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THE EFFECTS OF POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT, AND THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX ON INTERPROVINCIAL INCOME INEQUALITY IN INDONESIA: A PANEL DATA APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Income inequality across provinces in Indonesia represents a persistent structural problem driven by various socioeconomic factors, necessitating an in-depth examination of its key determinants. This study aims to analyze the effect of poverty, unemployment, and the Human Development Index (HDI) on inter-provincial income inequality in Indonesia. **Methods:** This research is a quantitative study using panel data from 34 provinces in Indonesia over the period 2018–2023, yielding 204 total observations. Data were sourced from official publications of the Central Bureau of Statistics. Model selection was conducted through the Chow Test and Hausman Test, with the Fixed Effect Model identified as the most appropriate estimator. **Results:** Poverty has a positive and significant effect on income inequality (coefficient = 0.0042, p = 0.0002); unemployment has a positive and significant effect (coefficient = 0.0031, p = 0.0007); and HDI has a negative and significant effect (coefficient = −0.0058, p = 0.0001). Simultaneously, all three variables significantly influence income inequality, with an F-statistic of 34.512 and Adjusted R^2 of 0.7412. **Conclusion:** Integrated strategies encompassing poverty alleviation, employment creation, and HDI improvement are key to reducing regional income inequality in Indonesia. Future studies are recommended to incorporate additional variables such as economic growth and fiscal decentralization for more comprehensive results
Keywords: Human Development Index, Income Inequality, Poverty

INTRODUCTION

Income inequality is a structural issue that remains a serious challenge for Indonesia's economic development. As an archipelagic nation characterized by significant geographical, social, and economic diversity, Indonesia faces income disparities between provinces—disparities that tend to be persistent and difficult to resolve solely through aggregate economic growth policies. This phenomenon is reflected in the national Gini ratio; while it has shown a downward trend in recent years, it remains at a level indicating a substantial gap between high-income and low-income groups, particularly when examined at the provincial level. This situation underscores the urgent need for a deeper analysis of the structural determinants that contribute to the persistence of such inequality (Statistics Indonesia, 2023). Among the various factors believed to influence income inequality, poverty occupies a central position as a variable that directly reflects the unequal distribution of welfare. High poverty rates in a province not only signify low purchasing power among the population but also reflect limited access to human capital, infrastructure, and basic services—factors that ultimately exacerbate economic polarization. In addition to poverty, unemployment is a critical variable that diminishes the productive capacity of the workforce. High unemployment rates mean that a

large portion of the population loses its primary source of income, leading to an increasingly unequal distribution of wealth between those with formal, well-paying jobs and those who are not absorbed into the labor market. Empirical studies indicate that unemployment and poverty share a mutually reinforcing causal relationship, simultaneously worsening inequality at the regional level (Todaro & Smith, 2022).

A third factor of primary concern in this study is the Human Development Index (HDI), a composite measure encompassing dimensions of health, education, and a decent standard of living. The Human Development Index (HDI) reflects the quality of human resources in a given region, which, in theory, is inversely related to the level of inequality; a higher HDI in a province should, in principle, correspond to a more equitable distribution of income within that region. In the Indonesian context, however, the relationship between the HDI and inequality is not always linear, given the significant heterogeneity across provinces—ranging from the Special Capital Region of Jakarta (DKI Jakarta), which boasts the highest HDI, to provinces in eastern Indonesia that remain less developed. These three variables—poverty, unemployment, and the HDI—collectively form an ecosystem of determinants that must be examined simultaneously to gain a comprehensive understanding of the root causes of income inequality across Indonesian provinces (UNDP, 2023). Previous research on income inequality in Indonesia has generally examined these variables in isolation or covered only limited time periods, failing to fully capture long-term dynamics. A panel data approach, which integrates both cross-sectional and time-series dimensions, is considered the most appropriate method for analyzing the simultaneous relationships among these variables across Indonesia's 34 provinces over a specific period. The advantage of this method lies in its ability to control for unobserved heterogeneity across provinces, resulting in more accurate and unbiased estimates compared to standalone cross-sectional or standard time-series analyses. Furthermore, the use of Fixed Effects or Random Effects models within a panel data framework allows researchers to identify the specific impact of each variable while accounting for the unique characteristics of individual provinces (Baltagi, 2008).

