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Inclusive Economic Growth and Fiscal Intervention: Could It Reduce Poverty, Inequality, and Unemployment in East Java Post-COVID-19?

Abstract

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, East Java Province made remarkable achievements in economic growth accompanied by a continuing downward trend in poverty. The COVID-19 pandemic had a crucial impact, causing East Java to face a reasonably deep economic contraction and a spike in poverty and unemployment. Apart from these problems, East Java Province faces vast inequality before and after the pandemic. These three problems are priorities to be addressed immediately to realize sustainable development. Based on these problems, the study analyzes whether these three problems can be overcome with inclusive growth and local government fiscal intervention, especially in the post-pandemic period. Using panel data regression (2015-2021 period) and a dummy for the COVID-19 variable, this study documents that economic growth in East Java still needs to be fully inclusive. This conclusion is underlined by findings where economic growth is negatively correlated with poverty but positively correlated with inequality and unemployment. On the other hand, fiscal intervention in education spending plays a significant role in reducing poverty. Unfortunately, this study found no determinants that reduce inequality and unemployment in East Java.

Keywords: inclusive economic growth index, government spending, village funds, poverty, Covid-19

JEL Classification Code:H3, O4

INTRODUCTION

In the regional scope of Indonesia, East Java Province (abbreviated to East Java) has had a consistently increasing economic growth rate in the last decade (Tri Hardjoko et al., 2021). A solid trend followed this brilliant achievement in reducing poverty until 2019. However, this brilliant achievement was overshadowed by rising inequality and high levels of unemployment. These two problems have become increasingly critical after the Covid-19 pandemic (Siswantoro, 2022). In the Indonesian context, East Java has suffered quite severely from the pandemic, with the highest death rate due to COVID-19 in Indonesia[1] (Kompas, 2021).

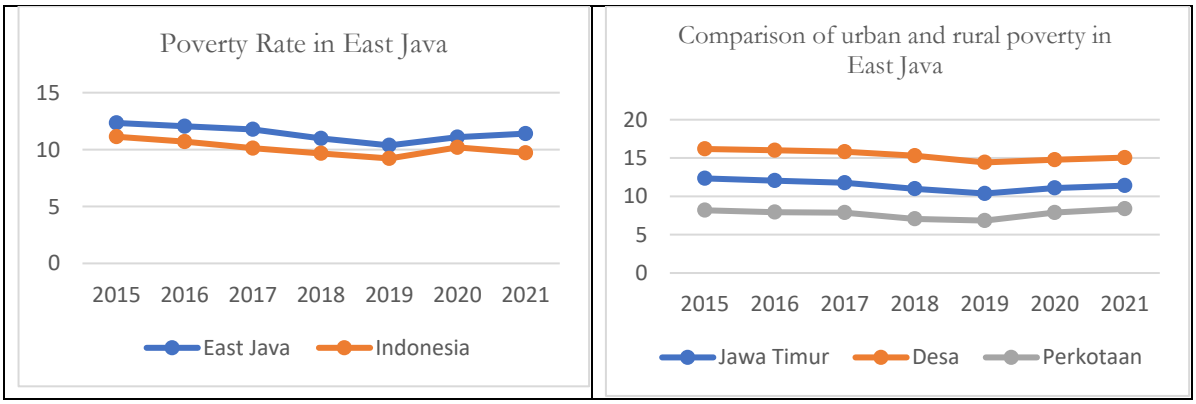
To reduce the spread of COVID-19, the government has implemented restrictions on social interaction, and several districts/cities have even proposed implementing a lockdown. This restriction policy has a crucial impact on the local economy. Moreover, East Java's economic structure is more supported by the processing, services, and large trade sectors. Before 2020, East Java's regional economic growth recorded a positive trend of 5.53 percent; conversely, in the second semester of 2020, it fell to minus 2.23 percent. This decline indicates that the East Java economy is experiencing quite a deep contraction.

The economic slowdown impacted reduced production activities, followed by reduced working hours and the number of employees. The following multiplier effect is the increase in the number of unemployed people, which will undoubtedly be followed by a decrease in income (Dewi & Nursiyono,

[1] Since April 2020, the number of deaths from COVID-19 victims in East Java has increased sharply and recorded the highest figure in Indonesia. The highest death toll was from the city of Surabaya (Kompas. 2020). 5 Provinces with the highest Covid-19 Death Cases, East Java number . https://www.kompas.com/tren/read/2020/09/21/130400065/5-provinsi-dengan-case-matian-covid-19 -highest-eastern-java-number-1) Kompas (2021). Distribution of 144 Death Cases due to COVID-19, Highest in East Java. https://kmp.im/app6https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2021/09/24/18065351/sebaran-144-case-matitian-akibat-covid-19-tertinggi-di-jawa-timur.

