

# Impact of Unemployment, Social Protection Spending, and SMEs on the Underprivileged Population Number

*Unemployment,  
Social Protection  
and SMEs*

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to analyze the effect of unemployment, realization of social protection costs, and Regency/City Minimum Wages (UMK) on the number of poor people in 23 regencies/cities in North Sumatra Province in the period 2020–2024. The approach used is quantitative with secondary data from BPS and DJPK, as well as panel data regression analysis using the EViews 9 application. The best estimation model chosen is fixed effect. The results of the study show that unemployment has a positive and significant effect on poverty, which means that the higher the unemployment, the higher the poverty rate. Conversely, the realization of social protection costs and UMK have a negative and significant effect, which means that an increase in these two variables can reduce the number of poor people. These findings emphasize the importance of effective social protection policies and UMK adjustments as a strategy to reduce poverty in the regions, as well as improve people's welfare.*

**Keywords:** *Fixed Effect, Minimum Wage, Poor Population, Social Protection, Total Unemployment*

## **ABSTRAK**

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh pengangguran, realisasi biaya perlindungan sosial, dan Upah Minimum Kabupaten/Kota (UMK) terhadap jumlah penduduk miskin di 23 kabupaten/kota di Provinsi Sumatera Utara pada periode 2020–2024. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kuantitatif dengan data sekunder dari BPS dan DJPK, serta analisis regresi data panel menggunakan aplikasi EViews 9. Model estimasi terbaik yang dipilih adalah fixed effect. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengangguran berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kemiskinan, yang berarti semakin tinggi pengangguran, semakin tinggi pula angka kemiskinan. Sebaliknya, realisasi biaya perlindungan sosial dan UMK berpengaruh negatif dan signifikan, yang berarti peningkatan kedua variabel ini mampu menurunkan jumlah penduduk miskin. Temuan ini menekankan pentingnya kebijakan perlindungan sosial yang efektif dan penyesuaian UMK sebagai strategi dalam mengurangi kemiskinan di daerah, serta meningkatkan kesejahteraan masyarakat.*

**Kata kunci:** *Efek Tetap, Upah Minimum, Penduduk Miskin, Perlindungan Sosial, Total Pengangguran*

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### INTRODUCTION

Poverty is caused in all countries poverty arises because of inequality in life. Poverty can refer to limited access to basic health services and a lack of literacy in understanding healthy lifestyles is a factor in the lack of public health. On a multidimensional scale, improvements in health quality have resulted in regional, urban and rural inequalities that are still high. Educational disparities between rich and poor populations, and between urban and rural areas are still considerable (Suryani & Woyanti, 2021; Jardim et al., 2022). Lack of employment and business opportunities is still one of the problems (Arsyat, 2016). Poverty can be caused by several factors that can be described. According to Kuncoro (2011) There are factors that cause poverty from an economic point of view. The poor only have resources that they lack. Second, poverty arises from differences in human capital. Third, poverty arises due to inequality in access to capital (Torm & Oehme, 2024). The following graph shows the development of the percentage of poor people in North Sumatra and Indonesia starting from 2020-2024 (Abisuga-Oyekunle et al., 2020).