Addressing this research gap, this study aims to: first, analyze the impact of poverty rates on income inequality across provinces in Indonesia; second, examine the influence of open unemployment rates on income inequality across Indonesian provinces; and third, evaluate the simultaneous effect of the Human Development Index on income inequality across these provinces, employing a panel data approach. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the body of literature on regional economics, particularly by enhancing the understanding of inequality dynamics in developing nations characterized by heterogeneous regional structures. Practically, the findings are intended to provide evidence-based policy recommendations for central and local governments to design more targeted interventions aimed at reducing inequality, alleviating poverty, lowering unemployment, and improving the quality of human development equitably across all regions of Indonesia (Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas, 2023; World Bank, 2024).

METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design, which seeks to explain the causal relationships between independent and dependent variables through statistical hypothesis testing. This design was selected because the research objective is confirmatory in nature—specifically, to examine the influence of poverty, unemployment, and the Human Development Index (HDI) on income inequality across provinces in Indonesia. The study utilizes secondary panel data, combining cross-sectional data from 34 Indonesian provinces with time-series data covering the 2018–2023 period, resulting in a total of 204 observations. All data are sourced from official publications by Statistics Indonesia (BPS) and

include the provincial Gini ratio as the dependent variable (Y), along with the poverty rate (X_1), the open unemployment rate (X_2), and the Human Development Index (X_3) as independent variables. The research population encompasses all provinces in Indonesia; a purposive sampling method was applied based on the criterion of data completeness throughout the observation period, leading to the inclusion of all 34 provinces as units of analysis. The econometric model employed is formulated as follows:

$$\mathbf{GINI_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 POV_{it} + \beta_2 UNEMP_{it} + \beta_3 IPM_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}}$$

Where $GINI_{it}$ is the Gini ratio for province i in year t; POV_{it} is the poverty rate; $UNEMP_{it}$ is the open unemployment rate (TPT); IPM_{it} is the Human Development Index; α is a constant; β_1, β_2, and β_3 are the regression coefficients for each respective variable; and ε_{it} is the error term. The selection of the optimal model—among the Common Effect Model (CEM), Fixed Effect Model (FEM), and Random Effect Model (REM)—is conducted through a three-stage testing process: the Chow Test (to choose between CEM and FEM), the Hausman Test (to choose between FEM and REM), and, if necessary, the Lagrange Multiplier Test. Subsequently, classical assumption tests—including tests for normality, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, and autocorrelation—are performed to ensure the validity of the estimates. Hypothesis testing is carried out using partial t-tests, simultaneous F-tests, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) at a significance level of $\alpha = 5\%$. All analyses were performed using EViews software, version 12 (Gujarati & Porter, 2012). Regarding research ethics, this study relies exclusively on public aggregate data officially published by BPS (Statistics Indonesia) and does not involve personal data from individual respondents; therefore, ethical clearance from an ethics committee is not required. Transparency, objectivity, and scientific integrity are upheld throughout the entire process of data processing and reporting (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of a panel data analysis covering 34 provinces in Indonesia over the 2018–2023 period, comprising a total of 204 observations. Data processing was conducted using EViews 12 software, following a systematic series of estimation and statistical testing stages to derive the optimal and valid panel data regression model.

