Global Economics, Social, and Development Review

Determinants of Poverty in East Java: Education, Unemployment, and Minimum Wage

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Received 18 November 2024, revised 30 January 2025, accepted 24 February 2025

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the effect of average school years, open unemployment rate, and minimum wage on the number of poor people in East Java Province from 2014-2023. The research method used is quantitative with a descriptive approach, using panel data regression covering 38 districts/cities. The data analyzed were sourced from the East Java Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), including the number of poor people, average school years, open unemployment rate, and minimum wage. The analysis shows that average years of schooling have a significant negative effect on poverty. Although the minimum wage hurts poverty, the effect is minimal. These findings emphasize the importance of improving education and reducing unemployment as the main strategies for poverty alleviation in East Java.

Keywords: Average Length of Schooling, Minimum Wage, Open Unemployment Rate, Poverty
JEL: I3, I2, E24, J3

DOI: https://doi.org/10.24123/gesdr.v29i1.7047

1. INTRODUCTION

The challenge often faced by developing countries is poverty. The issue of poverty is a critical global problem for all developing countries (Herlambang & Rachmawati, 2023). Indonesia is a developing country still shrouded in high levels of poverty. Poverty is a situation where people do not have a decent life, making it difficult to meet their needs and live with limitations (Anjarsari & Hartini, 2018). Based on data from the Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), poverty refers to a situation where a person cannot meet basic needs such as food and other necessities. Changes in the poverty rate are believed to impact the quality of life and the overall well-being of society (Jefferson, 2018).

The poverty rate in districts or cities in East Java Province shows significant fluctuations during the period 2014-2023, according to BPS. Although East Java is one of the most densely populated provinces in Indonesia, the poverty rate in this province is still relatively high compared to other provinces in Java (Fauziah et al., 2021). East Java is also a major contributor to the national economy, accounting for 14% of Indonesia's total economy (Mahsunah, 2013). Many large industries in this province operate nationally in Southeast Asia.

Despite this economic significance, poverty remains a persistent issue, particularly in rural areas and the agricultural sector. Based on the data available from BPS, three key factors have been identified as major contributors to poverty in East Java: education, unemployment, and minimum wage. The high poverty rate occurs in rural areas and agricultural-based economies compared to urban areas. For instance, regions like Madura, especially in Sampang Regency, experience the highest poverty levels in the province. In contrast, more developed areas like Surabaya and Malang have the lowest poverty rates due to better access to education and employment opportunities.

Education plays a crucial role in alleviating poverty, as it provides individuals with the skills and

knowledge necessary to improve their economic conditions. According to Wicaksana & Primandhana (2023), the average length of schooling (ALS) is a key indicator for assessing the level of education in an area, and this correlates with the poverty rate (Wicaksana & Primandhana, 2023). A study by Faradilah et al. (2023) further shows that higher levels of education are associated with lower poverty rates, as educated individuals are more likely to secure stable and higher-paying jobs (Faradilah et al., 2023). Furthermore, higher education contributes to better decision-making, particularly in managing financial resources, which is crucial for poverty reduction (Zenarolla, 2013). Improving the education level within a population, therefore, can be considered a long-term strategy to enhance productivity and economic growth, which ultimately improves the quality of life (Spada et al., 2023).

Unemployment is a key factor contributing to poverty, as individuals without stable jobs struggle to meet their basic needs (Triwulandari et al., 2023). A study by Saunders (2006) shows that part-time or casual work is often not enough to lift individuals out of poverty, emphasizing the importance of full-time employment (Saunders, 2006). Additionally, unemployment has broader economic implications, as it can lead to decreased economic growth and increased social instability (Suasih & Karmini, 2022). Specifically in East Java, the high unemployment rate correlates with the poverty rate, as many individuals are still unable to secure stable employment (Romi & Umiyati, 2018). However, not all unemployed individuals are considered poor, as some of them may still be actively seeking jobs or starting their businesses (Utami & Masjkuri, 2020). Thus, addressing unemployment requires targeted policies that not only create jobs but also ensure job stability and adequate wages.

Urowoli & Alero (2022) state that the high unemployment rate is primarily caused by the very high poverty rate (Urowoli & Alero, 2022). Unemployment or someone who does not have a job cannot contribute to increasing economic growth in a region. Unemployment significantly contributes to poverty, as the increase in unemployment leads to higher levels of inequality and economic hardship in society, which can worsen the economy (Ukpere & Slabbert, 2009). Unemployment in East Java negatively impacts the economy. The increasing number of unemployed people means more and more individuals without income.

