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THE EFFECT OF VILLAGE FUNDS, ECONOMIC GROWTH, AND THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX ON POVERTY IN FIVE REGENCIES IN GORONTALO PROVINCE, 2015–2024

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Abstract. *This study aims to analyze the relationship between Village Funds, economic growth, and the Human Development Index (HDI) and poverty rates in Gorontalo Province during the 2015–2024 period, both partially and simultaneously. This study employs a quantitative approach using secondary panel data covering all five regencies in Gorontalo Province over a ten-year period, resulting in 50 observations. Gorontalo City was excluded because it has no villages eligible to receive Village Funds. The data were obtained from Statistics Indonesia and the Directorate General of Fiscal Balance. Panel data regression was conducted using the Fixed Effect Model (FEM), with model selection based on the Chow and Hausman tests, followed by diagnostic and hypothesis testing. The results indicate that Village Funds have a negative and statistically significant relationship with poverty rates. In contrast, economic growth has a positive and statistically significant relationship with poverty rates, suggesting that economic growth during the study period was not fully inclusive. Meanwhile, the Human Development Index has a negative and statistically significant relationship with poverty rates. Overall, the findings indicate that Village Funds and human development are associated with lower poverty rates, whereas economic growth is positively associated with poverty rates in the observed regencies.*

Keywords:
Village Funds; Human Development Index; Poverty

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Introduction

Poverty is one of the main problems in regional economic development because it is related to the limited ability of the population to meet basic needs and to gain access to various economic and social resources. The World Bank (2000) states that poverty reflects not only low income but also limited access to education, health,

employment, and public services. Poverty reduction is therefore an important part of regional development policy.

Gorontalo Province continues to face poverty problems with conditions that differ across regions. Based on data from BPS Provinsi Gorontalo (2025b), in September 2024 the percentage of poor people was recorded at 13.87%, or approximately 170.03 thousand people. Poverty in rural areas reached 21.62%, higher than in urban areas at 4.99%. In the five Village Fund–recipient regencies, the poverty rate during 2015–2024 ranged from 14.80% to 22.43%. The highest value was recorded in Pohuwato Regency in 2015 at 22.43%, while the lowest was in Bone Bolango Regency in 2024 at 14.80%. In 2024, Boalemo Regency had the highest poverty rate at 17.83%. On average, the poverty rate of the five regencies declined from 20.66% in 2015 to 16.61% in 2024 (BPS Provinsi Gorontalo, 2025a).

From the fiscal policy perspective, Village Funds were first disbursed in 2015 as an instrument of the central government to support rural development and community empowerment, as regulated by Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages. In the five regencies of Gorontalo Province, the total realization of Village Funds increased from Rp212.06 billion in 2015 to Rp628.99 billion in 2024 (DJPK, n.d.). This figure represents the sum of the Village Fund realization of each of the five regencies in Gorontalo Province for every fiscal year. The realization data were obtained from the Regional Financial Information System (SIKD) database of the Directorate General of Fiscal Balance, Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia. This increase indicates growing fiscal support for rural development, but it does not necessarily reflect success in poverty reduction. Village Funds can support the development of basic infrastructure, public services, and community economic empowerment. Several studies—including Sigit and Kosasih (2020), Arfiansyah (2020), Ritonga et al. (2021), and Duhe et al. (2024) in Gorontalo Province—show a negative relationship between Village Funds and poverty. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of Village Funds in reducing poverty needs to be examined according to regional conditions and the observation period.

In addition to fiscal policy, economic growth also plays a role in poverty dynamics. Economic growth is expected to create employment opportunities and increase people's income. However, the benefits of growth are not always evenly distributed, so an increase in economic activity is not necessarily followed by a decline in poverty. Data from BPS Provinsi Gorontalo (2025a) show that economic growth in the five regencies slowed in 2020, and most of them even experienced contraction. In 2024, the highest economic growth among the five regencies was recorded in Bone Bolango Regency at 4.19%, while the lowest was in Boalemo Regency at 3.55%. The study by Puluhulawa et al. (2023) shows that economic growth has a positive and significant effect on poverty in Gorontalo Province, whereas Arfiansyah (2020) found a negative effect. These differing results indicate that the relationship between economic growth and poverty can be influenced by regional characteristics and the distribution of growth benefits.

Another factor related to poverty is the quality of human development, as measured by the Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI reflects achievements in the dimensions of health, education, and a decent standard of living. Improving human quality can expand employment opportunities, increase productivity, and strengthen the ability of communities to take advantage of economic opportunities. Syahroni and Anggraini (2025) found that the HDI has a negative and significant effect on poverty in Gorontalo Province. This result is consistent with Sinurat (2023), whereas Utami and Samsuddin (2025) found a negative but insignificant relationship. These differing findings indicate that the relationship between the HDI and poverty still requires further examination.