2023). The pandemic has significantly impacted the supply and demand side of the labor market (Sukanti & Sulistyaningrum, 2022). The economic downturn causes a decrease in the number of working hours and the number of employees. On the supply side, many workers experience declining health and stop working. Based on East Java's Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) data at the end of 2020, the processing industry, services, and wholesale trade sectors experienced a double-digit decline (to minus) compared to the end of 2019. The impact of the pandemic further caused poverty and inequality levels in East Java to soar. Graph 1 shows a visualization of East Java BPS data (www.jatim.bps.go.id) where the poverty reduction trend was stable until 2019 (10.37 percent), then increased to 11.08 percent and 11.40 percent at the end of 2020 and 2021, respectively. This graph shows that the poverty level in East Java is higher than the national average.

Graph 1 Comparison of Poverty and Inequality Trends Between Regions



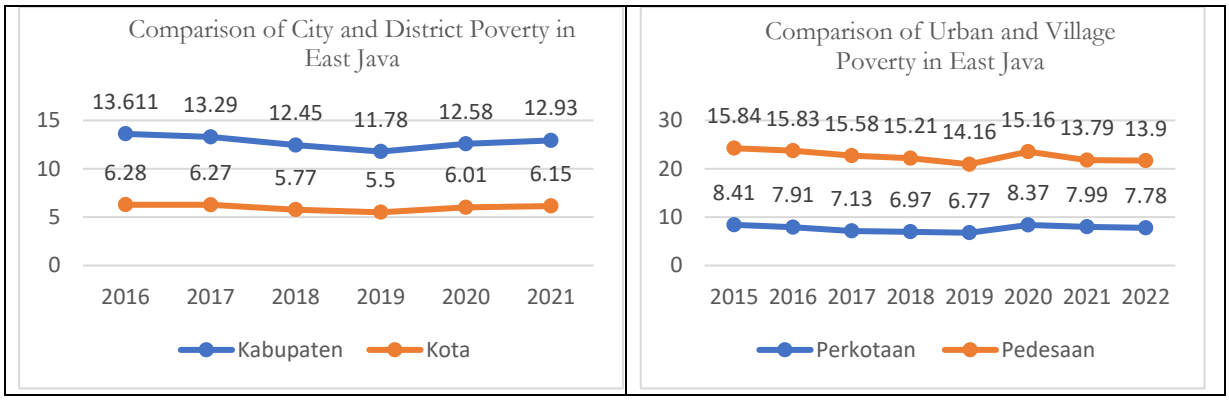
Graph 1 Comparison of Poverty and Inequality Trends Between Regions

As explained previously, East Java faces quite wide welfare disparities. This province faces triple inequality, namely inequality between villages and cities, between districts, as well as inequality between neighborhoods and cities. Graph 2 shows relatively high disparities between the poor population living in rural areas (11-13 percent) and urban areas (5-6 percent). In the context of welfare, three districts in the Madura region (Sumenep, Bangkalan, and Sampang) have poverty above 20 percent, while Malang City and Batu City have below 5 percent. In addition, Dartanto (2015) stated that 60 percent of poor households in East Java earn their living from the agricultural sector. In contrast, only 10 percent of the wealthiest households earn income from the service sector. The income ratio between the richest and poorest groups is 75 percent versus 25 percent. The disparity in welfare between regions in East Java represents not only poverty but also inequality between regions.

The emergence of this quite wide disparity is most likely due to the dominance of the contribution of the non-agricultural sector in East Java. Based on data analysis from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), only five of the 38 districts/cities contribute significantly to East Java's GRDP. The five regions are Surabaya, Sidoarjo, Pasuruan, Gresik, and Kediri (BPS, 2022). These areas are centers of processing industry, services, and large trade in East Java. Long before the pandemic, statistically, output from the services sector and large trade continued to increase, while production from the agricultural sector continued to decline. This low growth in the farm sector is not beneficial for the poor population who still depend on the agricultural industry (Putra, 2022).

Graph 2 shows that poverty and unemployment rates soared at the end of 2020, and inequality between regions in East Java widened. The growth contraction hit the economy and caused many family groups previously not considered poor, just above the poverty line, to fall into the inferior group. The decreased working hours and layoffs resulted in this group's income reduction (see Graph 4). Another impact of the pandemic is that the open unemployment rate soared in 2020 and will

continue to rise in 2021. This problem is crucial for many people's lives and requires immediate handling by both the provincial and regency/city governments in East Java.



Graph 2. Comparison of Poverty in East Java Province

Regarding the problems in East Java, economists have recommended that the solution to these problems is stable economic growth (Klasen, 2008; Ranieri & Ramos, 2013). Many experts have discussed the strategic role of economic growth in development, especially from the perspective of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Veiga et al., 2018). Furthermore, leading scientists (Datt & Ravaillon, 2002; Dollar & Kraay, 2003) prescribe that every country needs to grow to eradicate poverty. Growth's "trickle-down effect" is expected to reach poor populations in every region (Norton, 1997).