While unemployment limits income opportunities, another crucial aspect affecting poverty is the minimum wage policy. The minimum wage plays an important role in poverty reduction by ensuring that workers receive a basic income to meet their needs. However, the low minimum wage in several areas of East Java has been linked to persistent poverty levels (Rahmawati et al., 2022). Although higher minimum wages are intended to improve workers' living conditions, this can also create challenges in areas with a high cost of living, as the wages may still be insufficient to meet basic needs (Wiadnyana & Hadiyati, 2023). Government Regulation No. 8/1981 categorizes the minimum wage into regional sectors, affecting wage policies in various districts and industries (Peraturan Pemerintah (PP) Nomor 8 Tahun 1981 Tentang Perlindungan Upah, 1981). Empirical studies show that an increase in the minimum wage correlates with a decrease in poverty levels, as higher wages enhance workers' purchasing power (Susanto & Windyastuti, 2023). Thus, establishing an effective minimum wage policy is crucial for balancing economic stability and poverty alleviation in East Java.

Previous studies on poverty in East Java, such as Jasmine (2014), primarily focused on the effects of domestic investment, minimum wages, and government spending. Although these factors are important, the study did not consider human capital factors, such as education and employment, which play a crucial role in long-term poverty alleviation. This gap in research indicates a need for further exploration of how human capital variables interact with poverty dynamics. Furthermore, Jasmine (2014) suggested that the increase in the minimum wage does not significantly affect poverty, but recent findings from various regions show diverse results, requiring further investigation (Susanto & Windyastuti, 2023).

To address this gap, our study utilizes a panel data regression approach, allowing for a more precise analysis of regional and temporal poverty dynamics. Considering the high poverty rate in East Java

despite economic growth, this research aims to fill the gap by analyzing the impact of education, unemployment, and minimum wage on poverty using panel data analysis in 38 districts from 2014 to 2023. By incorporating these factors, this research provides a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of poverty and offers policy recommendations tailored to the socio-economic conditions of the region.

Based on the article "The Influence of Economic Growth, Minimum Wage, Open Unemployment Rate, and Education on the Number of Poor Population" by Utami (2020) this study examines the influence of economic growth, minimum wage, open unemployment rate, and education on the poverty rate in East Java. The research results show that the minimum wage, open unemployment rate, and education (measured by ALS) have a significant negative effect on poverty, while economic growth has a negative but not significant effect. This study emphasizes that policies in East Java should focus on increasing economic production and adjusting the minimum wage to reduce poverty. The novelty here lies in the years used, specifically from 2014 to 2023, with the variables employed being the average length of schooling, the open unemployment rate, and the minimum wage about the number of poor residents, without adding the economic growth variable.

In general, poverty can be explained as the inability of individuals to meet their needs in various aspects of life. Based on Sen (1999), poverty can be defined as the limitation in meeting living standards, regardless of whether those standards are met or not (Nizar & Arif, 2023). Based on Becker's (1975) human capital theory, education is viewed as a highly profitable investment to enhance individual productivity (Hoiroh et al., 2024). Higher education can expand individuals' skills in finding quality jobs, which has the potential to reduce poverty levels.

In developing countries, the relationship between high unemployment and poverty is often observed. Landahl (2005) states that high population growth can increase the number of jobs, thus it is necessary to improve job opportunities. If there are no jobs, it can lead to long-term poverty (Bintang & Woyanti, 2018). One of the things that can influence the poverty rate is the minimum wage set by the government, as the minimum wage is useful for meeting daily needs. According to Tadaro and Smith (2014, p. 413), the purpose of setting a minimum wage is to achieve a decent standard of living, including welfare and health. The higher the minimum wage, the more welfare is achieved (Sholihah et al., 2022). Moreover, he asserts that when it can increase income, create jobs, and reduce inequality, it can enable the government to achieve the prosperity of its society.

