

# Determinants of Poverty in Indonesia from a Sustainable Development Goals Perspective

**Miftahul Huda**

STAI Muhammadiyah Bandung, Indonesia  
hafidz.8770@gmail.com

## Abstract

This study explores the determinants of poverty in Indonesia using a Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) framework. Employing qualitative analysis of policy documents, academic literature, and national statistics, it investigates how education, informal labor, and gender inequality intersect to sustain multidimensional poverty. The findings indicate that low educational attainment, informal employment dominance, and gender-based exclusion are critical factors influencing poverty, particularly in underdeveloped regions. Drawing from human capital theory, social exclusion, and the capabilities approach, the study highlights structural and institutional barriers to poverty alleviation. It also underscores regional and gender disparities that hinder progress toward SDG targets. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the research contributes a holistic understanding of poverty dynamics in Indonesia. Practical implications call for inclusive education reform, formal labor expansion, and gender-equity legislation. The study offers strategic insights for policymakers and development agencies aiming to reduce poverty through coordinated, SDG-aligned interventions across sectors and regions.

## Keywords

poverty; sustainable development goals; Indonesia; informal employment; gender inequality

## INTRODUCTION

Poverty remains a persistent and multidimensional challenge in Indonesia, despite significant progress in economic growth and development indicators over the past two decades. According to BPS–Statistics Indonesia (2015), the national poverty rate declined from 24% in 1999 to under 11% in 2015. However, this progress conceals the depth of regional inequality and the fragility of poverty alleviation outcomes when exposed to economic shocks.

Moreover, while aggregate data suggest improvement, micro-level realities often reveal continuing deprivation in health, education, housing, and employment. As articulated by Todaro and Smith (2012, p. 82), poverty must be seen not only in terms of income deprivation but as a condition reflecting multiple deficiencies in capabilities.

Hence, exploring the determinants of poverty from a multidimensional perspective is essential to understanding its resilience in Indonesian society.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a globally recognized framework for addressing poverty in all its dimensions. Goal 1 explicitly targets the eradication of poverty, while complementary goals emphasize education (Goal 4), gender equality (Goal 5), decent work (Goal 8), and reduced inequality (Goal 10).

The integration of SDGs into Indonesia's national development planning underscores the country's commitment to inclusive development (UNDP, 2016). Yet, scholars such as Alkire and Santos (2014) argue that tracking multidimensional poverty requires more than monetary thresholds—it demands analyzing overlapping deprivations affecting people's daily lives. In the Indonesian context, understanding how employment, education, social norms, and regional policies interact to influence poverty is crucial. These interactions define the structural and institutional determinants that hinder progress toward SDG-aligned poverty reduction.

Theoretically, poverty determinants are best understood through a combination of human capital theory, social exclusion, and sustainable development frameworks. Human capital theory emphasizes the role of education and health in enhancing productivity and income-generating capabilities (Becker, 1993, p. 46). Meanwhile, social exclusion theory focuses on the marginalization processes that prevent individuals from accessing resources and opportunities (Sen, 2000).

Within the SDG context, these theories offer complementary insights: one highlighting structural barriers and the other emphasizing capability building. Empirical studies in Indonesia confirm that factors such as educational attainment, informal sector employment, and gender disparities are strongly linked to poverty outcomes (Suryahadi & Sumarto, 2003; Bappenas, 2016). These findings provide the analytical basis for evaluating Indonesia's poverty determinants through an SDG lens.

Despite the growing literature on poverty and development, few studies have synthesized SDG indicators into a coherent analytical framework for exploring poverty determinants in Indonesia. Existing research often isolates individual factors such as education or income without accounting for their interdependencies (World Bank, 2016).

Moreover, limited attention has been paid to how poverty reduction policies align—or fail to align—with specific SDG targets. This disconnect highlights a research gap: a need for a multidimensional analysis that bridges macro-policy goals with micro-level determinants. By focusing on the synergy and tensions among key SDG-related factors, this study addresses an urgent theoretical and policy need.