Regarding the concept of growth, in the last decade, there has been a paradigm shift from pro-poor growth to inclusive economic growth (Adeleye, 2023). This concept of inclusiveness indicates the quality of economic growth where all levels of society enjoy the results of development equally. Thus, economic growth can increase the welfare of low-income people through expanding employment opportunities, ultimately reducing inequality between societal levels (Amponsah et al., 2023). Empirically, there is strong evidence of a strong correlation between inclusive growth and poverty (Habito, 2009), justice (Stacy & Fiol, 2021), and opportunity (Ali & Son, 2007). Economic growth is said to be inclusive when all members of society participate and contribute to the growth process. Participation and contribution are represented in job ownership so that each individual earns income and perceives "functioning" because they have participated in social and economic activities (Ranieri & Ramos, 2013). In an economy that grows inclusively, income distribution runs well in society (Ali & Zhuang, 2007). Thus, economic growth is inclusive if it can reduce poverty and inequality (Lee & Sissons, 2016).

However, as various studies prove, this normative idea cannot be realized. The reality is that the benefits of growth are relatively small and slow in reducing poverty (Laborde Debucquet & Martin, 2018). The distribution of economic development results in an uneven pattern, leaving poor groups outside the reach of economic expansion and development (Islam & McGillivray, 2020). In other words, the economic development results still need to be enjoyed by low-income people. Poverty continues to increase more than the reduction in poverty due to the neutral distribution of growth (Chen & Ravallion, 2009). Meanwhile, in the Indonesian context, the hope of realizing inclusive economic growth is still challenging, especially at the regional level. Empirical findings in the local context also provide evidence that economic development at the provincial level in Indonesia has not been inclusive; Economic growth only reduces poverty and does not reduce inequality and unemployment (Dartanto, 2015; Ernawati et al., 2021; Herdiyati & Ismail, 2022).

Despite the inconsistency of empirical evidence, the phenomenon of inclusive growth in East Java Province is interesting to analyze. By utilizing published data from BPS East Java and Bappenas, this study has a strong suspicion that poverty reduction is consistently correlated with the trend of inclusive economic growth, which continues to increase until 2019 (see Graph 1 and Graph 3). In addition, the OECD (2015) also emphasized the crucial role of inclusive economic growth in reducing poverty and inequality. These two arguments prompted this study to investigate whether quality economic growth is a solution to the problems of poverty and inequality in East Java after COVID-19.

Apart from economic growth, the empirical track record shows that other factors are crucial in reducing poverty and inequality. As proposed by (Sepulveda and Martinez-Vazquez, 2010) and (Mosley, 2014), government fiscal intervention is vital in eradicating poverty. From the revenue and expenditure side, the government can intervene by strengthening the demand and supply side. This strengthening takes the form of assistance to poor people to increase their income (S. Yao et al., 2004) or offering direct assistance programs to poor people (Sudewi & Wirathi, 2013). It is believed that increasing direct regional spending can increase local output, which then impacts increasing individual income (Lubis & Dahraini, 2018).

Apart from fiscal intervention at the regional level, this study also considers the Village Fund Program as a form of fiscal intervention at the village level. As is known, the government is aggressively promoting this program as an essential effort to accelerate development in rural areas (Alif et al., 2020). The acceleration of growth is expected to create more jobs and business opportunities to increase the income of rural communities and reduce disparities in prosperity between villages and cities, ultimately reducing poverty and inequality (ARHAM & HATU, 2020). This positive proposition is strengthened by the fact that East Java Province is the largest recipient of village funds compared to other provinces in Indonesia. This study also expands the analysis to other factors recommended by other researchers, such as local government fiscal independence (Manek & Badrudin, 2017) and quality of education (Arsani et al., 2020; Asrol & Ahmad, 2018) as essential factors in reducing poverty and inequality.

As with inclusive economic growth, empirical evidence still needs to be more consistent in explaining the effectiveness of village funds (Rimawan & Aryani, 2019) and fiscal intervention in reducing poverty and inequality (Taruno, 2019; Yusuf & Sumner, 2015). Therefore, this study utilizes the East Java phenomenon before and after the COVID-19 pandemic to better explain how economic growth and fiscal intervention, especially village funds, correlate with reducing poverty and inequality. With a health crisis accompanied by a financial crisis during the pandemic, the findings from this study can explain what many other studies still need to prove.

This article is organized into several parts: introduction, research methods, presentation of the results, and discussion of the results in the Discussion Section. Finally, this article presents conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach to analyze the influence of inclusive economic growth on poverty, unemployment, and inequality in East Java. The research period covers 2015-2021. The selection of the period range is intended to adapt to the start of the village funding program until the period after the COVID-19 pandemic. The data used is secondary data published by BPS East Java Province (www.jatim.bps.go.id.) and regional government financial data posted by DJPK, Ministry of Finance (www.djpk.kemenkeu.go.id). The data covers all districts and cities in East Java, including 38,

consisting of 29 districts and nine cities. Thus, the data used is the population of district and city governments in East Java.

