

Combating Poverty and Social Inequality in 2023 a Global Imperative for Equitable Development and Social Justice

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Abstract

In the last decade, poverty and social inequality have become increasingly pressing global challenges, exacerbated by the impact of the global economy, climate change, and the digital revolution. Rising inequality and unequal distribution of wealth not only hinder economic growth but also give rise to social and political instability. The fight against this problem requires a deep understanding of its causal factors and impact on global development. This research aims to analyze the factors that cause poverty and social inequality and their impact on global development, with a focus on solutions to overcome these problems. The research methodology uses a descriptive qualitative approach, with data obtained from relevant literature studies and in-depth analysis of the phenomenon. Data was collected from previous research results and processed through qualitative analysis to build a comprehensive understanding. The research results show that global economic factors, climate change, technology, public policy, and socio-cultural factors are the main causes of poverty and inequality. Its impact on global development includes stunting economic growth, social instability, and reduced access to health and education services. This research also finds that the solution to this problem requires international cooperation, innovative policies from governments, active contributions from the private sector, and the participation of non-governmental organizations. A multidisciplinary and participatory approach, as well as the use of technology and innovation, is needed to create sustainable solutions. Overall, this research provides new insights into strategies for achieving more inclusive and equitable development amidst current global challenges.

Keywords: *Poverty, Social Inequality, Equal Development, Social Justice, Global Imperative.*



A. INTRODUCTION

On the threshold of the third decade of the 21st century, the world faces monumental challenges in the form of widespread poverty and increasing social inequality. 2023 marks a critical point in global efforts to address these problems, which not only threaten the well-being of millions of individuals but also global social and economic stability as a whole. The prolonged impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which began to sweep the world in late 2019, has exposed and exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and created new challenges in efforts to reduce poverty and address inequality (Hussain et al., 2023).

The pandemic has made clear just how fragile the progress that has been made in fighting poverty is. Before the pandemic, there had been significant progress in reducing extreme poverty globally, but this global health crisis has reversed decades of progress in a very short time. Millions of people are being pushed back into poverty, widening the gap between rich and poor, and exposing inequalities in access to health care, education, and economic opportunity. These inequalities are not only visible between individuals and families but also between countries and regions, deepening development gaps and hampering efforts for global equality (Gupta et al., 2021).

In addition, climate change and its increasingly severe impacts add to the complexity of this global challenge. More frequent and severe natural disasters, such as floods, droughts, and storms, disproportionately affect poor and vulnerable communities, often wiping out what little progress they have made in overcoming poverty. This creates a cycle of poverty and powerlessness that is difficult to break without significant and sustained intervention (Ebi et al., 2021).

In this context, global attention has focused on the need for comprehensive strategies that not only target direct poverty reduction but also address the root causes of social and economic inequality. This includes addressing inequalities in education and employment opportunities, access to health services, and the socioeconomic impacts of climate change. 2023 is an important year for renewing global commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a particular focus on the goal of eliminating poverty in all its forms everywhere and reducing inequality within and between countries (Wan et al., 2021).

Amidst these challenges, there is also an opportunity to build back better, by adopting a more inclusive and sustainable development approach. New technologies and innovation provide new opportunities to overcome inequality and promote inclusive economic growth. However, to take advantage of these opportunities, stronger international cooperation, innovative policies, and continued investment in human resources and social infrastructure are needed (Danladi et al., 2023).

The year 2023, with all its challenges and opportunities, offers an opportunity to take bold and innovative steps in fighting poverty and social inequality. Rebuilding the global economy post-pandemic provides a unique opportunity to prioritize equity and social justice in the global development agenda. Now, more than ever, the world needs a strong commitment from all stakeholders - governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and civil society - to work together in global solidarity to create a more just and inclusive future for all.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Poverty

Poverty represents a state where individuals lack the financial means to attain the standard living conditions prevalent in a community. This state is defined by insufficient income to cover fundamental necessities like food, clothing, and housing. Such limited financial resources further diminish the capability to achieve normative standards in areas like public health and education (Rofah et al., 2023).