Descriptive Statistics

Prior to model estimation, an overview of the data characteristics is provided through descriptive statistics. Table 1 indicates that, throughout the observation period, the research variables exhibit significant variation across provinces, reflecting the high degree of heterogeneity in socio-economic conditions within Indonesia.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variabel	Mean	Minimum	Maksimum	Std. Deviasi	Observasi
Gini Ratio (Y)	0,3812	0,2640	0,4430	0,0381	204
Kemiskinan / *POV* (%)	11,24	4,14	27,74	5,62	204
Pengangguran / *UNEMP* (%)	5,31	1,86	11,47	2,03	204
IPM	71,43	60,06	81,65	4,87	204

(Source: Researcher, 2026)

Based on Table 1, the average Gini ratio across provinces is 0.3812, indicating that income inequality in Indonesia falls into the moderate category. The Human Development Index (HDI) values—ranging from a low of 60.06 to a high of 81.65—reflect a very wide

disparity in human development between regions. The highest poverty rate reaches 27.74%, predominantly found in provinces in eastern Indonesia, while the minimum value of 4.14% is observed in provinces with more advanced economies.

Selection of the Best Model

The next step involves determining the most appropriate panel data estimation model. The selection procedure is carried out in stages through three diagnostic tests, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of Panel Data Model Selection Tests

Uji	Statistik	*p-value*	Keputusan
Chow Test	F = 14,732	0,0000	FEM lebih baik dari CEM
Hausman Test	χ^2 = 18,941	0,0003	FEM lebih baik dari REM
Lagrange Multiplier	—	—	Tidak diperlukan

(Source: Researcher, 2026)

The Chow Test yielded an F-statistic of 14.732 with a p-value of 0.0000 < 0.05, indicating that the Fixed Effect Model (FEM) is superior to the Common Effect Model (CEM). Further confirmation via the Hausman Test resulted in a χ^2 statistic of 18.941 with a p-value of 0.0003 < 0.05, signifying that the FEM is more appropriate than the Random Effect Model (REM). Consequently, the Fixed Effect Model was selected as the final estimation model for this study.

Classical Assumption Tests

Prior to interpreting the regression results, a series of classical assumption tests were conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the estimation model. The test results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Classical Assumption Tests

Jenis Uji	Metode	Nilai Statistik	*p-value*	Keterangan
Normalitas	*Jarque-Bera*	2,341	0,3102	Residual berdistribusi normal
Multikolinearitas	*VIF*	< 10 (maks. 4,12)	—	Tidak terdapat multikolinearitas
Heteroskedastisitas	*White Test*	9,873	0,1963	Homoskedastis
Autokorelasi	*Durbin-Watson*	2,017	—	Tidak terdapat autokorelasi

(Source: Researcher, 2026)

All classical assumption tests yielded satisfactory results. A Jarque-Bera value of 2.341, with a p-value of 0.3102, indicates that the residuals are normally distributed. The maximum Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value of 4.12 is well below the threshold of 10, confirming the absence of multicollinearity among the independent variables. The White Test confirms the absence of heteroscedasticity, and a Durbin-Watson value of 2.017 indicates that there is no autocorrelation within the model.

Fixed Effect Model Estimation Results

Once all classical assumptions were met, the estimation results for the Fixed Effect Model were presented in full in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Fixed Effect Model Estimation Results

Variabel	Koefisien	*Std. Error*	*t-Statistik*	*p-value*
Konstanta (α)	0,6821	0,0743	9,1803	0,0000
Kemiskinan (*POV*)	0,0042	0,0011	3,8182	0,0002

Variabel	Koefisien	*Std. Error*	*t-Statistik*	*p-value*
Pengangguran (*UNEMP*)	0,0031	0,0009	3,4444	0,0007
IPM	−0,0058	0,0014	−4,1429	0,0001
R^2	0,7634			
Adjusted R^2	0,7412			
F-*statistik*	34,512			
Prob (F-*statistik*)	0,0000			

(Source: Researcher, 2026)

Based on Table 4, the poverty variable has a positive coefficient of 0.0042 with a p-value of 0.0002 (< 0.05). This indicates that, *ceteris paribus*, a one-percentage-point increase in the poverty rate leads to a statistically significant rise of 0.0042 points in the Gini ratio. The unemployment variable shows a positive coefficient of 0.0031 with a p-value of 0.0007 (< 0.05), suggesting that a one-percentage-point increase in the open unemployment rate (TPT) contributes to a significant rise in income inequality. Conversely, the Human Development Index (HDI/IPM) has a negative coefficient of −0.0058 with a p-value of 0.0001 (< 0.05), meaning that a one-point increase in the HDI significantly reduces income inequality. The Adjusted R^2 value of 0.7412 indicates that the three independent variables account for 74.12% of the variation in income inequality across provinces, while the remainder is explained by factors outside the model.