The research model refers to the model developed by Yao (2007) and Sepulveda and Martinez-Vazquez (2010). The dependent variable consists of three components, namely (1) the poverty level as measured by the percentage of poor people in each district/city (headcount index), (2) the level of inequality represented by the Gini ratio, and (3) the open unemployment rate to represent unemployment. The rationale underlying the development of the research model is the inclusive growth index, especially in the period after the COVID-19 pandemic, which is thought to be a benchmark for equal welfare distribution, ultimately reducing poverty, inequality, and unemployment (Dollar & Kraay, 2003). Other explanatory variables include local government spending policies as a form of fiscal intervention (Wibowo & Oktivalerina, 2022), degree of fiscal independence (Canare, 2020), village funds (Arham & Hatu, 2020), and school enrollment rates (Elbers et al., 2008). The research model was developed in the form of the following equation.

$$Pov_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1.IGI_{it} + \beta_2.IGI*postCovid + \beta_3.Econ_{it} + \beta_4.Educ_{it} + \beta_5.Health_{it} + \beta_6.VF_{it} + \beta_7.DFD_{it} + \beta_8.APS_{it} + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

Model 1 above analyzes the influence of inclusive economic development (IGI) and local government fiscal intervention variables such as budget allocations to finance essential social services (such as economics (Econ), education (Educ), health (Health), village funds (VF), degree of fiscal independence (DFI) and school enrollment rate (APS) on poverty (Pov). This model includes interactions between inclusive economic development and the period after the COVID-19 pandemic (IGI*postCovid).

Next, model 1 was developed into models 2 and 3 by adapting the poverty variable to the inequality (INEQ) and unemployment (UNEMP) variables. Models 2 and 3 aim to analyze the influence of independent variables on inequality. The proxy for human capital uses the average school enrollment rate, where this variable is expected to impact the welfare of low-income families directly. Many studies suggest that the higher the level of education, the greater the expected lifetime income (Krueger, 1999). For urbanites on the island of Java, the return on education is around seventeen percent, higher than in other countries (Byron & Takahashi, 1989).

$$INEQ_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1.IGI_{it} + \beta_2.IGI*postCovid + \beta_3.Econ_{it} + \beta_4.Educ_{it} + \beta_5.Health_{it} + \beta_6.VF_{it} + \beta_7.DFD_{it} + \beta_8.APS_{it} + \varepsilon \quad (2)$$

$$UNEMP_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1.IGI_{it} + \beta_2.IGI*postCovid + \beta_3.Econ_{it} + \beta_4.Educ_{it} + \beta_5.Health_{it} + \beta_6.VF_{it} + \beta_7.DFD_{it} + \beta_8.APS_{it} + \varepsilon \quad (3)$$

Information:

Pov_{it}	:	The poverty level is measured by the percentage of poor people in each district-city
$INEQ_{it}$	:	The level of inequality is measured by the Gini Ratio for each district-city
IGI_{it}	:	Inclusive economic growth index published by Bappenas.
PostCovid	:	The dummy variable uses "1" for the period after 2020 and "0" for the period before 2020.
IGI*postCovid	:	Interaction between the inclusive economic development index and dummy variables after COVID-19.
$Econ_{it}$	:	Economic expenditure is measured by realized economic expenditure divided by total admitted expenditure per district-city.
$Educ_{it}$	:	Education expenditure is measured by the realization of education expenditure divided by the total realization of expenditure per district city.

Health	:	Health spending is measured by realized health spending divided by total realized spending per district-city.
VF_{it}	:	Village Funds, measured by the natural logarithm of village funds
DFI_{it}	:	The degree of Fiscal Independence is measured by the ratio between original regional income divided by total regional expenditure.
APS_{it}	:	School Participation Rate, measured by APS data from BPS (jatim.bps.go.id)
α	:	Constanta
β_1- β_8	:	Regression coefficient

This study applies panel data regression using the PostCovid variable as a dummy. The 2020 and 2021 periods are represented with the number "1", while the period before 2020 uses "0". Furthermore, the interaction between PostCovid and the inclusive economic growth index becomes an independent variable representing post-COVID-19 IGI. In the equations of Model 1 and Model 2, the regression coefficients of β1 and β2 are expected to be significantly negative (t-table < -1.96, or p-value <0.05).

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistic

A descriptive analysis of the data used in this study is presented in Table 1. For poverty, the highest figure was 0.2569 or 25.69 percent, which occurred in Sampang Regency in 2015. Until the end of 2021, the poverty rate in Sampang Regency had decreased but remained high at 23.76 percent. The lowest poverty (3.81 percent) was in Batu City in 2019 and increased to 4.09 at the end of 2021. The average district poverty rate in East Java Province during the 2015-2021 period was 12.94 percent, while the average poverty rate in the city reached 6.05 percent. From these two average poverty figures, the welfare inequality between cities and districts in East Java is still vast. The poverty disparity between districts/cities on Madura Island and other neighborhoods and towns in East Java is quite significant. Poverty on Madura Island is around 19.87 percent, while in different districts and cities in East Java Province, it is approximately 10.30 percent.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