Based on previous studies, empirical results regarding the relationship between Village Funds, economic growth, and the HDI, on the one hand, and poverty, on the

other, still differ. The studies by Rimawan and Aryani (2019), Ritonga et al. (2021), and Savitri and Fatimah (2022) have examined the links among several of these variables, but differences in region and observation period leave room for further testing. Therefore, this study focuses on the five Village Fund–recipient regencies in Gorontalo Province during 2015–2024. The use of panel data is expected to account for variations in characteristics across regions and changes in conditions over time.

This study aims to analyze the effect of Village Funds, economic growth, and the HDI on the poverty rate, both partially and simultaneously. The proposed hypotheses are as follows: H1, Village Funds have a negative effect on poverty; H2, economic growth has a negative effect on poverty; H3, the HDI has a negative effect on poverty; and H4, Village Funds, economic growth, and the HDI simultaneously have a significant effect on poverty.

Research Methods

This study uses a quantitative approach with a panel data regression method. The data are annual secondary data for the 2015–2024 period for five regencies in Gorontalo Province, yielding 50 observations. The units of analysis comprise Boalemo Regency, Gorontalo Regency, Pohuwato Regency, Bone Bolango Regency, and North Gorontalo Regency. Gorontalo City is excluded from the scope of the study because it has no villages that receive Village Funds. Village Fund data were obtained from the Directorate General of Fiscal Balance (DJPK), while data on economic growth, the Human Development Index (HDI), and poverty were obtained from Statistics Indonesia (BPS).

The dependent variable in this study is poverty, measured by the percentage of the population whose average monthly per capita expenditure is below the poverty line. The independent variables consist of Village Funds, economic growth, and the HDI. Village Funds are measured using the total realization of Village Funds in each regency each year and transformed into natural logarithm form (LnDD). Economic growth is measured by the growth rate of Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) at constant prices, while the HDI uses the annual index value published by BPS.

The panel data regression analysis was conducted using three approaches, namely the Common Effect Model (CEM), the Fixed Effect Model (FEM), and the Random Effect Model (REM). Model selection was carried out using the Chow test and the Hausman test. The Chow test is used to determine the more appropriate model between the CEM and the FEM, while the Hausman test is used to choose between the FEM and the REM. Based on the results of these two tests, the selected model is the Fixed Effect Model (FEM).

The panel data regression equation used is as follows:

$$\mathbf{POV}_{it} = \alpha_i + \beta_1 \mathbf{LnDD}_{it} + \beta_2 \mathbf{PE}_{it} + \beta_3 \mathbf{IPM}_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Description:

- POV is the poverty rate
- DD is Village Funds
- PE is economic growth
- IPM is the Human Development Index
- i denotes the regional unit
- t denotes the time period
- α is the regency-specific intercept
- β is the regression coefficient
- ε is the error term

The selection of the panel data regression model was carried out through the Chow test and the Hausman test to determine the most appropriate model approach.

The Chow test is used to choose between the Common Effect Model (CEM) and the Fixed Effect Model (FEM), while the Hausman test is used to choose between the Fixed Effect Model (FEM) and the Random Effect Model (REM). Model estimation was performed using the cross-section weights approach to accommodate possible differences in variance across cross-sectional units.

The model diagnostic tests include tests of normality, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, and autocorrelation. The normality test was conducted using the Jarque–Bera method, the multicollinearity test using a correlation matrix among the independent variables, and the heteroscedasticity test using the Glejser method, while autocorrelation was examined using the Durbin–Watson statistic. Hypothesis testing was carried out through the t-test to determine the partial effect of each independent variable, the F-test to determine the simultaneous effect of the independent variables, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) to assess the goodness of fit of the model to the research data.

Results and Discussion

Panel Data Regression Model Selection

Descriptive statistics are used to provide a general overview of the characteristics of the research data, comprising the realization of Village Funds (LnDD), economic growth (PE), the Human Development Index (IPM), and the poverty rate (POV). The results of the descriptive statistical analysis of the 50 observations during the 2015–2024 period are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Research Variables

Statistic	LnDD	PE	IPM	POV
Mean	18.35822	4.728000	66.98980	18.38220
Median	18.33492	5.295000	67.21500	18.01500
Maximum	19.18087	7.410000	72.82000	22.43000
Minimum	16.96355	-0.210000	62.50000	14.80000
Std. Dev.	0.477539	2.271346	2.760578	1.805142
Observations	50	50	50	50

Source: EViews 14, data processed by the authors (2026)

Based on Table 1, the realization of Village Funds in natural logarithm form (LnDD) has a mean of 18.35822. Economic growth (PE) has a mean of 4.728%, while the HDI has a mean of 66.98980 points. Meanwhile, the poverty rate (POV) has a mean of 18.38220%. The minimum and maximum values indicate variation in socioeconomic conditions across regions and over time during the study period.

