Dinar
Jurnal Ekonomi & Keuangan Islam
Vol 12, No 2: Agustus 2025 150-170
ISSN: 2460-9889 (Print)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.21107/dinar.v8i2.9954
ISSN: 2580-3565 (Online)

North Sumatra Economic Growth: an Empirical Study of Unemployment and Poverty Panel Data With an Islamic Economic Review (2021-2023 Period)

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Abstract

North Sumatra Province continues to experience economic growth during the 2021–2023 period; however, this growth has not been accompanied by a proportional improvement in social welfare, as indicated by persistently high unemployment and poverty rates across several regencies and cities. Based on secondary data obtained from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) of North Sumatra, these conditions reflect a structural challenge in which economic expansion has not fully translated into productive employment and poverty reduction. This study aims to analyze the influence of unemployment and poverty on economic growth in North Sumatra Province from an Islamic economic perspective.

This study employed a quantitative approach with a causal associative design. The data consisted of secondary panel data from 33 regencies/cities in North Sumatra Province during the 2021–2023 period, obtained from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) and the Financial Services Authority (OJK). Data were analyzed using panel data regression with multiple linear regression techniques, preceded by model selection tests including the Chow test, Hausman test, and Lagrange Multiplier test to determine the most appropriate estimation model. The analysis was conducted using Eviews 13, and the test results indicated that the Common Effect Model (CEM) was the most suitable model for this study.

The results show that unemployment has a positive and significant effect on economic growth, while poverty has a negative and significant effect. Simultaneously, both variables significantly influence economic growth with a coefficient of determination of 27.1%. These findings imply that economic growth in North Sumatra has not been fully driven by productive employment, indicating the need for policies that prioritize job quality and labor productivity. Furthermore, poverty alleviation emerges as a key policy instrument to foster inclusive and sustainable economic growth in line with the principles of justice, welfare distribution, and social balance emphasized in Islamic economics.

Keywords: *Economic Growth, Islamic economics, North Sumatra, Poverty, Unemployment.*

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Introduction

North Sumatra Province is one of the regions with the largest economic contribution on the island of Sumatra. The province's economic performance reflects the region's ability to manage its resources and demonstrates the quality of social and economic development (Regina et al., 2025). However, the dynamics of economic growth in North Sumatra still face challenges in the form of relatively high unemployment and poverty rates (Syuhada et al., 2024). These two indicators reflect the extent to which economic growth can create equitable social welfare. Economic growth plays a crucial role in expanding employment opportunities and increasing community incomes. However, in many cases, high growth is not always accompanied by a decrease in unemployment or poverty. This phenomenon is also evident in North Sumatra, where in 2024 the open unemployment rate reached 5.60%, while economic growth was recorded at 5.03% (year-on-year). This condition indicates an imbalance between economic growth and improvements in public welfare (Ritonga, 2025). Theoretically, sustainable economic growth should be able to reduce unemployment and poverty rates. However, when growth is concentrated in certain sectors and is not inclusive, economic benefits are not felt equally by all levels of society. In a regional context, empirical studies based on panel data show that open unemployment and poverty negatively impact long-term economic growth (Pratama et al., 2025). Therefore, understanding the relationship between these three variables is crucial for formulating more effective regional development policies. The following table illustrates the development of unemployment, poverty, and economic growth rates in North Sumatra Province during the 2021–2023 period:

Table 1. Unemployment, Poverty, and Growth in North Sumatra, 2021–2023

Year	Unemployment	Poverty	Economic Growth
2021	6,33	9,01	2,61
2022	6,16	8,42	4,73
2023	5,89	8,15	5,01

Source: Central Statistics Agency (BPS)

The data shows that despite a decline in unemployment and poverty rates, economic growth remains relatively slow. This indicates that the decline in these two social variables has not been sufficient to accelerate the regional economy. In other words, improvements in public welfare have not been fully reflected in increased economic output.

Several previous studies analyzing economic growth rates (Nainggolan, 2020) state that population growth has a strong impact on the open unemployment rate. Furthermore, research (Sianipar et al., 2022) found that simultaneously, population and unemployment significantly influenced the poverty rate in Tebing Tinggi City from 2008 to 2020. Finally, research (Sagala et al., 2024) showed that the Human Development Index (HDI) and the unemployment rate significantly influenced the poverty rate. These findings suggest that to reduce poverty in North Sumatra, efforts are needed to increase the HDI by improving the

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quality of education, health, and the standard of living of the community. Increasing the HDI will contribute to poverty alleviation efforts.