This research aims to identify and analyze the key determinants of poverty in Indonesia from an SDG perspective. The following research questions guide the inquiry: (1) How does educational access influence poverty levels in Indonesia within the SDG framework? (2) What role do labor market structures and informal employment play in perpetuating poverty? (3) How does gender-based economic disparities and social norms affect poverty outcomes? These questions are addressed thematically in the discussion section, integrating theoretical and empirical insights. The study's significance lies in its potential to inform poverty alleviation strategies that are both theoretically grounded and aligned with global development goals.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The academic discourse surrounding poverty determinants in Indonesia has evolved from an income-based paradigm to a multidimensional framework. Early works grounded in classical development economics emphasized income thresholds and aggregate growth indicators as primary determinants of poverty (Todaro & Smith, 2012, p. 88). However, more recent scholarship has underscored the importance of education, employment, health, and institutional governance in shaping poverty outcomes (Sen, 1999).

In particular, the integration of the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) by Alkire and Santos (2010) has influenced how scholars and policymakers evaluate deprivation. Their approach, focusing on simultaneous deprivations in education, health, and standard of living, resonates strongly with Indonesia's diverse development landscape. Indonesian studies such as Suryahadi and Sumarto (2003) have reaffirmed this perspective, illustrating how rural education and employment patterns significantly impact poverty in outer islands.

Another strand of literature has focused on the role of social structures and institutional frameworks in perpetuating poverty. Studies by the World Bank (2016) and UNDP (2016) emphasize the need to examine systemic inequality, gender bias, and regional policy failures that limit access to public services. This aligns with social exclusion theory, which frames poverty as a consequence of marginalization from societal participation (Sen, 2000).

Indonesian scholars such as Tjiptoherijanto (2014, p. 123) have examined how decentralized governance has yielded unequal development outcomes across provinces. Meanwhile, comparative studies highlight that without aligning national strategies with global development frameworks like the SDGs, poverty reduction can be fragmented and unsustainable (United Nations, 2015). These works underscore the

importance of policy coherence, equity-based frameworks, and targeted investments to address structural determinants of poverty.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The foundation of this study rests upon human capital theory, which posits that education, skills, and health significantly influence individual productivity and earning potential. Becker (1993, p. 21) emphasized that investments in human capital—particularly education and vocational training—contribute directly to poverty alleviation by enhancing workforce capabilities. In Indonesia, disparities in educational attainment have long been identified as a critical determinant of poverty, especially in rural and eastern provinces (Suryadarma et al., 2006).

Poor access to quality education limits employment opportunities, leading individuals to engage in low-productivity or informal jobs with minimal income security. Human capital theory thus provides a lens for analyzing how education-related SDGs—particularly Goal 4—intersect with poverty outcomes. Moreover, this framework supports the formulation of targeted policies that link educational reforms with labor market improvements.

A second conceptual pillar is social exclusion theory, which interprets poverty as a process of systematic marginalization from economic, political, and social participation (Sen, 2000). This theory moves beyond monetary poverty by highlighting structural barriers that restrict access to resources and rights. In Indonesia, exclusionary practices often manifest through gender discrimination, ethnic inequality, and unequal regional development (Tjiptoherijanto, 2014, p. 125).

For example, women in rural communities are frequently excluded from formal labor markets, affecting their income and agency. Such exclusions contribute to persistent poverty and contradict the equity principles embedded in SDG Goals 5 and 10. Social exclusion theory, therefore, provides an essential framework for evaluating the institutional and cultural dimensions of poverty, particularly in assessing how government and societal norms reinforce deprivation.

A third theoretical orientation is derived from the sustainable development paradigm, particularly as articulated by the United Nations (2015) in the 2030 Agenda. This framework integrates economic, social, and environmental goals, asserting that poverty eradication must occur in tandem with equity and ecological sustainability. Within this framework, poverty is not solely a humanitarian concern but a systemic issue requiring policy coherence across sectors (UNDP, 2016).

In Indonesia, the challenge of sustainable development is compounded by environmental degradation and urban overpopulation, which often exacerbate poverty in vulnerable communities (World Bank, 2016). The sustainable development perspective enriches the analysis by promoting intersectoral strategies and long-term planning, directly supporting Goals 1, 8, and 11 of the SDGs. It frames poverty not merely as an economic deficit but as an outcome of multidimensional underdevelopment.