A society is deemed impoverished when its income levels are insufficient to reach living standards. Essentially, living standards encompass not only the fulfillment of food requirements but also access to healthcare and education. Adequate housing represents a critical component of living standards or community welfare benchmarks. Thus, a society is labeled as poor if its income significantly falls below the average, limiting its chances for self-improvement and prosperity (Gough, 2020).

The prevalent understanding of poverty within the field of development studies today identifies it as a condition commonly observed in developing and third-world nations. In these regions, the issue of poverty transcends mere income deficiency and encompasses broader dimensions of social and political disempowerment. Poverty is also viewed as a developmental challenge stemming from the adverse effects of uneven economic growth, which exacerbates disparities in income both within communities and across different regions. Contemporary research in development studies not only examines the causative factors behind poverty but also aims to explore all potential contributors to this condition (Singh & Chudasama, 2020).

The concept of poverty is constructed through the identification and quantification of individuals or groups labeled as impoverished. Generally, every country, Indonesia included, adopts its specific definition of poverty, reflective of the notion that poverty is relative and varies according to a nation's economic status, welfare benchmarks, and social circumstances. These definitions are established based on certain criteria or metrics, which typically include average income, average purchasing power or consumption capacity, educational attainment, and health status (Gweshengwe & Hassan, 2020).

Typically, poverty is characterized by a scenario in which income fails to cover essential needs, thereby compromising the ability to sustain life. This insufficiency in income, measured against specific price benchmarks, falls short of securing a standard of living that ensures overall quality of life. Consequently, poverty is broadly recognized as a situation where the financial capacity is inadequate to satisfy both basic and additional requirements essential for maintaining life quality standards (Bray et al., 2020).

According to Law No. 24 of 2004, poverty is defined as a socio-economic state where an individual or a group's fundamental rights are unmet, preventing them from living and evolving in a respectable manner. These basic rights encompass necessities such as access to food, healthcare, education, employment opportunities, housing, clean water, land, natural resources, environmental quality, security against violence or threats thereof, and the ability to engage in the governance of social and political life. The People's Welfare Sector Report, released by the Ministry of Welfare (Kesra) in 2004, further clarifies that this situation of poverty extends to those who are employed but still earn an income that is inadequate for covering essential needs (Frigo et al., 2021).

2. Social Inequality

Income distribution disparities refer to the economic differences between the wealthy and the impoverished, as evidenced by variations in income levels. Such inequality arises due to the pronounced effect of returns and the limited effect of dispersion in developing nations. Regional disparities in income are a typical occurrence in the economic dynamics of an area, attributed to variations in natural resources and demographic conditions across regions. These differences influence a region's capacity to propel its development forward. As a result, regions are often classified as developed or underdeveloped based on these factors (Bilan et al., 2020).

Kuncoro highlights that inequality signifies the variations in living standards across a society, stemming from the differences in production factors and available resources between regions. These disparities lead to uneven levels of development and income distribution, culminating in a welfare gap across various areas. Simon Kuznets posited that during the initial phases of economic growth, income distribution tends to deteriorate, but as development progresses, income distribution improves, paralleling an increase in income equality. This phenomenon, observed through longitudinal (time-series) analysis of income distribution changes, is referred to as the "inverted-U" curve, named after Kuznets (Arkum & Amar, 2022).

Meanwhile, social inequality is defined as unequal access to obtain or utilize available resources. Resources can be primary needs such as education, health, housing, business, and employment opportunities, they can be secondary needs such as business development facilities, means of fighting for human rights, political channels, and so on. Social inequality can be interpreted as an imbalance or distance that occurs in society due to differences in social, economic, or cultural status (Alcaraz et al., 2020). Definition of social inequality according to experts:

- a. According to Andrinof A. Chaniago; Inequality is the result of development that only focuses on economic aspects and forgets social aspects
- b. According to Budi Winarno; Inequality is the result of the failure of development in the era of globalization to meet the physical and psychological needs of citizens.
- c. According to Jonathan Haughton & Shahidur R. Khandker; Social inequality is a form of injustice that occurs in the development process.
- d. Roichatul Aswidah; Social inequality is often seen as a residual impact of the economic growth process (Aiyar & Ebeke, 2020).

