

## Understanding the Poverty through the Development of Unemployment and Illiteracy Rates

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### A B S T R A C T

*Poverty is a profound issue affecting various regions, with its impacts observable through domino effects such as low human resource (HR) quality, declining welfare, and regional underdevelopment. This study aims to analyze the factors influencing poverty levels, specifically unemployment and education. East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) was chosen as the research location due to its status as one of the poorest provinces in Indonesia. The study employs a survey method with a quantitative approach and applies multiple linear regression analysis. Before conducting the analysis, all prerequisite tests were met. The secondary data used include literacy rates, unemployment levels, and poverty rates from 2014 to 2021, obtained from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS). The analysis results indicate that literacy rates and unemployment have a positive and significant impact on poverty levels. Additionally, the F-test results show that both independent variables, literacy rates and unemployment, have a simultaneous and significant effect on poverty levels.*



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## INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a crucial and complex social issue that affects not only developing countries but also developed ones. The causes of poverty can be divided into three main groups: internal factors related to the individual, such as lack of effort, laziness, or mental health issues; external factors, such as discrimination, low wages, and social injustice; and fatalistic factors associated with fate or conditions beyond human control, such as physical disabilities or mental disorders (Terol-Cantero et al., 2023). Additionally, job loss and income decline are primary triggers of poverty and contribute to mental health problems (Ridley et al., 2020). Rapid population growth, without corresponding increases in food production and infrastructure, also leads to shortages of basic resources such as food, clean water, and healthcare services (Adeyeye et al., 2023). The impacts of poverty are

widespread, including low purchasing power which causes an inability to meet basic needs, poor quality of human resources, limited access to education, poor health conditions, as well as a higher risk of experiencing unfair treatment and a tendency to commit criminal acts to (Adhitya et al., 2022; Hidayat & Woyanti, 2021; Jonathan et al., 2021).

In the field of education, poverty has a significant negative impact. Economic limitations make it difficult for people to access proper educational facilities. Competence and opportunities to obtain education are also limited (Hilmi et al., 2022; Priyanto, 2023). This hinders the process of improving human quality. Education should be the key to breaking the cycle of poverty and improving the quality of life (Azizah & Ismanto, 2023). Therefore, addressing poverty requires a comprehensive and integrated approach. For example, developing the industrial sector, building infrastructure, expanding access to education and healthcare services, and increasing community participation (Ibrahim, 2025; Simarmata & Iskandar, 2022). Without these efforts, poverty will continue to be a significant barrier to social progress and sustainable development. The magnitude of poverty’s impact is the basis for determining the research title and location. In this study, the researcher selected East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) Province as the focus because NTT is one of the provinces with a relatively high poverty rate. Detailed poverty data over several years can be seen in the following figure:

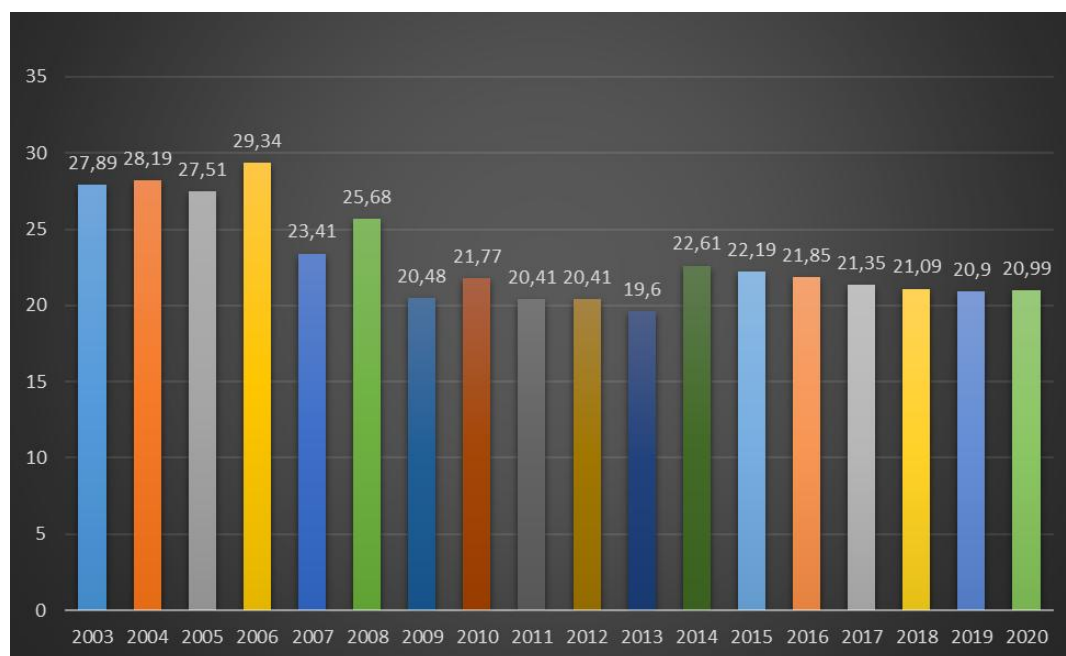


Figure 1. Poverty Level of Nusa Tenggara  
Source: BPS East Nusa Tenggara

Poverty is one of the most prevalent problems found in various countries, both developing and developed. Poverty itself has a wide range of impacts on a region, including affecting the quality of human resources, education, health, and social conditions (Liu et al., 2023 ; Wang et al., 2021). Similarly, Osmani et al., (2024) explained that unemployment has several socio-economic, political, and moral consequences, which can lead to low productivity and chronic poverty. In terms of human resources, poverty results in a country having low-quality human capital, primarily due to the limited abilities, experience, and education among its population (Adhitya et al., 2022). This occurs because many parents prioritize immediate survival over education, forcing their children to work despite earning an inadequate income due to minimal skills, ultimately sacrificing the children’s future (Islam & Hoque, 2022). In the education sector, poverty undermines various aspects, including access to facilities, educational competence, and opportunities for people to receive an education (Terzi et al., 2023 ; Gedro et al., 2021)

Poverty has a profound impact on people’s lives, making it a central focus of researchers aiming to understand the factors that contribute to it. Several key factors influencing poverty include investment, economic growth, unemployment, and education (Erdkhadifa, 2022). Experts generally agree that unemployment and low

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levels of education are the main causes of poverty (Imanto et al., 2020 ; Dwi Utami & Welly Udjianto, 2023). Similarly, Muryani et al., (2021) emphasize that changes in unemployment rates, literacy levels, and per capita income shape poverty dynamics. Additionally, demographic factors, income levels, living costs, and urbanization also play a role in determining poverty levels (Saddique et al., 2023). Moreover, income inequality, economic growth, education, investment climate, and unemployment are identified as critical factors that significantly affect poverty (Mansi et al., 2020).

Based on the theory above, it can be seen that unemployment is closely related to poverty levels (Faharuddin & Endrawati, 2022; Shabbir et al., 2021). This can be observed from the various impacts caused by this variable, one of which is its pressure on health conditions and its effect on income levels in society. This aligns with the opinion of Paul & Holleder, (2023) who explain that individuals unemployed for an extended period tend to have poor health conditions. Various experts further elaborate that long-term unemployment can lead to stress, depression, and even difficulties in personal development (Arena et al., 2023; Sarigül et al., 2024). In addition to addressing unemployment, the continuous upgrading of educational skills and worker training is also necessary in the current global economic context (Kim & Park, 2020).

In addition to affecting health, unemployment also impacts income, as individuals who are unemployed lose their source of income, which worsens their economic conditions (Chadi & Hetschko, 2025; Noveria & Romdiati, 2022). Ibiyantoro & Imaningsih, (2022) also, explain that poverty can occur when many people lose their income, and the unemployment rate is high. In addition to unemployment, another equally important factor is the level of education, with this study focusing specifically on the rate of illiteracy. Illiteracy, in particular, is one of the significant barriers to the inclusiveness of financial and products in rural communities (Mossie, 2023; Williams et al., 2023). This focus is supported by various expert opinions and studies, which highlight that the illiteracy rate (IR) is a key indicator of educational development, particularly within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Hota, 2023; Thaharah & Batubara, 2023). In addition, the importance of illiteracy rates can also be seen from the various contributions of illiteracy rates, where this variable can improve the quality of life, help develop skills and mastery of technology, and increase the competitiveness of human resources. Based on the explanation above, one of the roles of the illiteracy rate (IR) is to help improve the quality of life (Mtika & Abbott, 2023; Sarigül et al., 2024), where Azizah & Ismanto, (2023) explains that through the illiteracy rate, a person can improve the quality of his life through various self-development so that he can live a more decent life. Besides that Karakolis et al., (2022) also explained that illiteracy rate (IR) is a bridge in various sciences where illiteracy rate (IR) can help someone in developing their abilities and mastery of technology so that someone can have quality, which in the end will make it easy to get a job. Finally, the Illiteracy Rate (AKK) is one solution to increase the competitiveness of human resources, where this ability allows a person to develop themselves and compete in the modern era and be able to survive with various demands of the times (Marmoah et al., 2022; Marlina et al., 2023). Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the illiteracy rate (IR) and its various roles can form quality and competitive human beings and can be a solution to poverty.