There is a gap in this research compared to previous research. Most studies still focus on the partial relationship between unemployment and poverty, or place economic growth as a mediating variable, both at the provincial and district/city levels in North Sumatra for the 2021–2023 period using panel data. This research provides theoretical and practical contributions to the study of regional economic growth. Theoretically, this study expands the development economics literature by presenting empirical evidence based on district/city panel data regarding the influence of unemployment and poverty on economic growth in North Sumatra Province. Unlike previous research that tends to analyze partial relationships or place economic growth as a mediating variable, this study emphasizes the role of unemployment and poverty as direct determinants of regional economic growth. Furthermore, this research strengthens the conceptual framework of development economics by integrating the principles of justice and welfare in Islamic economics as the basis for interpreting the relationships between macroeconomic variables, resulting in a more holistic analytical perspective.

Practically, the results of this study can serve as a reference for local governments in formulating more inclusive development policies, particularly in controlling unemployment and poverty alleviation as strategies to promote sustainable economic growth. The Islamic economic approach used also provides a normative foundation for policy formulation that is oriented not only towards increasing growth but also towards equitable distribution of social welfare. Based on these conditions, this study aims to empirically analyze the influence of unemployment and poverty on economic growth in North Sumatra Province using a panel data approach for the period 2021–2023. Through this analysis, wishing that a clearer description will be obtained regarding the extent to which unemployment and poverty, from a partial and simultaneous perspective of Islamic economics, act as obstacles or drivers for economic growth at the regional level, and that policy recommendations oriented towards inclusive and sustainable growth will be provided.

Literature Review

Islamic Economics

Islamic economics is a system and science of economics that studies how humans manage, utilize, and distribute limited resources to meet their needs based on Islamic values and law (Sharia) (Misno & Husain, 2025). This system not only regulates human relationships with economic resources but also regulates their relationships with God and with each other, so that economic activity is seen as an act of worship. Islamic economics places moral, ethical, and spiritual values as an integral part of economic activity. Every activity of production, distribution, and consumption must comply with the principles of halal (permissible), justice, social responsibility, and the welfare of the community. Thus, Islamic economics is not solely oriented towards material profit but also towards blessings, balance, and long-term prosperity.

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From an Islamic perspective, economic resources essentially belong to God, while humans are merely caliphs (managers) entrusted with the mandate to utilize them optimally and prevent harm. According to Muhammad Abdullah Mannan, as quoted by (Abdullah et al., 2013), Islamic economics is a social science that studies the economic problems of society, using Islamic values as the basis for determining economic policies and behavior. Therefore, Islamic economics rejects all forms of exploitation, hoarding, and inequality, based on the principle of social justice.

In addition to being a system, Islamic economics is also a science that studies economic phenomena such as economic growth, income distribution, poverty, unemployment, and economic stability, using an Islamic value framework. The ultimate goal is to achieve falah, namely the success and well-being of human life in this world and the hereafter. According to (Chapra, 2000), Islamic economics is a science that aims to realize human welfare through the fair and efficient management of resources in accordance with Islamic teachings, without eliminating individual freedom and while maintaining social balance.

Numerous empirical studies have shown that an Islamic economic perspective is relevant in analyzing macroeconomic problems such as unemployment and poverty. Research (Fadhilah, 2021) confirms that poverty alleviation and job creation are primary prerequisites for achieving equitable economic growth. Other research has found that high unemployment and poverty rates reflect a failure to distribute the fruits of development, which contradicts the principles of falah and social justice in Islamic economics (Diana & Syarif, 2024). Thus, Islamic economics provides a conceptual framework emphasizing that sustainable economic growth must be accompanied by a reduction in unemployment and poverty.