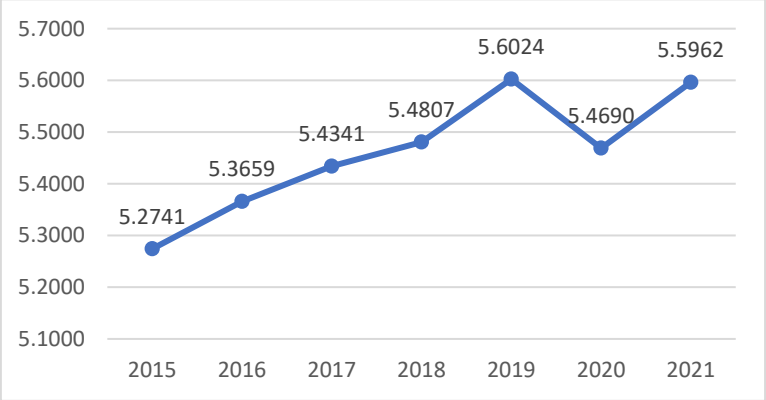
Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Poverty (Pov)	0.1131	0.0465	0.0381	0.2569
Inequality (INEQ)	0.1895	0.1663	0	0.421
Unemployment (UNEMP)	3.8036	2.2710	0	10.97
Inclusive Growth Index (IGI)	5.6283	0.4469	4.59	6.95
Economy Expenditures (Econ)	176143.8	165060.8	0	1316598
Education Expenditures (Educ)	765339.9	301012.8	0	2189842
Health Expenditures (Health)	469377.5	360728.4	0	2368749
Village Fund (VF)	14.6480	8.1812	0	19.9003
Degree of Fiscal Independency (DFI)	0.1805	0.0963	0.0738	0.6524
Average School Participation (ASP)	63.4281	27.6898	0	97.11
Observation (n x year)	266			

Source: processed data

The Gini ratio describes the inequality in East Java, where the maximum figure of 0.421 occurred in Nganjuk Regency in 2019. The average disparity in districts/cities in East Java Province reached 33.31 percent. The intermediate district Gini ratio reached 32.71 percent, while the average Gini ratio in urban areas reached 35.08 percent. Income inequality in urban areas is higher than inequality in districts. In addition, the highest Inclusive Economic Growth Index (IGI) was achieved by Kediri City

(6.95) in 2021, followed by Madiun City (6.87) and Blitar City (6.68). The lowest IGI belongs to a group of districts on Madura Island, namely Sampang District (4.63), Sumenep (4.87), Bangkalan (4.59) and Pamekasan (4.81).

The IGI trend in East Java Province experienced impressive development until the end of 2019. Graph 3 shows a trend with a positive slope in the observation period, namely 2015-2019. In 2015, IGI was at 5.274 points, continuing to rise until 2019 at 5.6024. However, the IGI trend decreased at the end of 2020 to 5.4690, then rose again in 2021 to 5.5962. The increase in IGI in 2021 indicates optimism for improving the economy and welfare in East Java after the COVID-19 pandemic. In this way, it is hoped that economic recovery in East Java will reduce the number of poor people and income inequality between levels of society.



Graph 3 IGI Trends in East Java Province

Regression results

Research data processing uses panel data regression. Initial analysis used Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression. The results of this initial analysis are the basis for determining the validity of the three models using the classical assumption test. For multicollinearity and correlation, the test results show that the three models fulfill both. The model is assumed to be free from symptoms of multicollinearity with a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) indicator of 1.96, smaller than the required limit of 5.00. Meanwhile, the degree of correlation between independent variables is below 0.80. Apart from these two tests, this model does not meet the normality assumption and homoscedasticity assumption (Skewness/Kurtosis tests for Normality Prob>chi2 0.0059; and the Breusch-Pagan test shows chi2 (1) 11.62 and Prob Chi2 > 0.0007).

Due to the normality assumption not being fulfilled and the model experiencing heteroscedasticity problems, the analysis used the Generalized Estimating Equation (GEE) technique. The advantage of the GEE method is that it models a linear function between the dependent variable and one or more independent/explanatory variables to estimate model parameters with data that is not normally distributed. GEE is a multivariate generalization of quasi-likelihood for separate responses (Cui & Qian, 2007).

Table 2 shows regression results for models 1, 2, and 3, where inclusive growth has a dual effect: reducing poverty while increasing inequality and unemployment in East Java. Likewise, when this variable interacts with the post-Covid-19 dummy, it shows the same direction, although the influence on post-Covid poverty decreases significantly. In addition, the post-Covid inclusive economic index increased the number of unemployed. These findings support previous findings, which stated that economic development at the regional level needed to be more inclusive (Dartanto, 2015; Wibowo &

Oktivalerina, 2022). Using the concept of elasticity, Table 3 (in the attachment) supports the regression results in Table 2. In the 2015-2019 period, the elasticity of poverty to growth is greater than the elasticity of inequality and unemployment to growth. However, poverty elasticity decreased in the 2020-2021 period.

Another finding related to regional government fiscal intervention is that education spending has proven to be a key determinant in getting people out of poverty. On the other hand, in the case of East Java, the allocation of government spending on education cannot reduce the range of inequality and even increase post-Covid-19 unemployment. Economic expenditure does not affect poverty or inequality. On the contrary, spending on health increases the poor population while increasing inequality and significantly reducing poverty in East Java Province. For control variables, school enrollment rates and the degree of fiscal independence significantly impact poverty reduction. However, these two variables do not correlate significantly with inequality, while the degree of fiscal autonomy increases the number of unemployed.