Finally, this study incorporates the capabilities approach, developed by Amartya Sen (1999), which emphasizes individual freedoms and the ability to live a life one has reason to value. Unlike theories focused solely on resources or income, this approach evaluates the real opportunities individuals have to escape poverty. The capabilities framework is particularly relevant to the Indonesian context, where cultural norms, geographic isolation, and bureaucratic inefficiencies often limit individual agency (Tjiptoherijanto, 2014, p. 127).

For example, even when education or healthcare is technically available, many marginalized populations lack the freedom or resources to access them meaningfully. Integrating the capabilities approach with SDG analysis ensures that poverty alleviation is not only measured by economic indicators but by improvements in agency, empowerment, and human dignity.

Together, these four theoretical constructs—human capital, social exclusion, sustainable development, and capabilities—form an integrated analytical framework. Each theory complements the others in identifying and interpreting the multifaceted determinants of poverty in Indonesia. By aligning these theories with SDG indicators, this study offers a robust platform for both empirical investigation and policy-oriented recommendations.

## **Previous Research**

Suryahadi and Sumarto (2003) conducted a foundational study examining how education, household characteristics, and regional disparities influenced poverty in Indonesia post-crisis. Their findings indicated that poor educational attainment and informal labor market participation significantly predicted poverty levels. They emphasized that localized poverty required tailored policy responses rather than one-size-fits-all solutions.

Chowdhury and Squire (2006) extended the discussion by analyzing the impact of institutional quality and governance on poverty alleviation efforts in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia. Their research identified a strong correlation between weak

institutional frameworks and persistent poverty. They called for more inclusive governance structures to reduce systemic deprivation.

In 2008, Ravallion revisited the poverty-growth-inequality triangle, suggesting that economic growth does not automatically translate into poverty reduction unless coupled with equity-based policies. His findings hold particular relevance for Indonesia, where robust GDP growth has not uniformly benefited all socioeconomic groups.

The World Bank (2010) published a country study on Indonesia that emphasized the impact of labor market dualism on poverty. The study showed that informal sector workers—especially in agriculture and retail—were more vulnerable to poverty due to unstable income and lack of social protection. This finding highlighted the importance of labor reforms in national poverty reduction strategies.

Tjiptoherijanto (2014, p. 119) provided a nuanced analysis of poverty in Indonesia by examining decentralization's impact. He argued that while regional autonomy aimed to improve service delivery, in practice, it exacerbated inequalities between provinces due to varied administrative capacities. His work supports the argument that governance quality significantly influences poverty outcomes.

Finally, UNDP (2016) offered an evaluative report on Indonesia's progress toward SDG implementation. It emphasized the lack of alignment between sectoral policies and SDG indicators, particularly in education and employment. The report urged for integrated monitoring and localized adaptation of global targets.

While these studies have advanced understanding of poverty in Indonesia, most have treated its determinants in isolation—education, labor, or governance—without synthesizing them within the SDG framework. Additionally, few have interrogated the interactive effects of these determinants across different demographic and regional groups. This study seeks to bridge that gap by applying a multidimensional, theory-driven analysis rooted in the SDGs, aiming to provide policy insights that are both holistic and actionable.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The type of data used in this study is qualitative and conceptual, derived from secondary textual sources that provide analytical and theoretical insights into poverty and development. This includes peer-reviewed academic literature, institutional policy reports, and government publications, all relevant to understanding the determinants of poverty in the Indonesian context. Qualitative data enables in-depth exploration of

multidimensional poverty, aligning with the study's theoretical framework and the interpretive demands of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

According to Creswell (2013, p. 87), qualitative inquiry is particularly appropriate when addressing complex, socially embedded phenomena such as poverty, as it allows for a holistic interpretation of human behavior, structures, and policy impact. Furthermore, this method supports the exploration of relationships among factors such as education, employment, and social exclusion, rather than isolating them as disconnected variables.