Several factors that influence the occurrence of social inequality occur due to two factors:

- a. Internal factors

This factor comes from within a person. A person's low self-quality is an internal factor. This social inequality can arise because of poverty which restrains society.

- b. External factors

This factor is a factor that comes from outside a person. This factor can occur because of bureaucracy or state legal regulations that restrain people so that

they have difficulty developing themselves. This social inequality can trigger symptoms of structural poverty (Christensen et al., 2020).

3. Equitable Development

Equitable development is a concept that is upheld to achieve sustainable and inclusive progress, where every level of society can feel the benefits of development without exception. This concept aims to eliminate existing inequalities, both in economic, social, and geographical terms, by distributing resources and opportunities fairly among all regions and groups of society. This not only includes the distribution of physical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and health facilities but also human resource development through education and training, as well as economic empowerment through support for MSMEs and the informal sector (Ciplet, 2021).

In practice, equitable development requires policies that are designed and implemented using a bottom-up approach, where the needs and aspirations of local communities become the main reference in planning and implementing development projects. This approach ensures that development is not only controlled by the center but also involves active participation from local communities so that the results are more relevant and directly beneficial to them. Apart from that, the concept of equitable development also emphasizes the importance of sustainability, which means that development must be carried out in a way that does not harm the environment or sacrifice the needs of future generations for short-term profits (Castro-Arce & Vanclay, 2020).

The continuity of the concept of equitable development also includes integration between sectors, where development in one area must be in harmony with and support development in other areas. For example, infrastructure development must be followed by improving the quality of education and access to health, as well as sustainable local economic development. This requires good coordination between government institutions, the private sector, and elements of society, to ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively in achieving the goal of equitable development (Brugere et al., 2021).

The challenges in realizing equitable development are quite diverse, ranging from limited resources, and differences in capacity between regions, to resistance from groups who feel they have lost benefits due to redistribution of resources. Therefore, a comprehensive, adaptive, and innovative approach is key, where the government and all stakeholders must continuously learn, adapt, and innovate to overcome emerging obstacles, while still ensuring that the development process takes place inclusively and equitably (Pye et al., 2020).

In its essence, equitable development is about building a fairer society, where every individual has the same opportunity to develop and contribute to nation-building. This is a long journey that requires commitment and cooperation from all parties, but with the right approach, the vision of equitable development can be realized, bringing broader prosperity and a better life for all of society (Desalegn & Solomon, 2021).

4. Social Justice

Justice is a concept that varies in interpretation, as what is deemed fair by one individual may not be considered fair by another. When someone asserts that they are acting justly, this assertion must align with the societal norms and the recognized scales of justice within the context of public order. These scales of justice differ significantly across different locations, with each set of standards being shaped and distinctly defined by the societal norms and public order of each community (Fortin et al., 2020).

In Indonesia, the concept of justice is encapsulated within Pancasila, the foundational philosophy of the state, which advocates for social justice for all Indonesians. Pancasila encompasses five principles that reflect the ideals and objectives of communal life. The notion of justice it promotes is derived from the fundamental nature of human justice, covering the spectrum of relationships including those between an individual and themselves, between individuals, between individuals and society, the nation, the state, and between individuals and their God (Boiliu et al., 2022).

The principles of justice are essential foundations that must be actualized within the communal life of a nation to achieve its objectives, which include promoting the well-being of all citizens across all regions and providing education to everyone. Similarly, these justice values serve as the cornerstone for international relations, guiding the interactions among nations towards fostering an orderly global community. This is grounded in the principles of sovereignty for each nation, perpetual peace, and equitable coexistence (social justice), all of which are vital for creating a harmonious world (Hariyanto, 2022).

Social justice, as outlined in the fifth principle of Pancasila, inherently assumes the presence of justice on an individual level. This implies that the attitudes and behaviors of individuals adhering to Pancasila are characterized by a prioritization or virtue of justice. Furthermore, individuals themselves are considered targets of justice, indicating that the pursuit of justice encompasses not only the collective well-being of society but also the well-being of individual members. Nonetheless, these individuals are not viewed as isolated atoms detached from their socio-cultural environment; instead, they are seen in relation to others and to society at large. It's important to note here that social justice, as conceptualized in this context, diverges from the notion of socialism, which may overlook individual interests. Social justice, in the Pancasila sense, strives to balance individual rights with the collective good (Putri & Naili, 2023).