Simultaneous Hypothesis Testing

As a final confirmation of the overall significance of the model, the results of the F-test are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of Simultaneous Testing (F-test)

Sumber Variasi	F-*Statistik*	*p-value*	Keputusan
Kemiskinan, Pengangguran, IPM → *Gini*	34,512	0,0000	H_0 ditolak — berpengaruh signifikan

(Source: Researcher, 2026)

An F-statistic value of 34.512, with a p-value of 0.0000 (< 0.05), demonstrates that the variables of poverty, unemployment, and the Human Development Index (HDI) collectively exert a significant influence on income inequality across provinces in Indonesia. These results confirm that the constructed model is, as a whole, valid and statistically significant for explaining the phenomenon of regional income disparity, while also providing a robust foundation for the theoretical discussion and policy implications to be outlined in the following sections.

The Impact of Poverty on Inter-Provincial Income Inequality in Indonesia

Estimation results from a Fixed Effect Model indicate that the poverty variable has a positive and significant impact on inter-provincial income inequality in Indonesia, with a coefficient of 0.0042 and a p-value of 0.0002 (< 0.05). This means that, ceteris paribus, a one-percentage-point increase in the poverty rate is statistically associated with a 0.0042-point rise in the Gini ratio. These findings confirm that poverty is not merely a consequence of inequality but also a factor that actively exacerbates income distribution disparities across regions in Indonesia. Theoretically, this can be explained through the mechanism of unequal human capacity accumulation. Provinces with a high concentration of poor residents typically face limited access to quality education, healthcare services, and economic infrastructure, which keeps labor productivity in those regions at a low level. Consequently, impoverished groups

are unable to participate in formal economic activities that generate higher incomes, causing the gap between the top and bottom segments of the income distribution to widen further.

These findings align with research by Maskur et al. (2023), which demonstrates that income distribution inequality significantly affects poverty across 24 Indonesian provinces during the 2017–2021 period—a relationship that is reciprocal and structurally reinforcing. Furthermore, Nabila et al. (2026) assert that income inequality is a critical determinant significantly influencing poverty levels in Indonesia, and that policies aimed at income equalization are effective in reducing poverty on a sustainable basis. Thus, the findings of this study reinforce the fact that interventions targeting poverty contribute directly to narrowing income disparities between provinces; conversely, neglecting pockets of poverty in eastern Indonesia will continue to serve as a structural barrier to the equitable distribution of national income.

The Impact of Unemployment on Inter-Provincial Income Inequality in Indonesia

In this study, the Open Unemployment Rate (TPT) is shown to have a positive and significant effect on income inequality, with a coefficient of 0.0031 and a p-value of 0.0007 (< 0.05). These results indicate that an increase in the unemployment rate within a province is consistently accompanied by a deterioration in income distribution in that region. Logically, unemployed individuals do not receive an income stream from productive activities, effectively placing them at the bottom of the income distribution. As the proportion of this group—those without income—grows, the gap between them and those with formal employment and steady incomes widens, leading to an increase in the Gini ratio. This finding aligns with the research of Ashari & Athoillah (2023), who examined the "Tapal Kuda" (Horseshoe) region in East Java, where the Open Unemployment Rate was found to significantly increase poverty levels and worsen overall societal welfare.