Economic Growth

Economic growth is often defined as an increase in a region's production capacity for goods and services over a specific period. According to (Adam Smith, 1776), economic growth occurs due to the division of labor (specialization) and accumulation of capital, which increases labor productivity (Tya et al., 2025). Modern growth theory emphasizes that not only capital and labor accumulation are important, but also human capital quality, technological progress, institutional efficiency, and equitable distribution of benefits. For example, a study in Indonesia found that high economic growth alone does not guarantee poverty reduction if the distribution and quality are less inclusive (Octavia et al., 2023). In a regional context like North Sumatra, this means that even if GRDP or economic growth increases, it does not necessarily mean better labor absorption or a significant reduction in poverty. Economic development plays a crucial role in the growth and development of a country or region. Economic development is a process that can lead to long-term increases in a region's real income and is accompanied by improvements in its institutional systems.

Various empirical studies have shown that high economic growth does not always have a significant impact on reducing unemployment and poverty. Studies in Indonesia found that economic growth that is not accompanied by job creation and equitable income distribution

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tends to widen social inequality (Nurmasanti, 2026). Other research also shows that high unemployment rates can hamper regional economic growth due to low utilization of the productive workforce, while persistent poverty reduces purchasing power and the quality of human resources, thus depressing long-term economic performance (Ariani & Huda, 2025).

According to Ibn Khalbun (1377 AD) in his work Al-Muqaddimah (Affriyanti, 2021), Ibn Khalbun explained that economic growth occurs due to increased production, trade, and social activity, supported by justice, security, and moderate tax policies. Excessively high taxes will weaken economic activity. In other words, changes in the economic welfare of a society can be the beginning of economic improvement. Economic growth is inseparable from the conditions of national economic growth. Changes in economic conditions occurring at the national scale influence economic development in the regions. Regional development is a driving force for national development, which can shape local governments as planners to make various comprehensive changes in the economy for the welfare of the existing community, enabling them to create and implement regional development in line with national development goals.

Unemployment

Unemployment refers to people in the labor force who want to find work but have not yet found it. According to (Mankiw, 2014), unemployment is a situation where someone in the labor force does not have a job but is actively seeking it (Adriyanto et al., 2020). Unemployment can have a negative impact on a country. High unemployment rates can lead to households being unable to meet their consumption needs due to a lack of income and employment (Imsar et al., 2022). Unemployment can also lead to reduced productivity, leading to social problems. The Qur'an (QS. At-Taubah: 105) states, And say, "Work, and Allah will see your work." Islam commands its followers to work and strive. Therefore, unemployment is viewed as a sub-ideal condition and should be avoided as long as one is still able to work (Letsoin, 2023). This is because development makes people unproductive because they have nothing to do. Furthermore, unemployment causes resources to become useless because they are not used for activities that increase productivity, which inevitably leads to a lack of income and reduced purchasing power.

Production factors are one of the primary needs that remain a pressing issue for Indonesia, particularly North Sumatra. Given the still-high unemployment rate, unemployment is a major cause of mass poverty, both tangible and intangible. Job promotion is an opportunity given to someone to obtain a position according to the required criteria. Many argue that the cause of high unemployment is because wages in a region are low (Rahmaini, 2021).

A high unemployment rate can indicate an imbalance between the number of available workers and available jobs. In the context of North Sumatra, high unemployment can hamper economic growth because it reduces people's purchasing power and potential productivity. Unemployment, especially open unemployment (people who are actively looking for work but have not found it), is an important indicator in the labor market and

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economic development. A high unemployment rate usually indicates the existence of unutilized human resources, which can hinder the rate of economic growth because productivity is not optimal, consumption decreases, and potential output is lost. According to Al-Ghazali (1095 AD), Al-Ghazali views unemployment as a condition where a person does not utilize his potential and ability to work, so that it can hinder the fulfillment of life's needs and the goals of the maqashid Sharia (Hayati et al., 2025). A study (Dalimunthe & Imsar, 2023) found that variables such as economic growth, the human development index (HDI), and investment significantly influence the unemployment rate. Within a theoretical framework, the relationship between unemployment and growth can also be explained through the consumption and investment pathway: high unemployment → low purchasing power → declining production and investment → slower growth.

