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Original Article

Investigating the Interplay of Socioeconomic Inequalities and Unemployment on Indonesia's Economy

Ira Mulia Safitri [1,*], Apridar Apridar [1] and Taufiq C. Dawood [1]

[1] Department of Economics, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Syiah Kuala, Darussalam, Syiah Kuala, 23111 Banda Aceh, Aceh, Indonesia; (A.A.) and (T.C.D.)
* Correspondence: iramulia90198@gmail.com (I.M.S.)

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Abstract: This study explores the impact of income inequality, human development, gender empowerment, and open unemployment on economic growth across Indonesia's 34 provinces over the period 2015 to 2022. Employing panel data regression techniques, the study utilizes both cross-sectional and time-series data to analyze regional variations and trends. The Random Effects Model was identified as the most appropriate model for this analysis based on statistical tests and model selection criteria. The findings indicate that income inequality and open unemployment have a statistically significant negative effect on economic growth. In contrast, improvements in human development and gender empowerment are shown to positively and significantly influence economic performance. These results highlight the importance of addressing structural disparities and enhancing social development indicators to achieve more inclusive and sustainable economic outcomes. The study suggests that equitable income distribution and strategic government investments in infrastructure, education, and healthcare can improve the quality of human capital, thereby supporting long-term growth. Furthermore, gender empowerment through policies promoting equal access to opportunities and decision-making roles can serve as a catalyst for broader economic participation and productivity. To address the adverse effects of unemployment, the government should focus on creating diverse employment opportunities and fostering entrepreneurship to enable income generation at the community level. Overall, the study underscores the need for a multidimensional policy approach that integrates economic, social, and gender considerations to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth across Indonesia.

Keywords: Economic Growth; Income Inequality; Human Development; Gender Empowerment; Open Unemployment

1. Introduction

Robust economic growth signifies that economic activity fosters equal income distribution and promotes substantial labor absorption, leading to the creation of new employment opportunities. Economic development is a governmental priority aimed at mitigating economic issues in Indonesia, including poverty, inequality, income disparity, unemployment, and other economic challenges that remain the government's responsibility to address. According to Todaro & Smith (2015) economic development is a process of economic transition from stagnation to growth, from low-income to high-income status, and also overcoming the problem of absolute poverty. Economic growth also underscores income inequality. Income disparity is a concern for the governments of both developed and developing nations. According to the United Nations (2016), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda seeks to guarantee equal opportunities and mitigate income inequality. The Indonesian government has always prioritized economic growth. This is demonstrated by Indonesia's transition from a low-income to a middle-income country over the previous few years.

Nonetheless, Indonesia's remarkable economic growth has not been matched by equitable income distribution. The disproportionate allocation of money is evident in the elevated rate of high-income earners seeing economic advancement relative to low- and middle-income earners. Income inequality between communities is measured using the Gini coefficient. In 2015, all provinces in Indonesia had modest income inequality. This indicates that income distribution has been equitably allocated across households. The chart also demonstrates that the disparity is not substantial within the community. Every province in Indonesia exhibits a moderate level of income inequality. The Bangka Belitung Islands province exhibits a low-income inequality index of 0.28 points. In addition to the favorable metrics of Bangka Belitung Islands province, Maluku province also exhibits a low-income inequality score of 0.28 points. In 2022, the income inequality index is 0.38 points. In comparison to 2015, income disparity in 2022 has diminished in many provinces; nonetheless, on a national level, inequality remains classified as moderate. The comparison between 2015 and 2022 demonstrates that inequality in Indonesia is under the moderate range.

The figure has diminished compared to the prior year. The reduction in inequality corresponds with the decrease in inequality across all provinces in Indonesia. The prevailing development paradigm is assessed by human development, observable in the quality of life across various regions. The Human Development Index will subsequently serve as a standard for assessing the quality of human existence, as indicated by education, health, and economic levels (purchasing power) (Hobrouw et al., 2021). The Human Development Index in Indonesia is commendable and exhibits annual growth. The healthcare services in Indonesia are exemplary, and every community has received adequate education. This does not absolve the government of its responsibility to enhance the wellbeing of its citizens. In 2015, Indonesian provinces exhibited poor Human Development Index ratings, while the national Human Development Index stood at 69.55 points. The provinces exceeding the national average are Riau, Riau Islands, DKI Jakarta, D.I Yogyakarta, Banten, East Kalimantan, and North Sulawesi. Numerous other provinces remain beneath the national average. Papua Province exhibits a markedly low Human Development Index value.