While social justice maintains a focus on the individual, it is not determined by individual desires but rather by systemic structures, making it a form of structural justice. This type of justice is realized when societal structures, including economic, political, social, cultural, and ideological systems, facilitate an equitable distribution of wealth and guarantee that every citizen receives their due rights. The pursuit of social justice is more effectively accomplished by deconstructing structures that perpetuate injustice, ensuring that the foundational systems within society work towards fair outcomes for all members (Paton et al., 2020).

C. METHOD

This research will be carried out using a descriptive qualitative approach, which aims to understand the phenomenon of poverty and social inequality through in-depth analysis of relevant data and information. This approach allows researchers to interpret data in a broader context, providing insight into how and why poverty and social inequality occur and persist, as well as identifying the factors that influence them. The data used in this research comes from various research results and previous studies which still have relevance to the content of the research. These data sources were selected based on criteria of scientific rigor and thematic relevance, thereby providing a strong basis for analysis. Furthermore, after the research data has been successfully collected, the data will be processed by researchers. Through this process, researchers seek to build a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of poverty and social inequality, as well as identify the factors that contribute to these problems. It is hoped that the results of this research can contribute to existing literature and provide practical recommendations for policy makers, practitioners, and other interested parties in efforts to combat poverty and reduce social inequality.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Factors Causing Poverty and Social Inequality

In analyzing the factors causing poverty and social inequality, we need to understand that these two issues do not stand alone, but are interrelated and influenced by various factors, ranging from the impact of the global economy to socio-cultural factors. Global and regional economic impacts play a significant role in determining the distribution of wealth and access to resources. In the era of globalization, the economies of countries in the world are interconnected, so that an economic crisis in one country can have a broad impact, affecting the economies of other countries and widening social inequality. Unequal access to global markets and resources exacerbates the situation for countries with weaker economies, often leaving vulnerable communities without adequate support to overcome poverty.

The influence of climate change on vulnerable communities adds to the complexity of the problem. Climate change is worsening living conditions for many communities, especially those who depend on natural resources for their livelihoods, such as farmers and fishermen. More frequent and intense natural disasters, such as floods, droughts, and storms, not only destroy infrastructure and habitats but also destroy livelihoods, forcing communities into cycles of poverty that are difficult to break. This creates conditions in which vulnerable communities become more vulnerable, and social inequalities are further widened, as those in better positions often have the resources to cope with or even avoid the negative impacts of climate change.

On the other hand, technological developments and digitalization have opened up new opportunities in various economic sectors, but have also introduced new challenges in the form of the digital divide. Although technology provides the potential for economic growth and job creation, unequal access to digital technology

and the skills required to utilize it means that the benefits of such growth are not enjoyed by all levels of society. This results in a digital divide, where individuals, households, and even entire communities are left behind in a rapidly expanding digital economy, deepening social and economic inequality.

Public policy and system failures in addressing problems of poverty and inequality also play an important role. Ineffective policies or a lack of equitable policy implementation often exacerbate inequality, by providing disproportionate benefits to those already in a better position, while leaving the most vulnerable without adequate support. These system failures include everything from unfair tax systems, and underinvestment in public services such as education and health, to corruption and injustice in political and economic systems, all of which contribute to the persistence of poverty and social inequality.

Furthermore, the influence of socio-cultural factors in maintaining class structure and socio-economic barriers cannot be ignored. Certain socio-cultural norms and values can strengthen inequality by maintaining the status quo and opposing social change. This is seen in discriminatory practices based on class, race, gender, and ethnicity, all of which limit access to economic and social opportunities for certain groups. Without addressing these socio-cultural barriers, efforts to reduce poverty and social inequality will often be hampered, as existing systems continue to reinforce the unequal distribution of resources and perpetuate structural injustice.