The large contribution of the two variables above is proven by various studies, where according to Yacoub & Restiatun, (2024) explains that unemployment has a positive and significant effect on poverty, where high unemployment will worsen a person's income, which will ultimately become a poverty trap. This is reinforced by research Ngubane et al., (2023) where he emphasized that unemployment can worsen economic growth through various problems that arise, starting from income levels, welfare, and others that affect poverty levels. Apart from unemployment, the illiteracy rate (IR) 's contribution is also important, according to Bukhari et al., (2021) Education (as seen from the illiteracy rate) has a negative influence on poverty, where quality education can be a good solution in overcoming poverty. In line with that, Li, (2020) also explained the same thing where he explained that one of the factors that drives poverty is the high level of illiteracy, where this factor also makes it difficult for human resources to compete on the national stage.

In this study, the researcher focuses more on children in conflict with the law (ABH) who are in their productive age, providing a broader perspective on the impacts of ABH that are not covered in other studies. Additionally, the researcher presents and analyzes detailed data on the poverty of ABH, unemployment, and poverty in general, aiming to provide a more consistent and targeted overview. This is especially important for shaping policies that encourage the productive-age population to obtain quality education and for urging the government to pay special attention to creating sufficient job opportunities.

**RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employs a survey method with a quantitative approach, aiming to analyze the factors that influence the poverty rate in Kupang City, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). The primary focus of this research is to investigate the impact of two independent variables—illiteracy rate and unemployment rate—on poverty, serving as the dependent variable. The selection of NTT as the research location is based on the fact that this province is one of the regions with the highest poverty rates in Indonesia, ranking among the top three poorest provinces. The data used in this study are secondary data obtained from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), covering the illiteracy rate, unemployment rate, and poverty rate in Kupang City from 2014 to 2021. The conceptual framework of this study is presented in Figure 2 below.

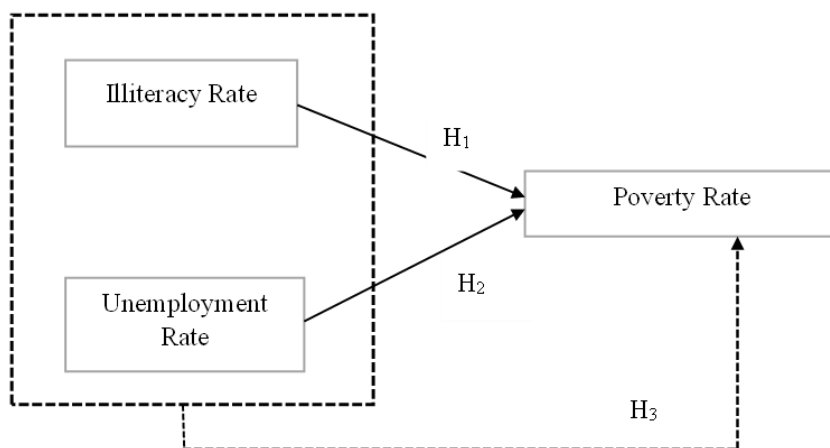


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

Prior to conducting the primary analysis, all data were subjected to a series of classical assumption tests to ensure the feasibility of the data. These prerequisite tests include normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests to guarantee the validity and reliability of the analysis results. Once the data met all the required assumptions, the study proceeded with multiple linear regression analysis to determine the extent to which illiteracy and unemployment influence poverty. Furthermore, hypothesis testing was conducted, including the t-test to assess the partial influence of each independent variable, the F-test to examine their simultaneous effect, and the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) to measure the extent to which the independent variables explain the variation in poverty in Kupang City.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the results of this study, research data were obtained that show the condition of the variable development. Based on Table 1, it can be seen that the illiteracy rate (IR) variable has experienced consistent changes every year. However, the percentage figure at the end of 2020 still shows a figure of 5.53%. This table also shows that the highest illiteracy rate (IR) occurred in 2013, with a percentage of 13.48. This happened because, according to the Financial and Development Supervisory Agency of the East Nusa Tenggara Representative Office, in the 2015-2019 Strategic Plan, there is still a need for optimization of the eight national education standards at all levels and paths, and the lack of optimization of learning time in schools.