The low Human Development Index in Papua Province is attributed to the inequitable education system in the region. This is evidenced by the limited number of educators, which hinders the optimization of education in the region, resulting in a significant number of schoolchildren experiencing dropout rates. In 2022, the national Human Development Index was classified in the high category at 73.77. It was also accompanied by a rise in every province in Indonesia. In 2022, the average provincial in Indonesia exceeds the national figure compared to 2015. Only a limited number of provinces remain below the national average, while the overall figure has risen. The government's initiatives to enhance the human development index have proven effective in the post-Covid-19 epidemic era. In 2020, specifically at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, the human development index declined, as evidenced by the education and health dimensions. During the Covid-19 epidemic, several individuals were infected to the virus, resulting in a significant shortage of health staff capable of delivering optimal healthcare services. The advancement of a nation can be assessed by the caliber of its human resources, which must be inclusive of all genders to achieve societal wellbeing. Gender disparities are frequently linked to human development.

In the realm of human development, there exists a word that assesses gender-based progress by evaluating developmental accomplishments between women and men. The fifth target of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) clearly addresses gender-based development, focusing on "Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women" (National Development Planning Agency, 2020). The objective of gender equality, as a component of the Sustainable growth Goals (SDGs), renders it a critical imperative in human growth. The advancement of a nation cannot be fully realized without gender equality. Gender equality entails equitable conditions for men and women in accessing opportunities and exercising their rights as human beings, enabling their participation and contribution across all domains, as well as equal enjoyment of developmental outcomes (Supartoyo, 2013). Gender equality can notably enhance women's health and education. The enhanced participation of women in the capital stock might significantly influence the political and economic empowerment of the female demographic Galor, O. and Weil (1993). Efficient utilization of human resources by each country generally fosters economic progress, since the deployment of comprehensive and superior human resources enhances this development (Esteve & Volart, 2004).

Indonesia has made significant strides in diminishing educational inequality between genders, evidenced by the decreasing disparity in educational achievement between men and women. Nonetheless, the productivity and labor force participation rates of women remain low. The involvement of women in development must be a focal point in national and regional development initiatives. KemenPPPA (2022) asserts that gender equality is a significant global concern. Consequently, attaining gender equality and empowering women is a fundamental objective of sustainable development goals (SDGs). Despite numerous initiatives aimed at enhancing women's quality of life and bolstering institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming, as articulated in Presidential Instruction No. 9/2000 on Gender Mainstreaming to promote gender equality and justice in national development, significant disparities between men and women persist across all provinces in Indonesia. Gender equality is essential for attaining sustained social, political, and economic development.

From an international standpoint, gender equality is a commitment outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by United Nations (UN) member states, specifically as the 5th goal: "Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering All Women and Girls." Enhancing the quality and quantity of women's participation or empowerment in the workforce and economic activities will augment the nation's income through elevated aggregate productivity, subsequently improving welfare and family well-being. Conversely, disparities in development and female empowerment persist among areas in Indonesia, with Eastern Indonesia exhibiting lower levels of development and gender empowerment. The gender gap exists not only between provinces but also within districts and cities within a province in Indonesia. This indicates a substantial disparity between the roles of women and men in regional development. In 2015, there was a positive change; however, it subsequently dropped in 2016. The occurrence occurred due to the more rapid increase of the male Human Development Index compared to that of the female Human Development Index in various regions of Indonesia. The decrease in the female Human Development Index resulted from the components of Life Expectancy, Expected Years of Schooling, and Urban Expansion, which exhibited a deceleration relative to 2015; only the average years of schooling component improved compared to the prior year.

In 2022, the province Gender Development Index also saw an increase, mirroring the achievement of the national level Gender Development Index. Seven provinces in Indonesia exhibit a decline in the growth of the Gender Development Index compared to the previous year: Aceh, Riau Islands, DKI Jakarta, East Java, North Kalimantan, Gorontalo, and Maluku. Out of the 34 provinces in Indonesia, over half (19 provinces) exhibit a poorer Human Development Index than the national Gross Domestic Income. In 2022, North Sulawesi had the highest GDI achievement, whereas Papua Province exhibited the lowest GDI achievement. A relatively high unemployment rate might also stimulate economic growth. The unemployment rate has a unidirectional relationship with economic growth; a rise in unemployment in a region would diminish the degree of economic growth in that area. In 2015, the unemployment rate in the average province of Indonesia remained above the national average. The unemployment rate in Aceh province is exceedingly high. The elevated unemployment rate results from population growth, whereas job availability is not commensurate with the human resources available. In 2020, a significant surge occurred because to the Covid-19 epidemic, which adversely impacted economic performance, particularly in the workplace.