Conversely, a study by Ersad et al. (2022), which analyzed five provinces in the Southern Sumatra region, found that the unemployment rate had a negative effect on income inequality within a fixed-effects model. This suggests that the dynamics of how unemployment influences inequality can vary based on a region's economic structure and sectoral composition. These divergent results highlight an important nuance: in regions dominated by the informal sector, low formal unemployment does not necessarily correlate with better income distribution. This is further supported by Kholis & Gunarto (2025), who found that the Open Unemployment Rate does not always have a significant impact on poverty in Lampung Province—a result attributed to the dominance of the informal sector and the phenomenon of the "working poor." Nevertheless, in the context of an analysis covering 34 provinces nationwide using a panel data approach, unemployment remains a statistically significant variable in explaining variations in income inequality across regions; therefore, policies focused on creating employment opportunities—distributed equitably and tailored to local potential—remain relevant as instruments for promoting income equality.

The Influence of the Human Development Index on Inter-Provincial Income Inequality in Indonesia

The Human Development Index (HDI) variable shows a significant negative influence on income inequality, with a coefficient of −0.0058 and a p-value of 0.0001 (< 0.05). This indicates that, *ceteris paribus*, every one-point increase in a province's HDI statistically reduces its Gini ratio by 0.0058 points. This finding carries significant strategic implications: investment in the dimensions of education, health, and a decent standard of living not only enhances individual well-being but also contributes to a more equitable structural distribution of income. Provinces with a high HDI tend to have a better-educated, healthier, and more productive workforce, thereby possessing a greater capacity to access quality employment with

better and more evenly distributed wages. These findings align with research by Nabila et al. (2026), which concludes that improving the HDI—through education, health, and a decent standard of living—generates a positive effect by fostering a more productive and economically independent society. Similar results were noted by Firdaus & Hasmarini (2023), who found that the HDI influences income inequality across regencies/cities in Bali Province for the 2015–2022 period, although the direction of this relationship depends on the composition of the HDI components and the level of equitable access to basic services across regions.

Meanwhile, Simarmata & Sinaga (2023) confirm that poverty has a significant negative impact on the HDI. This indirectly reinforces the argument that improving the HDI and reducing poverty are two sides of the same policy coin—inseparable elements in efforts to curb inequality. It is also important to note that Janah (2022) found the Human Development Index (HDI) to have a positive effect on inequality during certain periods. This can be explained by the fact that, in the initial stages of HDI improvement, segments of the population with better access to education and healthcare experience faster income growth than those in lower socioeconomic groups; consequently, inequality rises temporarily before eventually declining—a phenomenon consistent with the inverted-U Kuznets curve within the dimension of human development.

Overall, the results of this study demonstrate that poverty, unemployment, and the HDI are, collectively, significant determinants of income inequality across provinces in Indonesia, as indicated by an F-statistic of 34.512 with a p-value of 0.0000. An adjusted R^2 value of 0.7412 suggests that these three variables account for approximately 74% of the variation in inter-provincial inequality, representing a substantial explanatory power. These findings underscore that a holistic policy approach—simultaneously addressing poverty alleviation, the expansion of employment opportunities, and the enhancement of human development—is far more effective than partial interventions in achieving sustainable income equity across all regions of Indonesia.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aims to analyze the impact of poverty, unemployment, and the Human Development Index (HDI) on income inequality across provinces in Indonesia, employing a fixed-effect panel data model for the 2018–2023 period. The estimation results confirm all research hypotheses. First, poverty is found to have a positive and significant effect on income inequality, indicating that higher poverty levels in a province lead to greater income disparity. Second, unemployment has a positive and significant impact on inequality, meaning that an increase in the open unemployment rate exacerbates income distribution disparities among social groups. Third, the HDI has a negative and significant effect, demonstrating that improving the quality of human development effectively reduces income inequality. Collectively, these three variables account for 74.12% of the variation in inequality across provinces. Based on these findings, this study recommends that central and local governments integrate policies for poverty alleviation, the expansion of employment opportunities, and the enhancement of the HDI in a synergistic and measurable manner—particularly in the less-developed provinces of Eastern Indonesia. Future research should consider broadening the scope of variables to include factors such as economic growth, fiscal decentralization, and infrastructure, while also extending the observation period to produce more comprehensive and representative estimates.

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