The Chow test is used to choose between the Common Effect Model (CEM) and the Fixed Effect Model (FEM), while the Hausman test is used to choose between the FEM and the Random Effect Model (REM). The results of these two tests are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of the Chow and Hausman Tests

Test	Statistic	df	Probability
Chow – Cross-section F	13.978912	(4, 42)	0.000
Chow – Cross-section Chi-square	42.321837	4	0.000
Hausman– Cross-section random	49.293187	3	0.000

Source: EViews 14, data processed by the authors (2026)

Based on Table 2, the Chow test produced a Cross-section F probability of 0.0000, which is smaller than 0.05. This result indicates that the Fixed Effect Model (FEM) is more appropriate than the Common Effect Model (CEM). Furthermore, the Hausman test produced a probability of 0.0000, which is smaller than 0.05, so the FEM is more appropriate than the Random Effect Model (REM). Accordingly, the estimation model used in this study is the Fixed Effect Model.

The model diagnostic tests include tests of normality, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, and autocorrelation. The residual normality test using the Jarque–Bera method produced a probability of 0.726590, which is greater than 0.05, so there is insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis that the residuals are normally distributed. Next, the multicollinearity test through the correlation matrix shows a correlation of −0.318719 between LnDD and PE, 0.450236 between LnDD and IPM, and −0.280212 between PE and IPM. These values do not indicate a high correlation among the independent variables, so there is no indication of strong multicollinearity based on the correlation matrix examination.

The heteroscedasticity test was conducted using the Glejser method to determine whether there is any indication of differences in residual variance in the regression model. The test results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of the Glejser Heteroscedasticity Test

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Probability
LnDD	-0.161746	0.196365	-0.8237	0.4148
PE	0.088016	0.030819	2.855867	0.0066
IPM	0.051416	0.029984	1.714785	0.0938

Source: EViews 14, data processed by the authors (2026)

Based on the test results in Table 3, the economic growth variable (PE) has a probability of 0.0066, which is smaller than 0.05. This result indicates heteroscedasticity in the tested model. Therefore, the final estimation was performed using the cross-section weights approach to accommodate possible differences in variance across cross-sectional units.

The autocorrelation test was conducted using the Durbin–Watson statistic. The test result shows a Durbin–Watson value of 1.436574. This value lies between the lower bound (dL) of 1.420 and the upper bound (dU) of 1.674. Thus, the Durbin–Watson value falls within the inconclusive region, so this test cannot yet confirm whether or not autocorrelation is present in the regression model.

Panel Data Regression Estimation Results

The panel data regression estimation using the Fixed Effect Model (FEM) with the cross-section weights approach produced the coefficients for each variable, as presented in Table 4. This model uses 50 observations covering five regencies in Gorontalo Province during the 2015–2024 period.

Table 4. Panel Data Regression Estimation Results

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Probability
C	59.219240	6.915191	8.563645	0.0000
LnDD	-1.445945	0.369074	-3.917765	0.0003
PE	0.201031	0.057448	3.499375	0.0011
IPM	-0.227535	0.057935	-3.927438	0.0003

Source: EViews 14, data processed by the authors (2026)

Note: The dependent variable is the poverty rate (%). LnDD is the natural logarithm of the realization of Village Funds, PE is economic growth (%), and IPM is the Human Development Index (index points). The estimation uses the Fixed Effect Model with the cross-section weights approach (50 observations).

Based on Table 4, Village Funds (LnDD) have a coefficient of −1.445945 with a probability of 0.0003. This means that a 1% increase in the realization of Village Funds is associated with a decline in the poverty rate of approximately 0.0144 percentage points. Meanwhile, economic growth (PE) has a coefficient of 0.201031 with a probability of 0.0011, indicating that a 1 percentage point increase in economic growth is associated with an increase in the poverty rate of 0.201031 percentage points. The HDI has a coefficient of −0.227535 with a probability of 0.0003, meaning that a 1-point increase in the HDI is associated with a decline in the poverty rate of 0.227535 percentage points.