Poverty

Poverty has long been recognized as a multidimensional phenomenon. This means that poverty is not simply understood as economic deprivation or inability. According to Al-Ghazali (1095 AD), poverty is a condition where a person is unable to meet their basic needs, thus disrupting the implementation of religious obligations and the purpose of human life (maqasid Sharia) (Hayati et al., 2025). In general, poverty is defined as a condition where income is insufficient to meet basic needs, resulting in a lack of ability to ensure survival (Putri & Mukramin, 2023). Poverty arises from inequality in ownership of the means of production. Nugroho (2004) states that poverty is an absolute or relative condition that prevents an individual or group of people in a region from meeting their basic needs according to certain values or norms prevailing in society due to natural, cultural, or structural causes (Simatupang, 2022).

According to Jacobus et al., 2018, poverty is the inability to meet a minimum standard of living. These basic needs include food, clothing, shelter, education, and health. Poverty is also related to attitudes, lifestyles, and specific environments within a society (Akbar et al., 2025). Poverty is also defined as the powerlessness of a group of people under a government system that leaves them in a very weak and exploited position. Similarly, Peter Townsend (Adon et al., 2023) states that poverty is the absence or deficiency of food, comfort, standard services, and activities required by society. Poverty is a fundamental issue because it affects the fulfillment of basic life needs. It is a global problem, facing many countries (Imsar, 2018). Poverty is also a humanitarian problem that hinders prosperity, so everyone agrees that poverty must be addressed.

Poverty alleviation strategies are related to the availability of accurate poverty data, so that government policies are well-targeted. Poverty is generally described as insufficient income to meet basic needs. Poverty is defined as a condition where a household is unable to adequately meet basic needs (food, shelter, education, and health) (Susanti, 2020). In economic development theory (Sariah et al., 2024), poverty can be both a cause and a consequence of weak or non-inclusive growth. The concept of the vicious circle of poverty explains that poverty, low productivity, and low investment hinder growth, which persists.

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The impact of poverty according to Muttaqien (2006:3) quoted from (A. Malik et al., 2023), reveals that poverty causes almost the same effects in all countries. Poverty causes: (1) Loss of welfare for the poor (clothing, food, shelter), (2) Loss of the right to education, (3) Loss of the right to health, (4) Elimination from decent work according to humanity, (5) Marginalization from the right to legal protection, (6) Loss of the right to security, (7) Loss of the right to participate in government and public decisions, (8) Loss of the right to psyche, (9) Loss of the right to innovate, and (10) Loss of the right to freedom of life. The latest panel research (Indonesia) (Shihab et al., 2025), shows that unemployment and human quality (HDI) significantly affect poverty. So, in the context of North Sumatra, if poverty is still high then this is not only a result of low growth, but can also be an obstacle to future growth (Silaen et al., 2025).

Relationships Between Variables

Growth, Unemployment, and Poverty

Strong and inclusive economic growth should generate more jobs, reduce unemployment, and increase household income, thus reducing poverty. Development theory states that increased economic output will encourage job creation and improve income distribution (Astuti & Hukom, 2023).

Studies (Dalimunthe & Imsar, 2023) support that economic growth and the HDI have a negative impact on poverty. Empirical research shows that economic growth and improvements in the quality of human resources have a negative impact on poverty rates, due to increased employment opportunities and labor productivity (Budhijana, 2019). Thus, quality economic growth has the potential to be a key instrument in reducing unemployment and poverty at the regional level.

Unemployment, Poverty, and Growth

However, if unemployment remains high and poverty is high, the growth rate can be hampered: low household consumption, low regional investment, and a less productive workforce. Research (Suharlina, 2020) shows that unemployment and poverty have a negative impact on economic growth. Research (Hamidah et al., 2024) also found that unemployment and poverty have a significant negative impact on economic growth, particularly in developing regions. This situation suggests that without improvements in employment and social welfare, economic growth tends to be suboptimal.

Moderating and Mediating Factors

Many studies also show that these effects are influenced by the quality of institutions, income distribution, human resource quality, economic sectoral structure, and equity. For example, research (Ramli et al., 2025) found that the HDI significantly influences unemployment and growth, suggesting that unemployment can act as a mediator or explanatory variable between poverty and growth.

Several studies indicate that the Human Development Index (HDI) plays a significant role in explaining the relationship between these variables (Palindangan & Bakar, 2021).