Table 2. Regression Results-Poverty and Inequality

Variables	Poverty		Inequality		Unemployment	
	Coefficient t-stat	P>|z|	Coefficient t-stat	P>|z|	Coefficient t-stat	P>|z|
Inclusive Growth Index (IGI)	-0.0481 -7.0***	0.000	0.1035 3.40***	0.001	0.2021 0.53	0.599
IGI*Post Covid	-0.0015 -1.70*	0.089	0.0283 6.68***	0.000	0.4058 7.60***	0.000
Economic Expenditures (Econ)	-0.0117 -0.180	0.854	0.1716 0.57	0.572	1.7625 0.46	0.645
Educational Expenditures (Educ)	-0.0990 -3.80***	0.000	-0.1519 -1.23	0.221	6.4685 4.14***	0.000
Health Expenditures (Health)	0.1111 2.74***	0.006	0.6376 3.31***	0.001	4.8088 1.98**	0.047
Village Fund (VF)	0.0693 6.25***	0.000	0.1693 3.21***	0.001	-0.8554 -1.29	-0.198
Degree of Fiscal Independency (DFD)	-0.0665 -3.02***	0.003	-0.1220 -1.17	0.243	7.4530 5.66***	0.000
Average of School Participation (ASP)	-0.0001 -1.72*	0.086	0.0005 1.08	0.278	0.0055 1.03	0.302
Constant	0.3979 10.31	0.000	-0.5866 1.08	0.001	-2.1540 -0.95	3.43
Wald chi2	495.57		164.97		240.47	
Prob > chi2	0.0000		0.0000		0.000	

Note: ***significance level at 0.01; ** significance level at 0.05; *significance level at 0.10

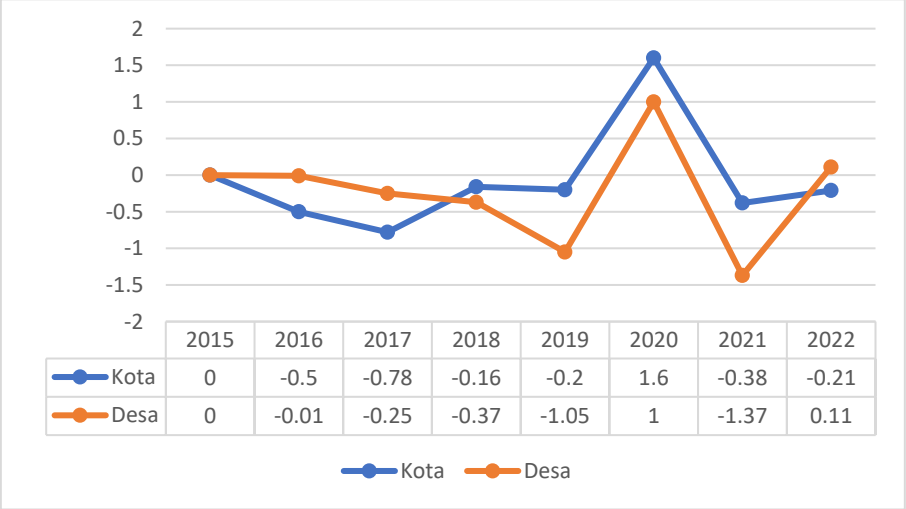
Another finding that is the antithesis of poverty is the Village Fund; The variable increases poverty and inequality. The level of fiscal independence and quality of education significantly reduces poverty but has no impact on inequality. Thus, this study provides evidence regarding the determinants of poverty in East Java but needs to find factors that can reduce inequality.

Discussion

The findings of this study strengthen the normative conception that inclusive economic growth is the primary key to poverty alleviation (Chen & Ravallion, 2009; Dollar & Kraay, 2003; Lee & Sissons, 2016; Nansadiqa et al., 2019). Even after the COVID-19 pandemic, inclusive growth has become a patent recipe for poverty problems, especially in the East Java Province region. This finding is supported by a visualization of the pattern of poverty reduction in East Java in the 2015-2022 period (Graph 4) and the pattern of inclusive economic growth (Graph 3); the growth index trend continues to rise, and the poverty trend continues to fall until the end of 2019. The rate of poverty reduction in the city is more

extensive than in the village. This fact strengthens the alleged imbalance in economic growth in East Java, which relies more on the processing industry, services, and extensive trade. The contribution of these three sectors dominates the GRDP value of East Java Province. On the other hand, many poor people live in rural areas and rely on the agricultural industry.

Based on Graph 4, the pattern of poverty reduction in rural areas decreased consistently in the 2015-2019 range, although the rate of poverty reduction in villages was lower than in cities. As a result of COVID-19, there has been a spike in poverty in both cities and villages, namely, 1.6 percent and 1.00 percent, respectively. However, if you look closely, a spike in poverty in the city has occurred since 2018-2020. Moreover, in 2021, the reduction in poverty in cities will be smaller than in villages. On the contrary, from 2021 to 2022, villages' poverty will increase. The poverty level in villages, which is still around double digits, has a temporary character (transient poverty). Reducing poverty rates can be done by stabilizing the macroeconomy after a crisis/pandemic. People who fell into poverty during the pandemic can be lifted out of poverty (Dartanto, 2015).