Based on the background that has been outlined, the formulation of the problem is as follows: "How does the average length of schooling, open unemployment rate, and minimum wage affect the number of poor people in East Java Province during the period 2014-2023?" and "How does the average length of schooling, open unemployment rate, and minimum wage affect the number of poor people in East Java during the period 2014-2023?". The objectives of this research are as follows: (1) Identifying the influence of average years of schooling, open unemployment rate, and minimum wage on the number of poor people in East Java Province during the period 2014-2023; (2) Analyzing the influence of average years of schooling, open unemployment rate, and minimum wage on the number of poor people in East Java Province during the period 2014-2023.

2. METHODS

This study employs a quantitative research method with an inferential approach, utilizing panel data regression to analyze the determinants of poverty in East Java from 2014 to 2023. The panel data method was selected as it allows for the combination of cross-sectional data (data across 38 districts/cities) and time-series data (10 years of observations), providing more robust estimations compared to standard regression techniques (Salsabil & Rianti, 2023).

The study analyzes secondary data obtained from the Badan Pusat Statistik of East Java (BPS, 2024). The dependent variable is poverty level (POV), while the independent variables include

average years of schooling (ALS), open unemployment rate (OUR), and minimum wage (MW).

Panel data regression requires selecting the most appropriate model among the following: a) Common Effect Model (CEM): Assumes a uniform effect for all districts without considering individual differences. b) Fixed Effect Model (FEM): Controls for time-invariant characteristics within each district, making it suitable for capturing regional heterogeneity. c) Random Effect Model (REM): Assumes that variations across districts are random and uncorrelated with the independent variables.

To choose the most appropriate panel data regression model, several types of tests are used, namely the Chow Test, the Hausman Test, and the Lagrange Multiplier (LM) Test. The Chow test is used to choose between the Common Effect Model (CEM) and the Fixed Effect Model (FEM), with the null hypothesis (H_0) stating that CEM is more appropriate, while the alternative hypothesis (H_1) indicates that FEM is more suitable. If the test results reject H_0, then FEM is chosen. Next, the Hausman Test compares FEM with the Random Effect Model (REM), with the null hypothesis (H_0) assuming that REM is more appropriate, while the alternative hypothesis (H_1) supports the use of FEM. If the test results reject H_0, then FEM is chosen as the best model. Finally, the Lagrange Multiplier Test is used to examine whether the Random Effect Model is more appropriate compared to the model without random effects, with the null hypothesis (H_0) stating that the model without random effects is better, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) indicating that the model with random effects is more suitable. The criteria for selecting the best model are determined based on its probability value; if it is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. The final regression equation is revealed on formula 1.

$$POV_{it}=\beta 0+\beta 1ALS_{it}+\beta 2OUR_{it}+\beta 3MW_{it}+\epsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

The variables in Formula 1 are defined as follows: The poverty level in district or city i at year t is denoted as POVit. The average length of schooling in district or city I at year t is represented by ALSit. The open unemployment rate in district or city I at year t is denoted as OURit. The minimum wage in district or city I at year t is represented by MWit. Finally, the error term is denoted by ϵit, which accounts for unexplained variations in the model.

This study adopts three hypotheses as follows: The first hypothesis is to test whether the average length of schooling (ALS) significantly affects the poverty rate in East Java. The second hypothesis tests whether the open unemployment rate (OUR) significantly affects the poverty rate in East Java. Meanwhile, the third hypothesis tests whether the minimum wage (MW) significantly affects the poverty rate in East Java.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

The output estimation results of data management regarding the influence of ALS, OUR, and MW on the number of poor people in East Java (Salsabil & Rianti, 2023). The research period uses data from 2014-2023 from the observation data of 38 districts/cities in East Java Province, and the selection of the best model using the fixed effect model is as follows in Table 1.

Table 1. Chow Test

Effect Test	Statistic	d.f	Prob	Description
Cross-Section F	449.862169	(37,339)	0.0000	Valid
Cross-section Chi-Square	1487.327989	37	0.0000	Valid

Table 1, describes the result of Chow Test to to decide the suitable model between the Common

Effect Model (CEM) and the Fixed Effect Model (FEM). The results show a Cross-section Chi-Square value of 0.0000, which is smaller than 0.05, H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. This means that the Fixed Effects (FEM) model is more appropriate to use than the Common Effects Model (CEM).