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(Prasetyoningrum & Sukmawati, 2018) found that the HDI significantly influences unemployment and economic growth, suggesting that unemployment has the potential to act as a mediating variable in the relationship between poverty and economic growth. These findings confirm that development policies focused on improving the quality of people and institutions are crucial for creating inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Research Methods

This study uses a quantitative approach with a causal-associative approach. The aim is to analyze the causal relationship between unemployment and poverty variables and economic growth in North Sumatra Province during the 2021–2023 period. The term causal-associative is used in this study to indicate the suspected causal relationship between variables based on the theoretical framework of development economics. However, the analysis is empirical-statistical in nature and is not intended to prove causality purely experimentally (Sugiyono, 2019). The quantitative approach was chosen because it allows for objective hypothesis testing through statistical analysis of measurable numerical data. The population in this study includes all 33 districts/cities in North Sumatra Province. Given that complete data is available for all regions and study periods, the entire population served as the research sample. The sampling method used was saturated sampling (census), a sampling technique that involves taking all members of the population as the research sample.

Table 2. Operational Variable

No	Research Variable	Indicator / Measurement	Unit	Data Source
1	Economic Growth (Y)	Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) growth rate at constant prices	Percentage (%)	(BPS Provinsi Sumatera Utara, 2026)
2	Unemployment (X_1)	Open Unemployment Rate (TPT)	Percentage (%)	(BPS Provinsi Sumatera Utara, 2026)
3	Poverty (X2)	Percentage of poor people	Percentage (%)	(BPS Provinsi Sumatera Utara, 2026)V

Source: Processed data by the author (2025)

Data analysis was performed using panel data-based multiple linear regression with the help of EViews software version 13. Panel data was used because it combines time series and cross-sectional dimensions, providing more accurate estimates. The best model was selected using the Chow Test, Hausman Test, and Lagrange Multiplier (LM) Test, which indicated that the Common Effect Model (CEM) was the most appropriate model. Next,

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classical assumption tests were conducted, including multicollinearity and heteroscedasticity tests. Hypothesis testing was performed using the t-test to examine partial effects, the F-test for simultaneous effects, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) to determine the contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable.

Results and Discussion

Results

This section presents the results of panel data processing using EViews 13 software. The analysis was conducted in stages to ensure that the regression model used was the most appropriate and met the classical assumptions, so that the obtained estimation results could be interpreted validly and reliably. The analysis stages include selecting a panel data model, testing classical assumptions, and testing the research hypotheses.

Model Analysis Results

The panel data model selection aims to determine the most appropriate regression model to describe the relationship between unemployment (X_1), poverty (X_2), and economic growth (Y). The three models considered in this study are the Common Effect Model (CEM), the Fixed Effect Model (FEM), and the Random Effect Model (REM). To determine the best model, the Chow Test, the Hausman Test, and the Lagrange Multiplier (LM) Test were performed.

Chow Test

The Chow Test is used to compare the Common Effect Model and the Fixed Effect Model.

Table 3. Chow Test Results

Redundant Fixed Effects Tests
Equation: Untitled
Test cross-section fixed effects

Effects Test	Statistic	d.f.	Prob.
Cross-section F	0.737059	(32,64)	0.8261
Cross-section Chi-square	31.059951	32	0.5140

Source: Eviews 13 Data Processing Results

Based on the Chow Test results in Table 3, the cross-section probability F value is 0.8261 > 0.05, so the more appropriate model is the Common Effects Model. This indicates that there are no significant differences in characteristics between districts/cities that need to be accommodated through fixed effects.

Hausman Test

The Hausman Test aims to determine whether the Fixed Effects Model or the Random Effects Model is more appropriate.

Table 4. Hausman Test Results

Correlated Random Effects - Hausman Test
Equation: Untitled

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Test cross-section random effects

Test Summary	Chi-Sq. Statistic	Chi-Sq. d.f.	Prob.
Cross-section random	6.4731292		0.0393

Source: Eviews 13 Data Processing Results

The test results in Table 4 show a probability value of 0.0393 < 0.05, indicating that the Fixed Effects Model is statistically more appropriate than the Random Effects Model.

LM Test

The LM test is used to compare the Common Effects Model and the Random Effects Model.

Table 5. LM Test Results

Lagrange Multiplier Tests for Random Effects
Null hypotheses: No effects
Alternative hypotheses: Two-sided (Breusch-Pagan) and one-sided
(all others) alternatives

	Test Hypothesis		
	Cross- section	Time	Both
Breusch-Pagan	1.966806	23.63308	25.59989
	(0.1608)	(0.0000)	(0.0000)

Source: Eviews 13 Data Processing Results

Based on the results in Table 5, the Breusch-Pagan probability value is 0.1608 > 0.05, so the Common Effects Model is more appropriate than the Random Effects Model.