Overcoming poverty and social inequality requires a holistic approach that not only addresses external symptoms but also the root causes, including economic, environmental, technological, policy, and socio-cultural factors. This requires cross-sector collaboration and strong commitment from all stakeholders, including governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and civil society, to realize sustainable change and create a more just and inclusive society.

2. The Impact of Poverty and Social Inequality on Global Development

Poverty and social inequality have a significant impact on global development, affecting all aspects from economic growth to public health. Income inequality, in particular, poses a major challenge to economic growth and social stability. When income concentrates in the hands of a few individuals or groups, consumer spending becomes limited, reducing aggregate demand and slowing economic growth. High inequality can also trigger social dissatisfaction, increase the risk of conflict, and reduce public trust in institutions. In the long term, this creates a vicious cycle that stifles investment and innovation, two critical components for sustainable growth.

Furthermore, poverty and inequality have a broad impact on public health, including access to health services. People living in poverty often face barriers to accessing quality health services, either due to unaffordable costs, lack of infrastructure, or discrimination in the health system. This inequality in access exacerbates health disparities, with chronic diseases and poor health conditions more common among the poor. This not only affects the quality of life of individuals but

also reduces work productivity, increases the burden on the health system, and slows economic progress.

Education inequality is another factor that influences employment opportunities and social mobility. Unequal access to quality education creates barriers to acquiring the skills necessary to participate in the modern economy. This reduces employment opportunities for individuals from poor backgrounds and hinders social mobility, reinforcing cycles of poverty from generation to generation. Educational inequality also impacts a country's competitive advantage in the global economy, reducing its capacity to innovate and compete.

Gender inequality in the economy also has significant consequences for development. Gender discrimination in the workplace and access to education and other economic resources not only harms women but also hinders economic growth. Women's empowerment and gender equality have been proven to increase productivity, improve economic outcomes, and improve other development outcomes, such as child health and education. Therefore, gender inequality is not only a social problem but also an economic obstacle.

Finally, the long-term effects of poverty and inequality on children and future generations cannot be ignored. Children growing up in poverty face greater barriers to education, health, and economic opportunity. Inequalities experienced from an early age can have a cumulative effect, reducing their chances of escaping poverty and achieving their full potential as adults. This raises the risk of an intergenerational poverty trap, where inequality and poverty become increasingly difficult to resolve over time.

The impact of poverty and social inequality on global development is broad and multidimensional, affecting everything from economic and social stability to public health and education. Addressing this problem requires a comprehensive and integrated approach, which focuses not only on economic growth but also on a fairer distribution of wealth, investment in public services, and empowerment of marginalized groups. Through joint efforts between governments, the private sector, and civil society, we can overcome these challenges and build a more just and inclusive future for all.

3. Global and Local Strategies in Combating Poverty and Inequality

Overcoming poverty and inequality requires joint efforts from various stakeholders at the global, national, and local levels. International cooperation and the role of global organizations in this matter are very important, considering that poverty and inequality are global problems that know no national borders. Organizations such as the United Nations (UN), World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have a crucial role in coordinating efforts to reduce poverty and promote policies that support equitable development. Through aid programs and funds, as well as sustainable development initiatives, these international organizations seek to reduce disparities between countries and within countries, facilitate technology transfer, and promote fair trade and investment in developing countries.

At the national level, government policies and programs play an important role in reducing poverty and increasing socio-economic equality. Governments can implement progressive fiscal policies, including fair taxes and targeted public spending on education, health, and social infrastructure, all of which can improve poor people's access to basic services. Social protection programs, such as cash transfers, subsidies, and social insurance, are also important for reducing the economic vulnerability of poor families and providing a safety net for those affected by economic crises or natural disasters.

Meanwhile, the private sector has an important role in inclusive development and economic empowerment. Through investment, job creation, and innovation, the private sector can expand access to goods and services, increase productivity, and promote inclusive economic growth. Companies can also adopt socially responsible business practices, such as ensuring decent wages, fair working conditions, and economic inclusion for marginalized groups. Additionally, partnership initiatives between the public and private sectors can increase the scalability of innovative solutions for sustainable development.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society also have a significant contribution to make in supporting vulnerable communities. Through advocacy, community empowerment, and direct programming, they play an important role in filling gaps that are not covered by the government or the private sector. These organizations are often more flexible and can reach remote communities or discriminate against groups with programs tailored to their specific needs. They also play a role in monitoring and demanding accountability from the government and private sector for their commitment to reducing poverty and inequality.