The data sources are drawn from international journal articles, Indonesian governmental reports, development organization databases, and reputable academic books. Institutional sources include BPS–Statistics Indonesia, the World Bank, UNDP, and Indonesia's Ministry of National Development Planning (Bappenas). Academic references are selected from major research databases including JSTOR, ScienceDirect, and Taylor & Francis, ensuring that all materials are traceable, verifiable, and published no later than 2016.

These sources provide reliable insights into poverty trends, policy interventions, and theoretical frameworks. Using official publications enhances the legitimacy and relevance of the findings, as these reports reflect nationally and globally accepted definitions and indicators of poverty (UNDP, 2016; World Bank, 2016). The wide variety of sources ensures that multiple dimensions of poverty are covered in the analysis, reflecting the intersectionality embedded within the SDG framework.

The data collection technique utilized in this study is document analysis, which involves a systematic review of policy documents, academic studies, and institutional publications. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis allows researchers to extract contextual meaning from existing literature, offering insights that may not emerge from quantitative methods.

Each source is selected through a purposive sampling strategy to ensure alignment with the SDG goals and theoretical models used in this study. The analysis focuses on identifying patterns, contradictions, and thematic consistencies related to educational access, labor markets, gender dynamics, and regional inequality. Through this technique, the study bridges empirical findings with theoretical frameworks, offering a rich, contextualized understanding of poverty determinants in Indonesia.

The data analysis technique employed is thematic analysis, which facilitates the categorization of data based on recurring patterns and conceptual themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis is particularly suited for studies grounded in theoretical interpretation, as it enables the identification and organization of key themes in complex data sets. In this study, the themes revolve around SDG-aligned



determinants such as education (Goal 4), employment and decent work (Goal 8), gender equality (Goal 5), and reduced inequality (Goal 10). These thematic codes are developed inductively from the literature and deductively based on theoretical concepts such as human capital, social exclusion, and sustainable development. This dual approach ensures both empirical relevance and theoretical rigor in the analysis process, making it possible to evaluate how various poverty determinants interact in the Indonesian context.

In drawing conclusions, the study uses interpretive synthesis, wherein theoretical insights are integrated with empirical patterns to generate meaningful conclusions and policy implications. According to Patton (2015, p. 83), this method enables researchers to develop nuanced understandings of complex social realities, especially when multiple determinants and stakeholders are involved.

The synthesis in this study leads to a multidimensional interpretation of poverty in Indonesia, emphasizing the interconnectedness of education, labor market structures, gender dynamics, and institutional governance. By aligning these interpretations with SDG targets, the study formulates recommendations that are both theoretically informed and practically relevant. The interpretive synthesis ensures that the findings are not merely descriptive but contribute to both academic discourse and policymaking strategies.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study underscore the necessity of understanding poverty in Indonesia as a multifaceted issue shaped by intersecting social, economic, and institutional determinants. Unlike earlier studies that focused solely on income deprivation, this research draws from the SDG framework to analyze how education, labor market dynamics, and gender disparities collectively influence poverty. Human capital theory and the capabilities approach provide a foundational understanding of how educational deprivation limits access to employment and upward mobility (Becker, 1993, p. 35; Sen, 1999).

These theoretical models are especially pertinent in Indonesia, where rural and underdeveloped provinces continue to report low education completion rates and limited access to decent work (World Bank, 2016). The thematic analysis confirms that multidimensional deprivation, rather than income alone, defines the reality of poverty for many Indonesians, reinforcing the importance of comprehensive and targeted policy approaches.



Furthermore, the results contribute to the academic discourse by introducing a more integrated analysis that aligns with SDG principles. Previous studies often addressed poverty determinants in isolation, such as focusing solely on education or regional inequality (Suryahadi & Sumarto, 2003; Tjiptoherijanto, 2014, p. 128). This study bridges that gap by analyzing the synergy between structural and human development factors, offering a unified perspective on poverty reduction.

The dialogue with theoretical frameworks also reveals how Indonesia's current policy responses may not be sufficiently synchronized with global development goals. For instance, decentralized governance—while promoting local autonomy—has created disparities in SDG implementation, particularly in eastern provinces (UNDP, 2016). The findings thus highlight the need for coordinated, SDG-informed national strategies that consider both the complexity and locality of poverty determinants in Indonesia.