	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Kota	0	-0.5	-0.78	-0.16	-0.2	1.6	-0.38	-0.21
Desa	0	-0.01	-0.25	-0.37	-1.05	1	-1.37	0.11

Graph 4. Comparison of Poverty Reduction in East Java Cities and Villages (2015-2022)

These positive findings on poverty contrast the impact of inclusive economic development on inequality and unemployment. The problem of inequality in East Java is very critical, both before and after Covid-19. Regarding unemployment, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the number of unemployed people in East Java to soar. The labor market most affected by the pandemic are young workers, women, informal workers, especially those who are self-employed, have low education and skills and also semi-permanent contract workers, workers with low wages and jobs with low productivity levels (Hassink et al., 2020; Schotte et al., 2023). In the model analyzed, none of the predictor variables was proven to be a determinant for reducing inequality and unemployment.

This study undermines the strategic role of government spending in building human capital. Reducing poverty and inequality requires a combination of well-distributed economic growth and investment in human resources (Amakom, 2013). Skills and knowledge increase the chances of earning a better income. As is widely known, education policy in Indonesia is primarily controlled by the central government, especially primary education (nine years) and higher education. At the local government level, local education spending finances preschool education (PAUD) and secondary education (upper secondary). Related to the findings of this study, local education budget allocation policies benefit low-income families, especially in urban areas. This analysis is supported by the rate of poverty in urban areas, which is greater than the rate of decline in rural areas in East Java (see Graph 4). By

strengthening secondary education, education spending plays a role in facilitating poor groups to obtain income that can escape the trap of poverty.

Another anomaly of education spending is its increasing effect on unemployment. This finding strengthens the alleged mismatch between support for increasing workforce skills funded by local government spending and industrial qualification needs (Sukanti & Sulistyaningrum, 2022). By analyzing the regional economic structure of East Java, the most significant contribution was made by four regions, namely the cities of Surabaya, Sidoarjo, Gresik, and Pasuruan, which are dominated by capital-intensive sectors (processing), services, and extensive trade. These sectors have low sensitivity in absorbing labor (Dartanto, 2015). This fact is reinforced by these four regions' high open unemployment rates.

Covid-19 has hurt the labor market on both the demand and supply sides. When restrictions on social interactions foster e-commerce, e-commerce tends to promote individual entrepreneurship (self-employment), and there is little opportunity for mass employment (Ridhwan et al., 2021). Thus, findings on education spending and school enrollment rates improve the understanding that government investment in human capital development can successfully absorb labor if policymakers understand the economic structure and ultimately lead to the design of skills programs that suit industry needs (Amakom, 2013).

Another finding related to government spending is health spending. From data analysis, health spending is proven to increase poverty and unemployment. This finding contradicts the concept that health services can help people, especially people experiencing poverty, achieve prosperity (Peters et al., 2008). However, of course, policymakers must be able to determine the target beneficiaries accurately. The success of a health service program is also determined by accuracy in determining targets well, including mastery of information about public health and how it is funded (Amakom, 2013).

In the context of regional government authority in the health sector, spending in the health sector at the district/city government level is focused on providing essential health services, such as community health center level services, which focus on maternal and child health, alleviating malnutrition and stunting. Thus, the role of district-level health spending has yet to strengthen the health of people with low incomes. In other words, regional government expenditure policies for the health sector still need to be redistributive or pro-poor. The tendency of poor households in developing countries is that when subsidies for social service expenditures such as health and education are provided, the household income set aside to finance these expenditures is saved or to fund other spending (Bourguignon et al., 2003).

Another crucial finding from the study is that the Village Fund, as a government fiscal intervention at the village level, still needs to prove its success in reducing poverty and inequality. The Village Fund does not affect labor absorption in the East Java regional area. Referring to Graph 4, the poverty reduction rate in rural areas is relatively small compared to the rate of poverty in urban areas. The difference in the rate of decline can be explained by analyzing the structure of poverty in villages with development priorities funded using village funds. The poor population in villages depends more on the agricultural sector, and most are small farmers, daily laborers, and land renters. The income level of farming workers is relatively small compared to land owners. Meanwhile, the agricultural sector has not become a top priority in village development and empowerment. The central government's primary attention to village governments is still focused on infrastructure development in rural areas. Moreover, village governments in East Java are more oriented towards strengthening the service sector (financial services, village tourism, culinary, rental, waste management) and primary

processing/industry. The cash-intensive labor program (in Indonesia, well-known as Padat Karya Tunai/PKT), launched to help low-income families earn additional income, has yet to succeed in alleviating poverty in rural areas. As long as the government does not pay attention to the sectors people experiencing poverty rely on, it will be difficult for low-income families to escape the poverty trap.

Other variables used as controls, namely fiscal independence and school enrollment rates, show a strategic role in reducing poverty in East Java but have no impact on inequality and unemployment. This study also confirms the significant role of inclusive growth and human capital development in reducing poverty in East Java. For inequality and unemployment this study has not found determinant factors that overcome inequality and unemployment. These findings reinforce inequality and chronic unemployment in the East Java region.