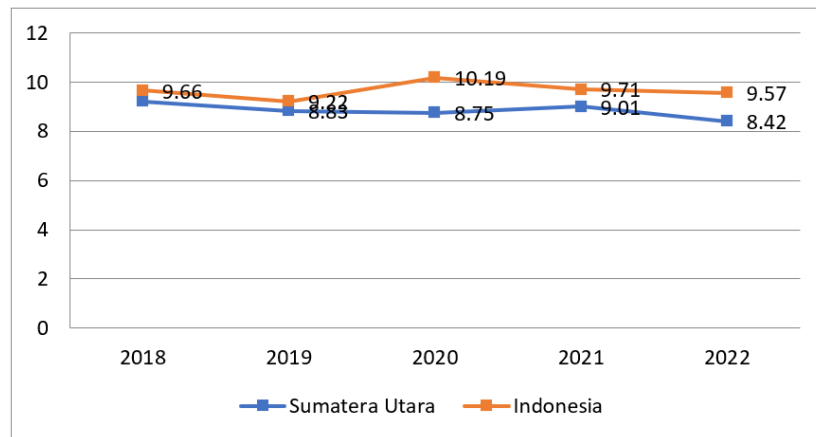


Figure 1. Poverty Percentage Level in Indonesia & North Sumatra 2020-2024

Figure 1 shows the development of the percentage of poor people from 2020 to 2024 for the North Sumatra region and Indonesia (Gerard et al., 2020). Social protection response to the COVID-19 crisis: options for developing countries. From the graph, it can be seen that the percentage of poor people for each region tends to fluctuate, decreasing in 2019, increasing sharply in 2020 and 2021. Based on the available data, it can be concluded that the average percentage of poor people in Indonesia is higher than in North Sumatra Province in 2020-2024. In general, the increase that occurred between 2020 and 2021 was triggered by Covid-19 which did have an impact on the entire North Sumatra region and even Indonesia. At that time, there was a global crisis that triggered one of the risks of poverty levels (Sulistyaningrum et al., 2022; Zuraida & Asmara, 2024; Saputri & Sitorus, 2025).

Government policy efforts that require people to stay at home by implementing Large-Scale Social Restrictions (*Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar/PSBB*) which require people to stay at home or quarantine have caused mass fear of Covid-19 in the community related to the economy in each family which has declined and the lack of food for consumption so that there is an increase in food reserves which then causes an increase in food prices themselves (Torm, 2019). Until 2021 when Covid-19 has always been a source of problems, the government continues to strive for economic recovery to overcome the impacts caused by the pandemic, especially on poverty.

Social protection can be defined as a collection of efforts carried out to face and overcome weaknesses, risks and poverty that have exceeded. This idea of social protection is basically based on the principles of social justice, and has special authority where everyone must receive social safety and a standard of living sufficient to obtain health and safety for themselves.

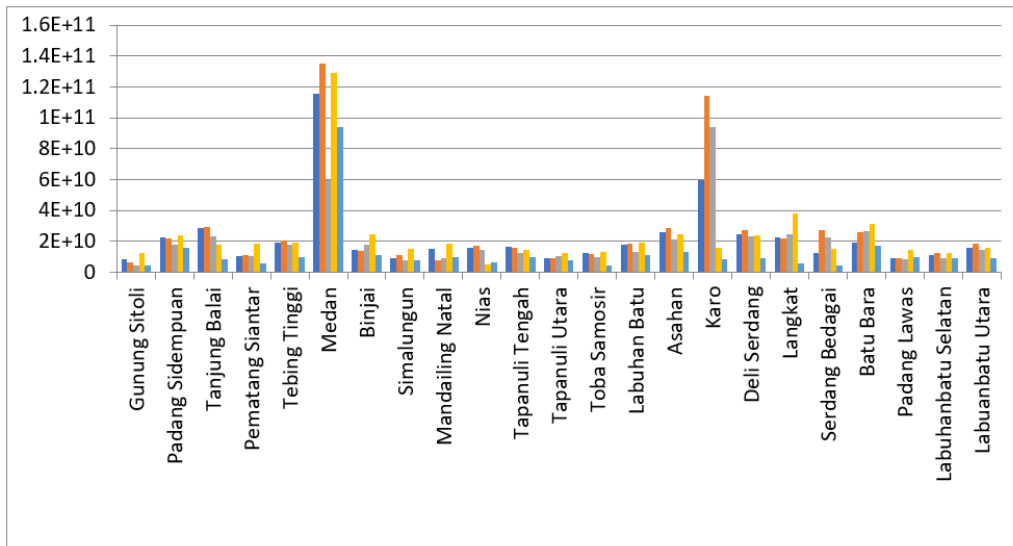


Figure 2. Graph of Realization of Social Protection Costs

Figure 2 shows that the income from social protection costs each experienced different gaps. The highest income from education costs was in Medan City at IDR 135,072,091,423 in 2019. While for Gunung Sitoli City it was IDR 3,966,612,371 in 2020. In the mandate of the central government through the 1945 Constitution article 31 paragraph 4 to allocate funds for the government. In Aini's research (2020) it was found that spending on the social protection sector for poverty had a negative effect on poverty. Khaliq and Uspri research (2017), changing spending in the social protection sector in the form of Family Hope Program assistance has provided positive things. The minimum wage is a guideline in overcoming poverty levels (Panjawa, 2014).