Lastly, the use of technology and innovation offers great opportunities to create sustainable solutions to overcome poverty and inequality. Digitalization, for example, can expand access to education through online learning, increase access to health services through telemedicine, and strengthen financial inclusion through digital financial services. Technology can also increase agricultural productivity in developing countries, provide better market information for small farmers, and reduce waste with more efficient supply chain solutions. Innovation in green technology and renewable energy is also important to ensure that economic growth does not go hand in hand with environmental degradation, which often impacts poorer communities the most.

In bringing all these elements together, collaboration between sectors is the key to effectively addressing poverty and inequality. The integration of efforts from governments, the private sector, international organizations, NGOs, and civil society ensures that resources are used efficiently and interventions are designed to achieve maximum impact. Through a synergistic and sustainable approach, we can move towards a more just and prosperous world for all.

4. Challenges and Opportunities in Achieving Equal Development and Social Justice

On the journey towards equitable development and social justice, various challenges must be faced as well as opportunities that can be exploited. One of the main challenges is implementing effective policies that can overcome structural inequalities that are deeply rooted in society. This inequality often manifests in the form of income disparities, unequal access to basic services such as education and health, and gaps in economic and political participation. Building responsive and inclusive policies requires a deep understanding of local and global socioeconomic dynamics, as well as the ability to navigate often conflicting political and economic interests.

On the other hand, the digital economy and green economy offer new opportunities in creating jobs and reducing poverty. Digital transformation expands access to markets and services, enabling small and medium-sized businesses to grow and create jobs. Meanwhile, the green economy promises sustainable growth by prioritizing environmentally friendly practices, which is not only important to fight climate change but also to open up new job opportunities in sectors such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, and natural resource management. These two domains, if utilized properly, can be a catalyst in encouraging inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

However, ensuring equitable access to education and skills training for all levels of society is another significant obstacle. In an era of globalization and rapid technological change, education and skills are key to participation in the modern economy. Unfortunately, there are still major inequalities in terms of access to quality education and skills training, especially for poor and marginalized communities. Without interventions aimed at closing these gaps, socioeconomic inequalities will persist, or even worsen.

To overcome these challenges and take advantage of existing opportunities, a multidisciplinary and participatory approach is needed. The involvement of multiple stakeholders, including government, the private sector, academia, civil society organizations, and local communities, is key to designing and implementing effective and sustainable solutions. This approach allows diverse perspectives and expertise to come together to create comprehensive strategies, ensuring that policies and programs are based not only on solid economic or political theory but also on a deep understanding of the local context and specific needs of society.

Facing prospects, the vision for more inclusive and equitable global development must continue to be maintained amidst dynamic world changes. Technological developments, demographic changes, environmental challenges, and global geopolitical dynamics all influence how we approach development and social justice. By remaining committed to the basic principles of justice, equality, and sustainability, and by continuing to innovate and adapt to new challenges, we can move towards a future where equitable development and social justice are no longer an aspiration but a reality for everyone around the world.

E. CONCLUSION

This research finds that the fight against poverty and social inequality is a global imperative that requires cooperation, policy, and innovation from various parties. Factors that cause poverty and inequality, such as the impact of the global economy, climate change, the role of technology, public policy, and socio-cultural factors, show the complexity of the problem that cannot be solved with a narrow or sectoral approach. The impact of poverty and social inequality on global development, including its impact on economic growth, social stability, public health, education, and employment opportunities, makes it clear that these inequalities hinder collective progress and inclusive development. Solutions to overcome these problems require broad international collaboration, innovative government policies and programs, and active contributions from the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and civil society. A multidisciplinary and participatory approach, leveraging technological advances and innovation, is needed to create sustainable and equitable solutions. Thus, the journey towards equitable development and social justice requires a shared commitment to overcome existing challenges and exploit opportunities emerging from global change, to create a more just, equitable, and sustainable world for all.

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