Furthermore, Table 1 also shows the development of unemployment in NTT. Based on the data presentation, it can be seen that the highest percentage of unemployment occurred in 2004, with a percentage of 5.46%. The causes of high unemployment are caused by various factors, where, according to Siddique (2023), in the Kupang district, poverty occurs due to a gap between job opportunities and the workforce, thus worsening the poverty situation. Finally, the data also explains the poverty rate, where it is known that the highest poverty occurred in 2005 with a percentage of 29.34. This can occur due to many factors, where according to Nalle et al., (2022) high poverty is caused by the small growth of the agricultural sector as a result of the 2005 crop failure which caused the food crop sub sector to experience negative growth (-2.03%). The decline occurred in the

production of rice, corn, cassava, and sweet potatoes. Based on the background and Table 1, this study examines the impact of illiteracy rates and unemployment rates on poverty.

Table 1. Illiteracy Rate, Number of Unemployed and Poverty Rate

Year	Illiteracy Rate	Number of Unemployed	Poverty Level
2003	13.12	4.48	27.86
2004	13.32	5.46	28.19
2005	12.04	3.65	29.34
2006	11.47	3.72	27.51
2007	11.43	3.73	25.68
2008	10.34	3.97	23.41
2009	11.81	3.34	21.77
2010	10.80	2.69	20.48
2011	9.70	2.89	20.41
2012	8.39	3.25	20.41
2013	13.48	3.26	19.60
2014	7.27	3.83	22.61
2015	7.40	3.25	22.19
2016	7.25	3.27	21.85
2017	8.10	3.01	21.35
2018	6.76	3.35	21.09
2019	6.69	4.28	20.90
2020	5.53	3.77	20.99

Source: Statistics Indonesia

To see this influence, the researcher analyzed the two variables where the data was processed using multiple linear regression (with the help of the SPSS 21 application). The results of the analysis are presented in table 2. below:

Table 2. Multiple Linear Regression

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	59.206	20.884		.013
1 illiteracy rate (IR)	.500	.219	.410	.037
Unemployment	2.487	.867	.516	.012

Source: Data processing, SPSS 21

Table 2 illustrates that the illiteracy rate and the number of unemployed individuals have distinct effects, where the illiteracy rate (X1) has a negative and statistically significant impact. Unlike the illiteracy rate, the number of unemployed has a positive and significant effect. Based on the information in the table above, the following equation can be drawn:

$$Y = 59.206 + 0.500 X_1 + 2.487 X_2$$

In addition to multiple linear regression analysis, this study also focuses on hypothesis testing. In this test, there are three tests: the first is the t-test. This test shows how the two variables influence each other partially. In the illiteracy rate variable, the obtained figure is 2.283, with a significant value of 0.037. This shows that there is an influence (negative value) between the illiteracy rate and poverty. This is in line with the explanation Silitonga, (2022) where negative in the t-test only shows the direction of its influence, but the value and sig explain whether it has an influence or not ( $2.283 < 1.734$  and  $\text{sig } 0.037 < 0.05$ ). In contrast to the illiteracy rate (IR), the number of unemployed obtained a value of 2.868 and a sig of 0.012. This shows that there is an influence and sig ( $2.868 < 1.734$  and  $\text{sig } 0.012 < 0.05$ ).

Table 3. t-Test Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	59.206	20.884		2.835	.013
1 Illiteracy Rate	.500	.219	.410	2.283	.037
Unemployment	2.487	.867	.516	2.868	.012

Source: Data processing, SPSS 21

In F test the results obtained indicate that the two independent variables (illiteracy rate (IR) and the number of unemployed) have a simultaneous and significant influence. This is indicated by the F value of 9.332 (where  $F_{count} > F_{table}$  or  $9.332 > 4.543$ ) and a significance of 0.002 ( $sig < 0.05$  or  $0.002 < 0.05$ )

Table 4. F Test analysis

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	93.188	2	46.594	9.332	.002 <sup>b</sup>
1 Residual	74.896	15	4.993		
Total	168.083	17			

Source: Data processing, SPSS 21

Finally, this study also explains the determinant coefficient. The value of the determinant coefficient is obtained from the R Square value of 0.554. These results indicate that the contribution of the independent variable is 55.4% influenced by other variables, while the rest is influenced by other variables.