## **1. Educational Attainment and Its Role in Poverty Dynamics**

This section directly addresses the first research question by exploring how educational access and attainment affect poverty levels within the SDG framework. In Indonesia, educational deprivation has long been a core driver of poverty, especially in rural and remote regions. The human capital theory argues that education enhances individual productivity and employability, thereby contributing to poverty reduction (Becker, 1993, p. 50).

Yet, access to quality education remains highly uneven across the archipelago. BPS–Statistics Indonesia (2015) reported significantly lower school enrollment rates in provinces such as Papua and East Nusa Tenggara compared to Java. These disparities directly hinder progress toward SDG 4 (quality education) and undermine the broader goal of poverty eradication.

The thematic analysis reveals that poor educational infrastructure, teacher absenteeism, and language barriers are major contributors to low learning outcomes in underdeveloped areas. According to Suryadarma et al. (2006), the quality of primary education in Indonesia often fails to meet national standards, particularly in non-urban settings.

These systemic deficiencies perpetuate intergenerational poverty, as uneducated youth are funneled into informal employment without upward mobility. Moreover, limited vocational training opportunities restrict access to technical or high-demand jobs, further entrenching income inequality. The findings affirm that SDG-aligned poverty strategies must prioritize both access and quality in educational reforms.

Gender also intersects with education to influence poverty outcomes. Girls in certain regions face cultural and economic barriers to schooling, which contributes to lower female literacy and employment rates (UNDP, 2016). This exclusion violates both SDG 4 and SDG 5 (gender equality) and perpetuates economic dependency among women.

Empirical research by Tjiptoherijanto (2014, p. 133) notes that in patriarchal households, investment in girls' education is often deprioritized. As a result, women are underrepresented in formal employment sectors and more vulnerable to poverty in later life. These findings suggest that addressing educational inequalities must include gender-sensitive interventions.

Another critical insight involves the mismatch between education and labor market needs. The World Bank (2010) highlights that Indonesian graduates often lack skills required by employers, leading to underemployment even among educated youth.

This skills mismatch diminishes the poverty-reducing potential of education and points to the importance of reforming curricula and expanding technical and vocational education (TVET). Aligning educational outcomes with labor market demand is a crucial strategy to meet both SDG 4 and SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth).

The decentralization of the education sector has also affected the uniformity of service delivery. While local governments have the autonomy to manage schools, disparities in fiscal capacity and administrative competence result in unequal educational quality (Tjiptoherijanto, 2014, p. 136).

This inequality is especially pronounced in outer islands, where budget constraints often translate into inadequate infrastructure and teaching resources. These findings reinforce the need for greater policy coordination between central and local governments to ensure equitable education provision across regions.

Finally, poverty policies that integrate SDG goals must recognize that educational interventions have both direct and indirect effects. Directly, they increase individual income potential. Indirectly, they shape social norms, health outcomes, and civic participation—all of which reduce vulnerability to poverty (Sen, 2000). Therefore, any comprehensive poverty reduction strategy must include investments in inclusive, high-quality education as a cornerstone. Such investments not only fulfill SDG commitments but also lay the groundwork for long-term poverty eradication in Indonesia.

## **2. Informal Employment, Labor Structures, and Persistent Poverty**

This section directly addresses the second research question by examining the relationship between labor market structures—particularly informal employment—and poverty in Indonesia. Informal employment has long dominated the Indonesian labor market, especially in agriculture, trade, and construction sectors (World Bank, 2010).

The persistence of informal work—defined by a lack of social protection, job security, and legal recognition—contributes significantly to income instability and vulnerability. According to BPS–Statistics Indonesia (2015), more than 60% of the workforce is employed informally, indicating a structural imbalance that contradicts the goals of SDG 8, which calls for inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all.

Human capital theory suggests that education can enable formal sector participation; however, the data reveals a weak correlation between educational attainment and access to formal employment (Becker, 1993, p. 53). This disconnect is especially prominent in rural and peri-urban areas, where the economy is largely informal by nature.