Table 6. Model Selection Matrix

Pengujian	CEM	FEM	REM	Keterangan
Uji chow	V			CEM
Uji hausman		V		FEM
Uji LM	V			CEM

Source: Eviews 13 Data Processing Results

Based on the results of the three tests, summarized in Table 6, the most appropriate model to use in this study is the Common Effect Model.

Statistical Test Results

The classical assumption test was conducted to ensure that the regression model met the requirements of the Best Linear Unbiased Estimator (BLUE).

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Multicollinearity Test

The multicollinearity test aims to determine whether there is a strong relationship between the independent variables.

Table 7. Multicollinearity Test

	X1	X2
X1	1.000000	-0.349428
X2	-0.349428	1.000000

Source: Eviews 13 Data Processing Results

The results of the multicollinearity test indicate that the VIF value for variable X1 is -0.349428 <10, and the VIF value for variable X2 is 1.000000 <10. Therefore, it can be concluded that X1 and X2 pass the multicollinearity test.

Heteroscedasticity Test

The heteroscedasticity test was conducted using the Glejser method to determine whether the residual variance is constant.

Table 8. Heteroscedasticity Test

Dependent Variable: ABS(RESID)
Method: Panel Least Squares
Date: 11/02/25 Time: 12:06
Sample: 2021 2023
Periods included:3
Cross-sections included: 33
Total panel (balanced) observations: 99

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	0.864588	0.808565	1.069287	0.2876
LOG(X1)	0.261801	0.142242	1.840530	0.0688
LOG(X2)	-0.095386	0.320065	-0.298020	0.7663
R-squared	0.041413	Mean dependent var		0.985961
Adjusted R-squared	0.021442	S.D. dependent var		1.141480
S.E. of regression	1.129175	Akaike info criterion		3.110686
Sum squared resid	122.4035	Schwarz criterion		3.189326
Log likelihood	-150.9790	Hannan-Quinncriter.		3.142504
F-statistic	2.073702	Durbin-Watson stat		1.970516
Prob(F-statistic)	0.131315			

Source: Eviews 13 Data Processing Results

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The results of the Glejser heteroscedasticity test indicate that the probability value of variable X1 is 0.0688 > 0.05, and the probability value of variable X2 is 0.7663 > 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that X1 and X2 pass the heteroscedasticity test.

Hypothesis Testing

The aim of hypothesis testing is to determine the effect of unemployment and poverty on economic growth, both partially and simultaneously. The results of panel data regression using the Common Effect Model are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Hypothesis Test Results

Dependent Variable: Y
Method: Panel Least Squares
Date: 11/02/25 Time: 18:46
Sample: 2021 2023
Periods included: 3
Cross-sections included: 33
Total panel (balanced) observations: 99

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	2.187389	1.088910	2.008788	0.0474
X1	0.532602	0.115382	4.615992	0.0000
X2	-0.159173	0.069751	-2.282028	0.0247

R-squared	0.286713	Mean dependent var	3.030505
Adjusted R-squared	0.271853	S.D. dependent var	3.383272
S.E. of regression	2.886997	Akaike info criterion	4.988145
Sum squared resid	800.1363	Schwarz criterion	5.066785
Log likelihood	-243.9132	Hannan-Quinn criter.	5.019963
F-statistic	19.29413	Durbin-Watson stat	1.647745
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000000		

Source: Eviews 13 Data Processing Results

Based on the partial test (t-test), the unemployment variable (X_1) has a coefficient of 0.5326 with a probability value of 0.0000 <0.05, indicating that unemployment has a positive and significant effect on economic growth. Meanwhile, the poverty variable (X_2) has a

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coefficient of -0.1592 with a probability value of 0.0247 <0.05, indicating that poverty has a negative and significant effect on economic growth.

The simultaneous test (F-test) shows a probability value of 0.0000 <0.05, thus concluding that unemployment and poverty together have a significant effect on economic growth in North Sumatra Province. The coefficient of determination (Adjusted R^2) of 0.271 indicates that the unemployment and poverty variables explain 27.1% of the variation in economic growth, while the remaining 72.9% is influenced by other variables outside the research model.