In 2022, the administration prioritized economic recovery, resulting in a countrywide decrease in the unemployment rate, as well as reductions in certain provinces. The collapse that transpired was not far. Unemployment remains a significant issue in Indonesia, prompting government concern on the provision of opportunities for the working-age population to enhance the nation's economy. This research pertains to the study by Rahmadi & Parmadi (2019) which indicates that income disparity adversely affects economic growth. Conversely, according to the research by Rukmana (2012), the data indicate that income inequality positively influences economic growth. This study elucidates that, according to Kuznets' hypothesis, more equitable income distribution in the initial phases of development will subsequently lead to enhanced economic growth. This demonstrates that the elevated revenue of a region will incentivize neighboring regions to enhance their current resources, resulting in economic expansion.

Research related to the Human Development Index has also been studied by several previous researchers. In research by Wardinigrum & SS (2024) gave negative results on economic growth. However, there are studies that are in line with the actual theory. This research was conducted by Dewi & Sutrisna (2014)which gave positive results on economic growth. In research conducted Dewi & Sutrisna (2014), it is said that the better the achievement of the quality of human capital related to HDI as capital in economic development, economic growth will be realized and increased. The Gender Empowerment variable has a positive influence on economic growth in Indonesia. The results of this study are supported by research conducted by The results of this study are supported by research conducted by Infarizki et al., (2020) whose research has similar results where Gender Empowerment has a positive influence on economic growth. In his research, it is explained that the Gender Development Index is effective in having a significant effect on gross regional domestic product in the Kedu Karesidenan Region. For research on the level of open unemployment, as the influence given to economic growth, the research conducted by Padang & Murtala (2020)is very much in line with actual theory.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Materials

This study examines Economic Growth in Indonesia as the dependent variable, with Income Inequality (Gini Ratio), Human Development, Gender Empowerment, and Open Unemployment as independent factors, spanning the years 2015-2022 throughout 34 provinces in Indonesia. This analysis excludes 38 provinces, which align with the current number of provinces in Indonesia, due to constraints in acquiring historical data. This study utilizes secondary data sourced from the Central Bureau of Statistics, specifically about income inequality, human development index, gender development index, and open unemployment rate. Concurrently, information regarding economic growth was sourced from the Regional Basic Data Management and Information System (SIMREG) of BAPPENAS.

2.2. Methods

This method employs descriptive analysis and panel data regression analysis as its analytical techniques. Data regression analysis is employed to investigate the impact of Income Inequality, Human Development Index, Gender Development Index, and Open Unemployment Rate on economic growth in Indonesia. Descriptive analysis is employed to interpret the regression outcomes of the independent variables on the dependent variable. This study uses this method to ascertain the impact of Income Inequality or Gini Ratio (KP), Human Development (PM), Gender Empowerment (PG), and Open Unemployment (PT) on Economic Growth (PE) in Indonesia. To ascertain the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, an equation exists. As per Gujarati & Porter (2012), the multiple linear regression equation model is typically expressed as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

With this equation, it can be formulated:

$$LogPE_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 KP_{it} + \beta_2 PM_{it} + \beta_3 PG_{it} + \beta_4 PT_{it} + \varepsilon \quad (2)$$

Where PE represents economic growth as a percentage; KP denotes income inequality measured by the Gini coefficient index; PM signifies Human Development index; PG indicates Gender Empowerment index; and PT refers to Open Unemployment expressed as a percentage. The symbol α represents a constant, whereas β1, β2, β3, and β4 denote the regression coefficients. In this context, i represents the i-th district or city; t signifies the t-th year; and Ɛ designates the incorrect terms.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive Statistics

This descriptive statistic presents the mean, median, maximum, minimum, standard deviation, and count of observations in this investigation. The descriptive statistics table allows for the comparison of the standard deviation, which should be less than the mean, to determine the evenness of data distribution. Table 1 presents the test findings for the descriptive statistical values of economic growth, income inequality, Human Development Index, Gender Development Index, and Open Unemployment Rate from 2015 to 2022.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistic	LogPE (Percent)	KP (Index)	PM (Index)	PG (Index)	PT (Percent)
Mean	11,93	0,35	70,41	68,79	5,25
Median	11,79	0,35	70,54	69,38	4,81
Maximum	14,48	0,46	81,65	83,20	10,95
Minimum	9,92	0,25	57,25	47,88	1,4
Std. Dev	1,14	0,03	4,10	-0,62	1,85

Source: Statistics Indonesia (2024).