Based on the findings above, this study underlines the strategic role of inclusive growth in reducing the poor population. Therefore, the government should focus on encouraging the realization of inclusive growth that strengthens policies at the micro level, such as improving access to education, increasing financial inclusion, and access to health services. Additionally, increasing the school enrollment rate (APS) can directly increase the stock of skilled and skilled human resources. Quality human resources are an essential requirement for achieving sustainable economic growth in the long term.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzes whether inclusive economic growth reduces poverty, inequality, and unemployment, especially after COVID-19. Taking the East Java Province as a locus, which has an exciting track record in triple-inequalities, this study found that economic growth in East Java only reduced poverty rates before and after COVID-19. Our findings also document non-inclusive growth in East Java, where inequality and unemployment have widened after the pandemic. Even with economic growth returning to stability, it has not been able to intervene in these two fundamental social problems. Apart from growth, government support in developing human capital through allocating education spending plays a strategic role in alleviating poverty. On the other hand, education and economic spending, health, and village funds have yet to be proven to play a role in overcoming inequality and unemployment in East Java.

The implications of these findings are a portrait of failure to realize the urgency of inclusive growth by creating equal access to opportunities; in the case of East Java, equal opportunities do not exist due to market, institutional, and government policy failures. The research has several limitations, including limitations in separating poverty data between cities and villages in each district/city so that changes in poverty cannot be known due to government intervention. However, we make assumptions based on the trend of decreasing poverty in cities, which is reduced more than poverty in villages. Recommendations for further research are to explore the economic structure and labor market in East Java in a discussion analysis.

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Appendix

Table 3 Elasticity of Poverty, Inequality, and Unemployment on Growth

No	Regions	Periode 2015-2019			Periode 2019-2021		
		e-Pov	e-Gini	e-Unemp	e-Pov	e-Gini	e-Unemp
1	Pacitan	-0.582	0.077	-0.012	0.381	-0.016	0.299
2	Ponorogo	-0.438	0.067	-0.035	0.154	0.006	0.218
3	Trenggalek	-0.479	0.074	0.179	0.305	-0.010	0.045
4	Tulungagung	-0.357	0.059	-0.129	0.207	0.006	0.435
5	Blitar	-0.203	0.065	0.051	0.190	0.005	0.163
6	Kediri	-0.499	0.060	-0.289	0.334	0.008	0.430
7	Malang	-0.381	0.071	-0.231	0.262	-0.004	0.433
8	Lumajang	-0.423	0.062	0.027	0.161	0.004	0.224
9	Jember	-0.376	0.057	-0.206	0.298	0.009	0.450
10	Banyuwangi	-0.292	0.055	0.248	0.134	0.015	0.358
11	Bondowoso	-0.333	0.062	0.226	0.357	0.008	0.408
12	Situbondo	-0.470	0.062	-0.155	0.374	0.001	0.238
13	Probolinggo	-0.665	0.071	0.274	0.332	0.000	0.225
14	Pasuruan	-0.363	-0.363	0.055	0.235	0.008	0,186
15	Sidoarjo	-0.196	-0.196	0.054	0.147	0.009	1.505
16	Mojokerto	-0.144	0.047	-0.077	0.193	0.193	0.005
17	Jombang	-0.296	-0.296	0.062	0.197	0.197	0.000
18	Nganjuk	-0.274	0.080	0.200	0.151	-0.028	0.449
19	Madiun	-0.378	0.063	-0.655	0.341	0.006	0.366
20	Magetan	-0.337	0.069	-0.595	0.270	0.000	0.226
21	Ngawi	-0.238	0.066	-0.076	0.312	-0.007	0.172
22	Bojonegoro	-0.276	0.026	-0.120	0.115	0.004	0.162
23	Tuban	-0.499	0.059	-0.066	0.545	0.015	0.624
24	Lamongan	-0.388	0.057	-0.037	0.158	-0.007	0.246
25	Gresik	-0.391	-0.391	0.048	0.256	0.007	0.622
26	Bangkalan	-2.706	0.232	0.457	-21.239	0.088	-19.489
27	Sampang	-1.317	0.071	0.053	1.134	0.000	0.275
28	Pamekasan	-0.663	0.065	-0.383	0.351	-0.004	0.218
29	Sumenep	-0.344	0.146	0.005	0.603	-0.006	0.135
30	Kota Kediri	-0.251	0.060	-0.800	0.178	0.016	0.670
31	Kota Blitar	-0.028	0.059	0.128	0.172	0.007	0.469
32	Kota Malang	-0.093	-0.093	0.060	0.127	0.015	0.871
33	Kota Probolinggo	-0.214	0.046	0.041	0.124	0.007	0.538
34	Kota Pasuruan	-0.183	0.056	-0.123	0.109	0.011	0.349
35	Kota Mojokerto	-0.177	0.054	-0.393	0.304	0.006	1.039
36	Kota Madiun	-0.091	0.059	-0.192	0.167	0.000	0.947
37	Kota Surabaya	-0.216	0.067	-0.206	0.169	-0.013	0.920
38	Kota Batu	-0.137	-0.137	0.048	0.064	-0.001	0.954

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