All independent variables have probabilities smaller than 0.05, so partially they show a statistically significant effect on the poverty rate. However, these results need to be interpreted with caution given that the study covers only five regencies.

Next, a simultaneous test was conducted to determine the joint effect of Village Funds, economic growth, and the HDI on the poverty rate. The results of the simultaneous test and the coefficient of determination are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of the Simultaneous Test and the Coefficient of Determination

Description	Value
F-statistic	28.93179
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000000
R-squared	0.828237
Adjusted R-squared	0.799609

Source: EViews 14, data processed by the authors (2026)

Table 5 shows an F-statistic of 28.93179 with a probability of 0.000000. This result indicates that Village Funds, economic growth, and the Human Development Index jointly have a significant effect on the poverty rate in the five regencies of Gorontalo Province. In addition, the R-squared value of 0.828237 and the Adjusted R-squared value of 0.799609 indicate the goodness of fit of the model to the research data.

The Effect of Village Funds on Poverty

The results show that Village Funds have a negative and significant effect on the poverty rate in Gorontalo Province. The Village Fund coefficient of −1.445945 with a probability of 0.0003 indicates that an increase in Village Funds is associated with a decline in the poverty rate. This finding suggests that Village Funds can serve as one of the policy instruments that support poverty reduction in the regions studied. However, this relationship cannot yet be interpreted as a causal effect because the model has not controlled for year effects, which may capture general changes in economic conditions, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conceptually, Village Funds are directed toward supporting rural development and community empowerment. The use of these funds may relate to the development of basic infrastructure, the provision of public facilities and infrastructure, the improvement of public services, the development of local economic potential, and community empowerment. When these programs are implemented appropriately, communities can gain better access to basic facilities and economic activities. Nevertheless, this mechanism is a conceptual explanation that may underlie the negative relationship found in this study, rather than a direct test of the types of Village Fund use.

The results of this study are consistent with Bukhari (2021), who, using data from 2015–2019, found that Village Funds have a negative and significant effect on the number of rural poor. Arfiansyah (2020) also found a negative effect of Village Funds on poverty in the regencies of Central Java Province during 2015–2019. However, that study used the Village Fund budget ceiling and the number of poor people, whereas this study uses the realization of Village Funds and the percentage of poor people. Furthermore, Ritonga et al. (2021) found that Village Funds have a negative and significant effect on poverty in the regencies and cities of West Sumatra during 2015–2018, although the authors stated that the magnitude of this effect was relatively small. In the context of Gorontalo, the results of this study are consistent with Duhe et al. (2024), who, using data from the 2017–2022 period and the Fixed Effect Model, found that the Village Fund budget has a negative and significant effect, while the realization of Village Funds has a negative effect on poverty. The consistency in the direction of these results with previous studies reinforces that Village Funds have a negative relationship with poverty. This study complements previous research by using a longer observation period, namely 2015–2024, and by including economic growth and the Human Development Index as explanatory variables alongside the realization of Village Funds.

This finding indicates that the presence of Village Funds can support the equitable distribution of development through interventions at the village level. Infrastructure development and community economic empowerment can open access to economic activities and basic services. Nevertheless, this negative effect does not mean that an increase in Village Funds automatically eliminates poverty. Its effectiveness still depends on planning, management, targeting accuracy, and the use of funds in accordance with community needs.

The Effect of Economic Growth on Poverty

The results show that economic growth has a positive and significant effect on the poverty rate in Gorontalo Province. A coefficient of 0.201031 with a probability of 0.0011 indicates that an increase in economic growth during the study period is instead associated with an increase in the poverty rate.

This finding differs from the relationship that is theoretically often expected, namely that economic growth can reduce poverty through increased production, employment opportunities, and people's income. The results show that increased economic activity has not fully provided evenly distributed benefits to the poor. Accordingly, the economic growth that occurred during the study period can be said to have been not yet fully inclusive. However, this conjecture cannot be confirmed because this study does not directly test income distribution or labor absorption. In addition, the economic shock in 2020 caused by the COVID-19 pandemic may have affected the relationship between economic growth and poverty. The effect of changes in conditions across years also could not be controlled because the research model does not include year effects.

This result is consistent with the study by Puluhulawa et al. (2023), which analyzed economic growth, the unemployment rate, and education in relation to poverty in Gorontalo Province. That study found that economic growth has a positive and significant effect on poverty. This condition indicates that an increase in economic growth does not always automatically reduce poverty if the benefits of growth are not yet evenly distributed.

However, the results of this study differ from Arfiansyah (2020), who found that economic growth has a negative effect on poverty. This difference indicates that the relationship between economic growth and poverty can vary according to regional characteristics and the study period.