Table 2. Hausman Test

Effect Test	Statistic	d.f	Prob	Description
Cross-Section Random	449.949228	3	0.0000	Valid

Table 2 represents the result of the Hausman Test to compare Fixed Effect Model (FEM) and the Random Effect Model (REM). The result shows a random cross-section value of 0.0000, which is less than 0.05, H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. This indicates that the Fixed Effects model is more appropriate to use than the Random Effects model (REM) for this analysis.

Based on statistical tests, the Fixed Effect Model (FEM) was chosen as the best model for analyzing poverty determinants in East Java. This model was selected because it effectively controls for time-invariant characteristics across the 38 districts/cities in the region. Unlike the CEM, which assumes uniform effects for all districts, FEM statistical results for regional heterogeneity, allow for more accurate estimations of the impact of education, unemployment, and minimum wage on poverty levels.

Table 3. FEM Test

Variable	Coeffecient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Probability	Explanation
C	6.700238	0.240748	27.83092	0.0000	
ALS	-0.030700	0.013820	-2.2215041	0.0270	Negative Significant effect
OUR	0.013872	0.002341	5.926524	0.0000	Positive Significant effect
MW	-0.145253	0.022677	-6.405203	0.0000	Negative Significant effect
Prob(F-statistic)		0.000000			The research model has a significant simultaneous effect.
R-Squared		0.998031			The model explains 99.80% of the dependent variable
Dependent Variable		**Poverty Level**			

The regression results in Table 3 show that the coefficient for the average length of schooling (ALS) is -0.0307 with a p-value of 0.0000, indicating that the relationship is negative and statistically significant at the 1% level. This means that an increase in the average length of schooling significantly reduces poverty levels in East Java. The coefficient for the open unemployment rate (OUR) is 0.0138 with a p-value of 0.0090, meaning that an increase in unemployment significantly increases poverty levels. Since the p-value is below 0.05, confirming that unemployment has a statistically significant positive effect on poverty. The coefficient for the minimum wage (MW) is -0.1452 with a p-value of 0.0000, indicating a significant negative effect on poverty. This suggests that an increase in the

minimum wage reduces poverty levels in East Java, though the magnitude of the effect is relatively small. Since the p-value is below 0.05, confirming that the minimum wage policy has a measurable impact on poverty reduction.

The Fixed Effect Model (FEM) regression results provide valuable insights into how poverty is influenced by the independent variables. The coefficient for average years of schooling (ALS) is negative and significant, indicating that higher education levels lead to lower poverty rates. This finding supports the human capital theory, which posits that education improves employability and income levels, thus helping to reduce poverty. In contrast, the unemployment rate (OUR) has a positive coefficient, suggesting that higher joblessness exacerbates poverty. This is because unemployed individuals lack stable income sources, leading to an increase in poverty.

Regarding the minimum wage (MW), although the coefficient is negative, its magnitude is relatively small. This suggests that wage policies alone may not be sufficient to significantly reduce poverty without complementary economic policies. The choice of the Fixed Effect Model (FEM) ensures that regional-specific factors, such as local government policies, industrial structures, and infrastructure conditions, are taken into account, thereby enhancing the robustness of the findings. Future research may explore dynamic panel models to capture the potential lag effects of these variables on poverty reduction.