Discussion

Based on the results of panel data analysis using Eviews 13, the best model used in this study was the Common Effects Model (CEM). This is demonstrated by the results of the Chow, Hausman, and Lagrange Multiplier (LM) tests, which indicate that the probability values support the use of the common effects model. Therefore, each district/city in North Sumatra Province is assumed to have relatively similar characteristics that influence economic growth during the study period. The main objective of this study is to analyze the effect of unemployment (X_1) and poverty (X_2) on economic growth (Y) in North Sumatra Province for the period 2021–2023.

The Effect of Unemployment on Economic Growth

The regression test results indicate that the unemployment variable (X_1) has a coefficient value of 0.532602 with a probability value of 0.0000 <0.05, indicating that unemployment has a positive and significant effect on economic growth. These results indicate that changes in the unemployment rate in North Sumatra are related to the dynamics of regional economic growth. Theoretically, this result differs somewhat from the Law of Economic Growth, which states that a decrease in unemployment should increase economic growth. This phenomenon can be explained by North Sumatra's economic structure, which is still dominated by the informal sector. The decline in unemployment rates does not fully reflect increased productivity. Therefore, despite the decline in unemployment, its contribution to GRDP remains limited because most new jobs are in low-productivity sectors.

The theory of economic dualism states that in developing regions, the dominance of the informal sector causes unemployment indicators to not fully reflect labor productivity (N. Malik, 2018). Furthermore, structural growth theory explains that economic growth can be driven by capital-intensive sectors, so that increased output is not always accompanied by increased absorption of the formal workforce (Hubbansyah et al., 2023).

The results of this study align with research by Nainggolan (2020), which analyzed the effect of unemployment on poverty through economic growth in North Sumatra. This research shows that unemployment dynamics are strongly linked to regional economic growth. Although classical theory suggests that unemployment should reduce economic growth, the positive results in this study reinforce the findings of Jibril et al., 2025, which suggest that the relationship between unemployment and growth is not always linear, particularly in regions whose economic structures are dominated by the informal sector. In the context of

Dinar
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DOI: https://doi.org/10.21107/dinar.v8i2.9954
ISSN: 2580-3565 (Online)

North Sumatra, the decline in unemployment has not fully reflected increased productivity, so economic growth is still influenced by factors other than formal labor absorption.

From an Islamic economic perspective, this condition indicates the suboptimal function of work as a means of increasing falah (welfare) (Purba et al., 2025). Islam emphasizes the importance of productive and value-added work as part of the utilization of human resources. Therefore, despite the dynamics of unemployment, the resulting economic growth does not fully reflect justice and sustainability as emphasized in the principles of maqasid sharia.

The Effect of Poverty on Economic Growth

The poverty variable (X_2) has a coefficient of -0.159173 with a probability value of 0.0247 < 0.05, indicating a negative and significant effect on economic growth. This means that the higher the poverty rate in a region, the lower its economic growth tends to be. Economically, this condition can be explained by poverty reducing people's purchasing power and household consumption, which are the largest components of GRDP. Furthermore, poverty also hinders investment in human resources, such as education and health, thereby reducing labor productivity and long-term growth potential.

The results of this study align with the vicious circle of poverty theory, which explains that poverty reduces purchasing power, productivity, and investment in human resources (Abdussamad et al., 2023). Furthermore, endogenous growth theory emphasizes that the quality of human capital is a key factor in long-term growth, which is hampered when poverty levels are high (Liana et al., 2024).

This research aligns with research (Dama, 2016), which states that poverty reduces people's purchasing power and weakens household consumption, a major component of GRDP. This is also in line with research (Windari & Imaningsih, 2025), which found that poverty is a major obstacle to economic growth in the Sumatra region. Therefore, the results of this study strengthen empirical evidence that poverty is not only a consequence of low economic growth but also a contributing factor to slowing economic growth itself. Research (Ningrum et al., 2020) shows that unemployment and human resource quality (HDI) significantly influence poverty levels. These findings are relevant to the current research, which has shown poverty to have a direct impact on economic growth. This indicates an indirect relationship between unemployment and economic growth through poverty, as explained in the concept of the vicious circle of poverty. This means that when poverty is high, productivity and investment decline, thereby hampering economic growth. From an Islamic economic perspective, high poverty rates reflect the failure to meet the basic needs of the community. Islam views poverty alleviation as a primary prerequisite for equitable and sustainable economic growth (Suaidah et al., 2023). Therefore, high poverty rates indicate that economic growth is not fully aligned with the principles of distributive justice and social welfare.