In the context of Gorontalo Province, the positive effect of economic growth on poverty should be understood as an indication that increased economic activity has

not yet been fully able to reach the poor. Therefore, development policy should not focus solely on increasing aggregate economic growth but should also pay attention to the equitable distribution of economic opportunities, job creation, and improved access of the poor to productive activities.

Accordingly, the result showing a positive and significant relationship between economic growth and poverty is not consistent with the second hypothesis (H2), which predicts a negative relationship. Therefore, H2 is not supported by the results of this study.

The Effect of the Human Development Index on Poverty

The Human Development Index has a negative and significant effect on the poverty rate. The HDI coefficient of −0.227535 with a probability of 0.0003 indicates that an increase in the HDI is associated with a decline in the poverty rate.

The HDI reflects human development achievements through the dimensions of health, education, and a decent standard of living. Improvements in the quality of these three dimensions can increase the capacity of communities to carry out productive activities. Better education can improve skills and work capabilities, better health conditions can increase productivity, and a better standard of living can strengthen the ability of communities to meet their basic needs.

The results of this study support the view that human development is an important part of the poverty reduction strategy. When human quality improves, communities have a greater ability to take advantage of economic opportunities and increase their income. Conversely, limited human quality can perpetuate the vulnerability of communities to poverty.

This finding is consistent with Syahroni and Anggraini (2025), who analyzed the factors affecting poverty in Gorontalo Province. That study found that the HDI has a negative and significant effect on poverty. Similar results were also found by Endrawati et al. (2023), who showed that the HDI has a negative and significant effect on the poverty rate in Indonesia during the 2017–2022 period. In addition, Padmono (2025) also found a relationship between the HDI and the poverty rate in Indonesia. The consistency of these findings reinforces that an improvement in the quality of human development is associated with a decline in the poverty rate. In the context of this study, this relationship indicates the importance of improving the quality of education, health, and a decent standard of living as part of poverty reduction efforts in the five regencies of Gorontalo Province.

The Simultaneous Effect of Village Funds, Economic Growth, and the Human Development Index on Poverty

The simultaneous test shows an F-statistic of 28.93179 with a probability of 0.000000. Because the probability is smaller than 0.05, Village Funds, economic growth, and the HDI jointly have a significant effect on the poverty rate in Gorontalo Province.

The R-squared value of 0.828237 indicates the goodness of fit of the model in explaining the variation in the research data. Meanwhile, the Adjusted R-squared value of 0.799609 indicates the goodness of fit of the model after accounting for the number of explanatory variables used.

These results indicate that Village Funds, economic growth, and the HDI jointly have a significant relationship with the poverty rate. Village Funds represent fiscal and development policy at the village level, economic growth represents the development of economic activity, and the HDI represents the quality of human development. These three aspects provide a broader picture of the development conditions related to poverty.

This simultaneous finding also implies that the poverty reduction strategy in

Gorontalo Province needs to be carried out in an integrated manner. An increase in the village budget needs to be accompanied by well-targeted management, economic growth needs to be directed to be more inclusive, and human development needs to be continuously strengthened through improved access to education, health, and a decent standard of living.

Accordingly, poverty reduction policy cannot focus on a single indicator alone. The integration of village fiscal policy, the strengthening of economic activity that is able to reach the poor, and the improvement of human quality can be an important part of the regional development strategy.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results show that Village Funds have a negative and statistically significant relationship with the poverty rate in Gorontalo Province during the 2015–2024 period. Economic growth has a positive and significant relationship with poverty, so the second hypothesis (H2), which predicts a negative relationship, is not supported by the results. This finding indicates that economic growth during the study period was not yet fully accompanied by an equitable distribution of benefits to the poor. Meanwhile, the Human Development Index has a negative and significant relationship with the poverty rate. Simultaneously, the three variables have a significant relationship with the poverty rate.

Based on these findings, local governments need to improve the effectiveness of Village Fund use in supporting poverty reduction. The development of basic infrastructure programs, economic empowerment, and basic services can be considered as policy directions, although the effectiveness of each type of expenditure has not been specifically tested in this study. In addition, economic growth needs to be directed to be more inclusive through the expansion of employment and business opportunities, accompanied by improved access to education and health. Future research is encouraged to consider other variables and to broaden the coverage of regions or the study period.

This study has limitations in that the scope of the units of analysis covers only five regencies and does not yet include year effects in the model. Therefore, the results need to be interpreted with caution. Future research can broaden the coverage of regions or units of analysis and consider year effects in order to obtain more comprehensive results.

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