Table 5. Determinant Coefficient Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.745 <sup>a</sup>	.554	.495	2.23451

Source: Data processing, SPSS 21

Based on the results above, this study shows that there is a positive and significant influence between illiteracy rate (IR) and poverty. This is also proven by the results of multiple linear regression analysis and t-test. illiteracy rate (IR) itself is not something new, where illiteracy rate is one of the indicators that explains the ability of the community to master reading and writing skills. This is the basis for carrying out various activities. Illiteracy rate has an important contribution in preventing poverty. Some of its contributions are improving the quality of human resources, spurring increased skills and helping the process of forming a more mature character. This is as explained Wicaksono & Aliem, (2022) that good illiteracy rate skills will improve a person's abilities and skills in developing themselves, one of which is the ability to communicate, interact and write various works. In addition, good illiteracy (ABH) conditions also help individuals in character development through various up-to-date learning resources (Fadhillah et al., 2024). Finally, illiteracy rate also becomes the basis for improving the quality of human resources through various ICT utilization (Dores & Jolianis, 2014; Yoga et al., 2022). The above results are in line with research Nortinayati, (2014) where he explained that the illiteracy rate has a positive and significant influence on the poverty rate. This can happen because high illiteracy rates hinder the development of human resources. In contrast to the results above, Silitonga, (2022) explains that education (as seen from the illiteracy rate) has a negative influence on poverty. This can happen because the illiteracy rate is dominated by parents who have worked in various sectors. Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that illiteracy rate (IR) and its various roles can be a good key in overcoming poverty.

In addition to illiteracy rate, unemployment is a factor that greatly influences poverty, this is proven by various research results that explain that unemployment can have a positive and sig effect (multiple linear regression results and t-test). The results are clear where unemployment will provide great pressure and burden (health conditions) and can significantly affect income, which will ultimately affect the poverty rate. Paul &

Hollederer, (2023) explains that someone who is unemployed for a long time (long term) tends to have poor (prime) health conditions. In addition to having an impact on health, unemployment also has an impact on income. Margareni et al., (2022) explains that poverty can be formed because many people lose income due to increasing unemployment. The results of this study are also in line with research by Sari & Nuraini, (2020) where unemployment has a positive and significant effect on poverty (0.581682 with 0.0116). The same thing is also explained by Mardiatillah et al., (2021) Unemployment has a positive and significant effect on poverty (0.409 and sig 0.057). The results above explain that unemployment is one of the crucial factors that will affect the level of poverty in society.

Finally, the influence of unemployment and illiteracy (ABH) on poverty. In this study, it can be seen that these two variables have a positive and significant impact (as evidenced by the F-test and coefficient of determination). This indicates that communities experiencing illiteracy and unemployment are more significantly impacted by the level of poverty. This is because unemployment and illiteracy make it more difficult for individuals to obtain good jobs, earn decent salaries, maintain good health, and develop themselves. Gai et al., (2025) also explain that unemployment is a fundamental issue that impacts human resource quality, including health, well-being, and even criminality. Mseba & Keet, (2025) provide a similar explanation, stating that unemployment and low education quality affect the quality of life. Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that both individually and collectively, unemployment and illiteracy have a positive and significant impact on poverty, which can be observed through the declining quality of life.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the study results, it can be concluded that the illiteracy rate has a positive and significant effect on poverty. A high illiteracy rate is believed to hinder individual development by limiting abilities and skills, slowing character formation, and negatively impacting the quality of human resources. Similarly, unemployment plays a significant role in poverty, as the study shows that unemployment positively and significantly affects poverty. Prolonged unemployment can lead to health problems and lower individual income, which in turn worsens poverty levels in society.

In line with these findings, several solutions can be implemented to address poverty. First, efforts to reduce illiteracy, especially among the productive age population, need to be enhanced through programs focused on improving reading and writing skills. Second, policies that encourage the productive-age population to attain a proper quality of education are crucial to ensure they have adequate competencies to compete in the workforce. Third, the government needs to pay special attention by creating and expanding employment opportunities that can optimally absorb the productive-age labor force. Additionally, skill and character development is essential. Programs that develop communication, social interaction, and writing skills can help individuals grow and improve their capabilities. Finally, the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can optimize learning and self-development, providing better job opportunities and the ability to start businesses effectively.

In this study, the researchers faced difficulties and limitations in analyzing variables related to poverty due to constraints in time, data availability, research analysis, and relevant sources. To improve future research, the main focus should be on expanding studies that explore population dynamics, local government support and programs, as well as community training and empowerment. This will enable a deeper understanding of the root causes of poverty and support strategic efforts to address this issue.

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