The standard deviation of the economic growth variable is 1.14, which is less than the mean value of 11.93 percent. The highest value recorded is 14.48 percent, while the lowest value recorded is 9.92. The income inequality variable has a mean of 0.35, a maximum of 0.46, and a minimum of 0.25. The standard deviation of this variable is 0.03 indexes, which is less than the mean value. The mean value of the PM variable is 70.41 index. At this value, the PM is classified in the high category, indicating an improvement in the PM in Indonesia. This surge is also propelled by a rise in PM in Indonesian provinces. The PM variable's maximum value is 81.65 index, achieved by DKI Jakarta Province in 2022. The minimum index value of 57.25 was recorded in Papua Province in 2015. This modest figure has, in fact, risen in subsequent years. The standard deviation of the PM variable is 4.10 index. The average value of the PG variable is 68.79 index. The PG variable's maximum value is 83.20 index, a figure amended by Central Kalimantan Province in 2019. In 2019, women's engagement in politics significantly progressed. The minimum value is 47.88 index recorded in West Papua Province. The standard deviation value in the PG variable is -0.62. The PT variable exhibits a mean value of 5.25 percent. The highest result of 10.95 was achieved by DKI Jakarta Province. The minimum value is 1.4 percent. The standard deviation of the PT variable is 1.85 percent.

3.2. Determining the Best Model

To identify the optimal model for panel regression, one may do the Chow test, Hausman test, and Lagrange Multiplier (LM) test. These results will thereafter serve as a tool for analyzing the test outcomes in the study. Table 2 presents the test results for identifying the optimal model.

Table 2. Test Results of Determining the Best Panel Model

		Prob.
Chow Test	Cross-section Chi-Square	0,0000
Hausman Test	Cross-section random	0,0865
LM	Cross-section random	0,0000

3.3. Random Effect Model

On the basis of the model evaluation, the random effects model emerged as the most appropriate choice for this analysis and plays a central role in the study’s findings. Table 3 presents the results obtained from the random effects model estimation.

Table 3. Result of Random Effect Model Testing

Model	Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
FEM	C	6,845	0,317	21,567	0,0000*
	KP	-0,534	0,254	-2.097	0,0369**
	PM	0,072	0,003	22,495	0,0000*
	PG	0,0035	0,001	3,239	0,0013*
	PT	-0,007	0,003	-2,023	0,0440*
	R-Squared	0,7736		Prob. F-Statistic	0,0000

Note: *) indicates significance at the 1% level; **) indicates significance at the 5% level

The estimation outcomes derived from the Random Effect Model indicate that the variables of Income Inequality and Open Employment exert a negative and significant influence on economic growth. Simultaneously, the Human Development and Gender Empowerment variable exerts a beneficial impact on Economic Growth. The likelihood value of the F-statistic indicates a significant figure, suggesting a concurrent influence of Income Inequality, Human Development, Gender Empowerment, and Open Unemployment on economic growth in Indonesia. The investigation indicates that the R-Squared value is 0.773. Changes in the fluctuations of economic growth in Indonesia can be elucidated by the factors of Income Inequality, Human Development, Gender Empowerment, and Open Unemployment, accounting for 77.3 percent. The remainder is attributed to other variables not considered in this study.

4. Discussion

The economic prosperity of a nation is intrinsically linked to the economic growth of its individual provinces. Economic expansion within each province, in turn, contributes to the overall growth of the country. A nation's development success is reflected in its ability to promote economic growth through various dimensions. Achieving economic equilibrium requires the involvement of multiple influencing factors, including equitable income distribution, a human development index that indicates the quality of human resources, a gender development index that reflects gender parity in economic and social participation, and the open unemployment rate, which measures the extent of unemployment in the country. Collectively, these elements shape a nation's economic performance, especially given the substantial number of individuals actively seeking employment. Income inequality adversely impacts economic growth. This study is further corroborated by the findings of Rahmadi & Parmadi (2019) which indicated that income inequality adversely and significantly impacts economic growth in the Indonesian islands. This results from a reduction in income disparity in the Indonesian islands, accompanied by a decline in the population of impoverished individuals.