UNDP (2016) notes that despite macroeconomic growth, informal sector expansion has outpaced formal job creation, undermining efforts to improve income equality. Moreover, the lack of enforceable labor standards in informal sectors exposes workers to exploitation, low wages, and hazardous conditions—conditions that deepen poverty over time rather than alleviate it.

A major factor contributing to labor informality is regulatory and administrative complexity. According to Chowdhury and Squire (2006), excessive bureaucratic red tape discourages small and medium enterprises (SMEs) from formalizing. In Indonesia, high registration costs and tax burdens deter businesses from entering the formal sector, thereby limiting workers' access to legal protections and social insurance schemes. This institutional barrier reveals a misalignment between labor policy and poverty reduction, where regulatory frameworks inadvertently incentivize informality and exacerbate structural poverty.

Gender disparities further complicate labor market dynamics. Women, particularly in rural communities, are overrepresented in informal and unpaid family labor (Tjiptoherijanto, 2014, p. 137). Cultural expectations, limited mobility, and lack of childcare infrastructure prevent many women from engaging in formal employment, directly violating SDG 5 and indirectly

influencing poverty levels. Studies by UNDP (2016) show that women in informal employment earn significantly less than men, even in similar roles, contributing to persistent income inequality and economic dependency. Addressing gender-specific labor market constraints is, therefore, critical for meaningful poverty alleviation.

Another key dimension is the regional imbalance in labor opportunities. Java and Bali, as economic hubs, offer greater access to formal jobs and higher wages, while eastern provinces such as Papua and Maluku lag behind (World Bank, 2010). This regional divergence stems from uneven infrastructure development, disparities in education, and insufficient investment in job-creating industries outside Java.

As highlighted by Tjiptoherijanto (2014, p. 140), decentralization has not translated into equitable employment outcomes, further entrenching geographic poverty lines. Labor market interventions must, therefore, be regionally nuanced and developmentally inclusive.

Finally, the findings suggest that Indonesia's labor policies need to better align with SDG indicators, especially those targeting full and productive employment. While macroeconomic indicators may suggest job growth, the predominance of informal labor means many Indonesians remain economically insecure. Policy efforts should focus on expanding formal employment through tax incentives, simplified business registration, and targeted skills development aligned with market demand. Without addressing labor informality, poverty eradication will remain an elusive target, regardless of aggregate economic performance.

### **3. Gender Inequality, Social Norms, and Structural Barriers to Poverty Reduction**

This section addresses the third research question by exploring the effects of gender-based economic disparities and social norms on poverty outcomes in Indonesia. Gender inequality remains a major determinant of poverty, particularly among female-headed households and women in rural and marginalized communities. Drawing from social exclusion theory, this study highlights how gendered norms systematically limit women's access to education, credit, employment, and legal rights (Sen, 2000). These forms of exclusion are not merely cultural but institutionalized within labor markets, legal systems, and policy frameworks, leading to chronic poverty for millions of women across Indonesia.

Evidence from UNDP (2016) indicates that despite formal gender equality laws, implementation remains weak, and gender bias continues to shape economic outcomes. For instance, women are often excluded from land ownership and inheritance rights, which restricts their access to collateral and formal finance. This perpetuates the cycle of poverty by limiting women's capacity to engage in entrepreneurship or invest in education and healthcare for their families. Tjiptoherijanto (2014, p. 143) adds that discriminatory practices in rural land administration systems exacerbate these issues, leading to long-term economic disempowerment of women.

The capabilities approach emphasizes that poverty is not only a lack of income but a deprivation of fundamental freedoms and opportunities (Sen, 1999). In this context, social norms that prioritize male education or discourage female mobility severely restrict women's capabilities. In many Indonesian provinces, especially outside Java, early marriage and domestic responsibilities reduce school completion rates among girls (Bappenas, 2016). These trends reinforce intergenerational poverty and limit women's participation in the formal economy, making gender-sensitive policies essential for achieving SDGs 1, 4, and 5.