3.2 Discussion

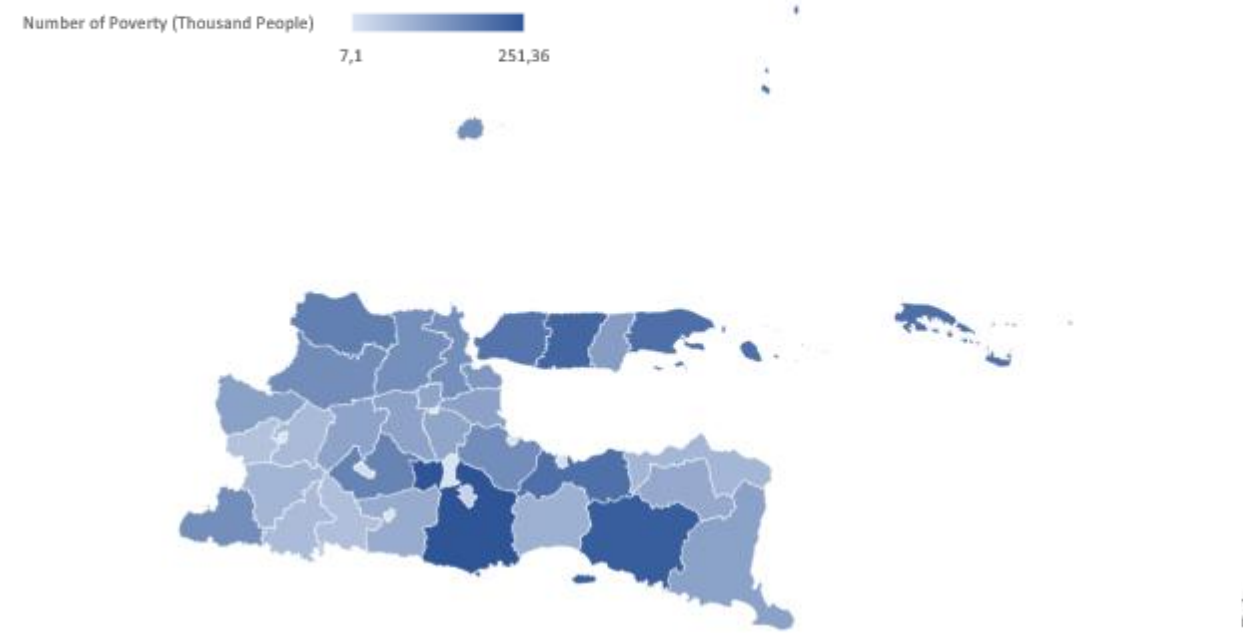
3.2.1 Poverty Condition in the East Java

Figure 1 describe the poverty data for 2023 in East Java regencies/cities that shows a significant variation in the number of poor residents. The districts with the highest number of poor residents are Malang (251.36 thousand people), Jember (236.46 thousand people), and Sampang (221.71 thousand people). These three regions have different economic characteristics, but structural challenges such as limited access to education, dependence on the traditional agricultural sector, and high unemployment rates can be the main factors contributing to the high poverty levels. On the other hand, the areas with the lowest number of poor residents are Mojokerto City (7.65 thousand people), Batu City (7.1 thousand people), and Madiun City (8.46 thousand people), which generally have more advanced economies with more developed industrial, tourism, and service sectors compared to agriculture-based regencies.

The disparity in the number of poor residents can be explained through various economic and social factors, including the level of education, the unemployment rate, and the region's economic structure. Districts with high poverty rates such as Sampang, Sumenep, and Probolinggo tend to have lower average years of schooling, which affects access to higher-paying jobs. Additionally, the labor sector in these areas is still dominated by informal jobs with low wages, making poverty alleviation efforts more difficult. Conversely, cities with lower poverty rates, such as Malang City, Surabaya City, and Kediri City, have better access to education and broader job opportunities in the industrial and service sectors, which provide economic stability for their residents.

To reduce the poverty gap between regions, the government needs to develop data-driven policies that focus on improving access to education and skills training, creating formal job opportunities, and investing in the economic infrastructure of underdeveloped areas. Programs such as vocational education, micro-enterprise empowerment, and the digitalization of the rural economy can help improve the competitiveness of the workforce and drive economic growth in the region. Moreover, areas with high poverty levels require region-based interventions, such as the development of transportation connectivity and regional labor market integration, to connect underdeveloped areas with economic growth centers in East

Figure 1. The Number of Poor Residents in East Java 2023 (Thousands of People)



Source: BPS of East Java, processed by author in 2025

Java. With a structured approach, poverty rates can be sustainably reduced, creating more equitable prosperity for all districts/cities in this province.

3.2.2 The Influence of Education on the Number of Poor People

The regression results show that ALS has a significant negative impact on poverty (0.0207<0.05), confirming that higher education levels are associated with lower poverty rates in East Java. This research shows that an increase in the average length of schooling has a significant negative impact on poverty. Each year, an increase in the average length of schooling can reduce the poverty rate. Education, which plays a role as one of the factors in improving the quality of life for individuals and families, enhances the level of education, thus providing a great opportunity to escape the poverty line (Adam et al., 2022). These findings align with Becker's (1975) human capital theory, which views education as a highly beneficial investment for enhancing individual productivity. When the human resources possessed by a region have adequate quality, they can compete in the increasingly fierce international competition (Mahsunah, 2013). Similar results were found by Faradilah et al. (2023), who demonstrated that increased school years reduce poverty rates in Indonesia. However, compared to Zenarolla (2013), who highlighted financial literacy as a key factor, our study emphasizes formal education as the primary driver of poverty reduction. This suggests that improving education policies, particularly in rural areas, should be a focus for poverty alleviation programs.