This study contradicts the findings of Utami & Zahrudin (2022) who determined that income disparity positively influences economic growth in Indonesia. This favorable outcome arises from the Gini Index's inability to represent optimal equity, resulting in a multiplier effect of the economic growth rate that falls short of expectations, particularly in Indonesia's eastern area. According to the Kuznets hypothesis, improved income distribution in the early phases of development will subsequently lead to enhanced economic growth. This demonstrates that elevated income levels in a region will stimulate more sophisticated economic activity to enhance competitiveness. The outcomes of Human Development positively impact economic growth in Indonesia. The outcomes of this study align with the research undertaken by Dewi & Sutrisna (2014)and Nazmi & Jamal (2018),), which indicated that the human development index positively influences economic growth. In theory, human development positively influences economic growth, indicating that high-quality human resources in education and health can yield favorable outcomes for improving living standards. Furthermore, it can stimulate economic growth in a region with skilled labor or economic participants.

This study's conclusions contradict those of Wardinigrum & SS (2024)), which indicate that the Human Development Index negatively affects economic growth in Papua. This study elucidates that a region with elevated human resource standards will have enhanced labor productivity and augmented revenue, both of which positively influence economic growth in the region. Additional investigations corroborating this research were undertaken by Ma'wa & Cahyadi (2023) who analyzed the Human Development Index's impact on economic growth in Central Java. His research indicates that the Human Development Index adversely affects economic growth. His research elucidates that this outcome violates Solow's hypothesis, which posits that economic growth is stimulated by three causes. The process of human resource development involves a progressive interaction of sectoral elements over time. Consequently, an elevation in HDI during that period does not inherently exert a direct influence on the economy Sari & Setyowati (2022) revealing that their research indicated a negative correlation between the human development index and economic growth. Solow's thesis posits that the Human Development Index reflects the quality of human resources within a region.

High-quality human resources will contribute to substantial income and productivity, hence influencing economic growth. The Gender Empowerment variable positively impacts economic growth in Indonesia. The findings of this study are corroborated by research conducted by Infarizki et al., (2020) which demonstrates comparable results indicating that Gender Empowerment positively influences economic growth. The research elucidates that the Gender Development Index significantly influences the gross regional domestic product in the Kedu Karesidenan Region. The gender empowerment index in Kedu Prefecture reflects the extent of women's involvement in economic and political spheres. In the Kedu Kerasidenan, the advancement of women's education enhances their participation in the economy and politics, hence positively influencing their income as their careers progress. This research contradicts the findings of Purba & Wahyuningsi (2023) which indicate a negative impact on economic growth in West Nusa Tenggara. This study indicates that the Gender Empowerment Index in West Nusa Tenggara Province has failed to positively influence economic growth.

The capabilities for women's empowerment remain inferior to those of men, which will impact women's active participation in the economic and political spheres. Gender equality in a region significantly enhances economic growth. The phenomena seen in the neighborhood indicates that the number of women in the labor force is lower than that of men. In the realm of employment, a disparity persists between men and women. Moreover, it was discovered that Open Unemployment adversely impacts economic growth in Indonesia. The reduction in economic growth resulting from elevated unemployment signifies that several individuals within the labor force remain jobless, thereby lacking income to satisfy their demands. This indicates that numerous individuals remain unengaged in a nation's economic activity. This study is corroborated by the findings of Padang & Murtala (2020), which demonstrate that the open unemployment rate adversely impacts economic growth in Indonesia. The rise in unemployment in Indonesia would adversely impact economic growth, resulting in a decline due to the significant number of individuals lacking employment.

Additional study that corroborates this study is undertaken by Harjana (2015), who elucidates that unemployment is a challenge that can impede economic functioning. High unemployment diminishes individuals' purchasing power, resulting in reduced spending. The reduction in consumption will lead to a decrease in production, therefore affecting economic growth.

5. Conclusions

This study utilizes panel data regression as the primary method of analysis. Through model selection testing, the random effects model was identified as the most suitable for this research. The results indicate that income inequality and open unemployment negatively affect economic growth in Indonesia, while human development and gender empowerment have a positive impact. Furthermore, all variables in the study exhibit a favorable distribution, with no significant anomalies or outliers detected. On the basis of these findings, several recommendations are proposed. First, efforts should be made to promote a more equitable distribution of income in order to reduce social inequality. Second, government expenditures should be allocated judiciously to maintain and enhance infrastructure and public services, thereby improving the quality of human development. Third, it is recommended that the government implement more inclusive and gender-neutral economic policies to support sustainable and long-term economic growth. These approaches are expected to reduce social disparities and alleviate unemployment by expanding the labor force and encouraging community-driven income generation, ultimately contributing to broader economic development.

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