The Effect of Unemployment and Poverty on Economic Growth

The F-test results show a Prob (F-statistic) value of 0.0000 < 0.05, indicating that unemployment and poverty simultaneously have a significant effect on economic growth

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in North Sumatra. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.271 indicates that the two independent variables explain 27.1% of the variation in changes in economic growth, while the remaining 72.9% is influenced by other factors such as investment, inflation, government spending, and real sector productivity. These results confirm that unemployment and poverty are closely linked to economic growth. High poverty can slow growth by reducing purchasing power and productivity, while changes in unemployment indicate a labor force that is not yet fully productive. Therefore, regional development policies need to emphasize the creation of quality jobs and poverty alleviation programs that focus on increasing the economic capacity of the community.

This research aligns with economic development theory, which asserts that growth is influenced by the overall socioeconomic conditions of the community (Parmadi et al., 2025). Furthermore, welfare theory states that sustainable economic growth requires a simultaneous reduction in unemployment and poverty (Nur, n.d.).

This research aligns with research by Ningrum et al., 2020, which concluded that economic growth is influenced by the comprehensive socioeconomic conditions of the community. The coefficient of determination of 27.1% also strengthens the argument that although unemployment and poverty are important, other factors such as investment, inflation, and government spending play a significant role in driving regional economic growth.

From an Islamic economic perspective, this research also aligns with the thinking of Ibn Khaldun and Al-Ghazali (Affriyanti, 2021), who emphasize that social welfare, distributive justice, and the fulfillment of basic needs are the main prerequisites for sustainable economic growth. High levels of poverty indicate that the objectives of the maqasid sharia have not been achieved, thus hindering economic growth. sehingga menghambat pertumbuhan ekonomi yang dihasilkan belum bersifat inklusif dan merata.

Conclusion

The results of the panel data analysis indicate that unemployment and poverty significantly influenced economic growth in North Sumatra Province during the 2021–2023 period. Unemployment was shown to have a positive and significant effect on economic growth, indicating that the dynamics of regional economic growth are not fully supported by increased labor productivity, particularly due to the dominance of the informal sector. Meanwhile, poverty had a negative and significant effect on economic growth, indicating that high poverty rates reduce people's purchasing power and hinder investment in quality human resources. Simultaneously, unemployment and poverty explained 27.1% of the variation in economic growth, with the remainder influenced by other macroeconomic factors such as investment, inflation, government spending, and real sector productivity.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce the view that the relationship between unemployment and economic growth is not always linear, especially in regions with an economic structure dominated by the informal sector. This study also confirms the relevance of the concept of the vicious circle of poverty, where poverty is not only a consequence of low economic growth but also a factor that slows growth itself. Thus, this

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study contributes to the regional economic literature by emphasizing the importance of quality labor absorption and welfare distribution in driving sustainable economic growth.
From a practical perspective, the results of this study imply the need for regional development policies that focus not only on increasing aggregate economic growth but also on creating productive, quality jobs and strengthening poverty alleviation programs. Local governments need to encourage the transformation of the informal sector into the formal sector, improve the quality of human resources through education and health, and strengthen strategic sectors capable of increasing community incomes equitably. From an Islamic economic perspective, these policies align with the principles of distributive justice and the achievement of the maqasid sharia, particularly in ensuring welfare and meeting basic community needs.
This study has several limitations, including the relatively short observation period of 2021–2023, and the use of independent variables that are still limited to unemployment and poverty. Furthermore, the model used does not fully capture the heterogeneity of characteristics across districts/cities in North Sumatra Province. Therefore, future research is recommended to expand the observation period, add other variables such as investment, inflation, government spending, and the human development index, and consider the use of fixed effects models or moderation and mediation approaches. Further research could also integrate Islamic economic instruments, such as zakat and productive waqf, to analyze their role in promoting inclusive and equitable economic growth.

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