Education functions as a solution to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty, fostering aspirations and motivating society to value learning as a path to improvement (Hai, 2021). With sufficiently high-quality education, it will be able to alleviate the poverty rate, as education is often seen as a reflection and deepening of the inequalities faced by poor children (Terzi et al., 2023). With this, ALS has an impact on reducing poverty rates in East Java, improving education as one of the effective strategies in the effort to alleviate poverty.

3.2.3 The Effect of Open Unemployment on the Number of Poor People

Our study finds that the open unemployment rate (OUR) has a significant positive effect on poverty (0.0000<0.05), meaning that higher unemployment is associated with increased poverty levels. This is consistent with Triwulandari et al. (2023), who reported similar findings for Java. However, our results differ from Saunders (2006), who argued that casual employment may still alleviate poverty. One possible explanation is that the structure of the labor market in East Java differs, with fewer informal job opportunities that could serve as a temporary economic buffer for the unemployed Unemployment is closely related to and significantly impacts poverty. The rising unemployment rate can impact the economy of a region because when people are not working, the production of goods or services is hindered, meaning no income can be earned. The lack of income results in a decrease in their purchasing power, as there is no income available for shopping, leading to a decrease in the demand for goods and services (Istiyani et al., 2024). According to Landahl (2005), the increasing number of people leads to a wide range of jobs. If there are no jobs, it can cause long-term poverty. The unemployment rate will increase along with the increase (Fadhilah et al., 2023). On the other hand, when the unemployment rate decreases, the poverty rate also decreases. This data emphasizes the importance of efforts to reduce unemployment as part of poverty alleviation policies because, without adequate job opportunities, an increase in the number of poor people tends to be difficult to avoid (’Izazi & Boedirochminarni, 2023).

3.2.4 The Effect of the Minimum Wage on the Number of Poor People

Our study shows that an increase in the minimum wage reduces poverty levels (0.000<0.05), although the magnitude of the effect is relatively small. This suggests that while minimum wage policies can contribute to poverty alleviation, they should be complemented with broader economic initiatives such as skills training programs and job creation efforts. Policymakers should also consider the regional cost of living when determining minimum wage levels, as a uniform increase may not be equally effective across all districts.

The minimum wage has a significant and negative effect on poverty, which means that an increase in the minimum wage can directly raise income. The existence of a high minimum wage will impact the purchasing power in a region (Ashari & Athoillah, 2023). According to Tadaro and Smith (2014), in line with this research, the minimum wage can achieve a decent standard of living, including welfare and health. The higher the minimum wage, the more welfare can be achieved. High wages can improve and reduce poverty, depending on the elasticity of labor demand, poverty avoidance, and the minimum wage to poverty line ratio (Fields & Kanbur, 2007). The significant increase in the minimum wage in East Java has reduced poverty, particularly by decreasing the flow from non-poverty to poverty. Although the impact is not significant, the minimum wage policy can still function as one of the main instruments in the effort to reduce poverty, especially if supported by employment and economic policies that focus on the welfare of low-income communities. This research aligns with the study by Utami (2020) That the factors of education and minimum wage have a significant negative impact on poverty. The minimum wage according to the research Nadia (2024) shows a significant negative impact. Unlike previous research which indicated that unemployment has a significant negative impact, the results of this study show that it is significant for the number of poor residents.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of this study highlight the important roles of education, employment, and minimum wage policies in reducing poverty in East Java. Education significantly reduces poverty levels,

emphasizing the need for policies that enhance access to quality education and vocational training. To address the issue of unemployment, targeted job creation programs and skill development initiatives must be implemented to ensure that job seekers can transition to stable employment. While the increase in the minimum wage has a small but significant impact on reducing poverty, it must be complemented by broader economic policies, such as subsidized housing, transportation, and social assistance programs.

In the long term, achieving sustainable poverty alleviation requires an integrated approach involving collaboration between the government, the private sector, and local communities. Future research should explore dynamic policy interventions, such as conditional cash transfers and digital education platforms, to further enhance the effectiveness of poverty reduction strategies. The contribution of influence is 99.80% on the dependent variable.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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