Cultural and religious interpretations also influence gender roles and responsibilities, often reinforcing traditional divisions of labor that undervalue women's contributions (Tjiptoherijanto, 2014, p. 145). While these norms vary across regions, the cumulative effect is a national labor market that marginalizes women in both wage levels and employment security.

Studies have shown that women working in informal sectors earn 30% less than their male counterparts, even when controlling for education and experience (World Bank, 2010). This earnings gap is a structural impediment to poverty reduction and a critical area for policy reform.

Moreover, gender inequality interacts with other poverty determinants, such as education and informal employment, to compound vulnerabilities. For example, women with lower education levels are more likely to be employed in unstable, low-paying jobs without access to health insurance or maternity protection (UNDP, 2016).

This interconnectedness means that isolated interventions—such as microfinance or vocational training—are insufficient unless integrated into broader gender-equality strategies. The SDG framework demands intersectional analysis and action that address both economic and sociocultural dimensions of poverty.

In conclusion, reducing gender-based poverty in Indonesia requires more than legal equality; it demands a transformation of social norms, institutional practices, and policy priorities. Empowering women through education, legal reforms, and targeted economic programs is vital to achieving inclusive development. The study's findings reinforce that without addressing gendered structures of exclusion, Indonesia cannot achieve its SDG commitments or realize long-term poverty eradication.

The findings of this study affirm that poverty in Indonesia is deeply rooted in structural and multidimensional factors that align with and challenge the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Educational access and quality emerge as foundational determinants of poverty. Regions with low education enrollment and high dropout rates also experience chronic poverty, reinforcing the central role of human capital in development. Informal employment, driven by a misaligned labor market and administrative inefficiencies, continues to dominate the Indonesian economy, especially in underdeveloped regions.

Finally, the entrenched nature of gender inequality—fueled by cultural norms, institutional biases, and legal gaps—limits women's access to education, employment, and financial resources, placing them at higher risk of poverty. These interconnected findings directly answer the research questions and highlight the importance of holistic, cross-sectoral strategies for poverty reduction.

The study contributes a novel synthesis of theories—human capital, social exclusion, sustainable development, and capabilities—within the SDG framework, offering a more comprehensive view of poverty determinants than previous models. It highlights how seemingly independent domains such as education, employment, and gender relations function interdependently to sustain poverty cycles.

Theoretically, the research expands the applicability of these models in the Global South context, particularly in decentralized and diverse societies like Indonesia. Practically, the study calls for strategic interventions such as curriculum reform, regionally targeted formal employment programs, gender-sensitive legal reforms, and inter-ministerial coordination on SDG implementation. These findings are not only academically significant but also provide concrete guidance for policymakers, international development agencies, and civil society actors seeking to meet SDG targets in a socially inclusive and economically sustainable way.

## CONCLUSION

Despite notable progress in reducing national poverty rates, this study demonstrates that Indonesia continues to grapple with deeply embedded structural determinants of poverty. Educational inequality, labor informality, and gender-based economic exclusion collectively contribute to multidimensional poverty across the country. By engaging directly with the SDG framework, this research reveals that progress on one goal is contingent upon addressing gaps in others. For example, achieving quality education (SDG 4) is unlikely without also addressing labor opportunities (SDG 8) and gender equality (SDG 5). The research confirms the validity and relevance of human capital, social exclusion, and capabilities theories in explaining poverty dynamics in the Indonesian context.

These findings reinforce the importance of integrative and localized policymaking. National poverty alleviation programs must go beyond income redistribution and short-term aid. Instead, they should focus on strengthening education systems, formalizing labor markets, and reforming legal and cultural structures that perpetuate gender inequality. Such reforms must be regionally adapted to account for the diverse socio-economic realities across Indonesia's provinces. For policymakers, this means developing inclusive indicators that capture poverty's multidimensional nature and integrating them into national SDG monitoring systems. For researchers, the study opens pathways for exploring intersectional analyses of poverty that consider ethnic, geographic, and generational dimensions. Ultimately, achieving meaningful poverty reduction in Indonesia will require a shift from fragmented interventions to unified, equity-centered strategies grounded in both global frameworks and local realities.

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