By providing support to MSMEs, the government hopes to create new jobs and increase people's income (Hahury, et al., 2022; Sari, 2023).

However, even though various policies have been implemented, challenges still remain. Research shows that unemployment remains a significant problem and contributes to poverty. An increase in the unemployment rate is often related to slow economic growth and economic instability (Deswari, 2023). Therefore, it is important for the government to continue to evaluate and adjust existing policies, so that they can be more effective in overcoming the problems of unemployment and poverty. Overall, comprehensive government policies in overcoming unemployment and poverty can have a positive impact on economic growth. Through increasing financial inclusion, spending on education and health, as well as support for social programs and MSMEs, it is hoped that it can create more jobs and improve overall community welfare.

Conclusion, Recommendations, Limitations and Future Research

Conclusion

The relationship between poverty, unemployment, and economic growth is reciprocal, where high unemployment leads to increased poverty, which subsequently hinders economic growth. This study reveals that unemployment has no significant impact on economic expansion, while poverty significantly influences economic growth.

Recommendations

To address these issues, comprehensive policies are required, encompassing job creation, equitable economic growth, and social development. Such efforts are essential to break the negative cycle and achieve sustainable economic progress.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study is limited to two independent variables: unemployment and poverty. Future research is encouraged to expand the scope by incorporating additional macroeconomic variables to better understand the dynamics of economic growth. Financial inclusion is suggested as one of the potential variables for further exploration.

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