In an effort to realize the welfare of the Indonesian people, especially in North Sumatra Province. The results of previous research conducted by Putra (2021) found that the minimum wage has a positive and significant effect on poverty. This result is different from the reality in Medan City, it can be seen that the Minimum Wage has increased but the number of poor people also experiences the same thing. So it is reinforced again in the research of Hanifah and Hanifa (2021) which states that the minimum wage has a negative effect on poverty. So, this research gap and data gap are interesting studies to further reveal the minimum wage on poverty in North Sumatra (Baltagi, 2008; Gerard et al., 2020). This study aims to determine the effect of unemployment, the realization of social protection costs and UMK on the number of poor people.

## LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

### Unemployment Rates and Poor Population

Unemployment is a classic problem in the world of employment that is often found in various countries, especially developing countries (Ningrum, 2017). The unemployment rate describes the proportion of workers who are actively looking for work but have not found work within a certain period. This condition indicates an imbalance between the growth of the workforce and the available job opportunities. High unemployment can have a serious impact on community welfare (Wirawan & Arka, 2015; Padang & Murtala, 2020). When someone is unemployed, there is no fixed source of income that can be used to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, education, and health. This will encourage households to live below the poverty line. In other words, unemployment is one of the main causes of the increasing number of poor people (Safitri et al., 2023). In the context of economic and social development, the relationship between unemployment and poverty is very strong. When unemployment increases, the level of community productivity automatically decreases and purchasing power weakens (Wahyuningrum & Soesilowati, 2021). This not only impacts individuals, but also slows down regional economic growth and widens social disparities. In

addition, unemployment that is left high in the long term can also cause other social problems such as crime, disturbances of order, and political instability. Reducing unemployment is not only a solution to improve people's welfare, but also a foundation for creating a stable and just social order.

H1: Unemployment rates have a significant effect on the poor population.

### **Social Protection and Poor Population**

Social protection is one of the government policy instruments aimed at reducing the economic vulnerability of the community, especially the poor and vulnerable groups (Ayu, 2021). Social protection can be in the form of cash assistance, subsidies, social security, and labor-intensive programs (Septiadi & Suparyana, 2019; Sirait et al., 2022). According to Suryahadi et al. (2022), social protection is important in maintaining people's purchasing power and consumption, especially during economic shocks such as a pandemic or financial crisis. When individuals or households experience a decrease in income, state intervention through social protection schemes can reduce the risk of falling into poverty. Data in Nias Regency shows that in 2020 there were 778 people who were unemployed (Agussalim et al., 2024; Indrawati et al., 2024). This condition has a direct impact on the loss of their main source of income, increasing the risk of poverty. This is in line with the findings of Aini (2020) who stated that unemployment that is not balanced with social protection can exacerbate inequality and widen the poverty gap. Therefore, in the context of areas with high unemployment rates, the presence of social protection programs is very crucial (Basuki, 2023). Government spending allocated for social protection reflects the state's commitment to creating equitable welfare. The amount of this budget allocation can be used as an indicator of the government's ability to reduce poverty rates.

H2: Social protection has a significant effect on the poor population.

### **UMK Expenditure and Poor Population**

The Regency/City Minimum Wage (*Upah Minimum Kabupaten/UMK*) is a form of government regulation to guarantee the minimum level of worker welfare. However, the realization of UMK expenditure in the socio-economic context is not always linear to the decline in poverty rates (Zuraida & Asmara, 2024; Saputri & Sitorus, 2025). Individuals who are not working or are still job seekers do not receive a fixed income, so they remain in the vulnerable poverty category. High unemployment is often correlated with increased poverty, due to the lack of adequate income security. The results of Khamilah (2018) study showed that in South Kalimantan, an increase in the open unemployment rate had a positive and significant effect on the poverty rate. This illustrates that every increase in the number of unemployed people also increases the number of poor people (Priyono & Yunitasari, 2022). However, different conditions were found in Simalungun Regency, where the increase in unemployment did not necessarily increase poverty because there were still many families who survived through the informal sector, especially agriculture, even though they had low incomes and education. Torm (2019) explains that the amount of UMK expenditure that is not balanced with the level of productivity and capacity of micro and small businesses (UMK) can actually create additional burdens for business actors, which ultimately affects employment and income stability (Jadoon et al., 2021; Ogujiuba & Mngometulu, 2022). Therefore, it is important to understand that government spending or wage policies are not only seen from their nominal value, but also from their efficiency in creating jobs and increasing people's purchasing power.

H3: UMK expenditure has a significant effect on the poor population.

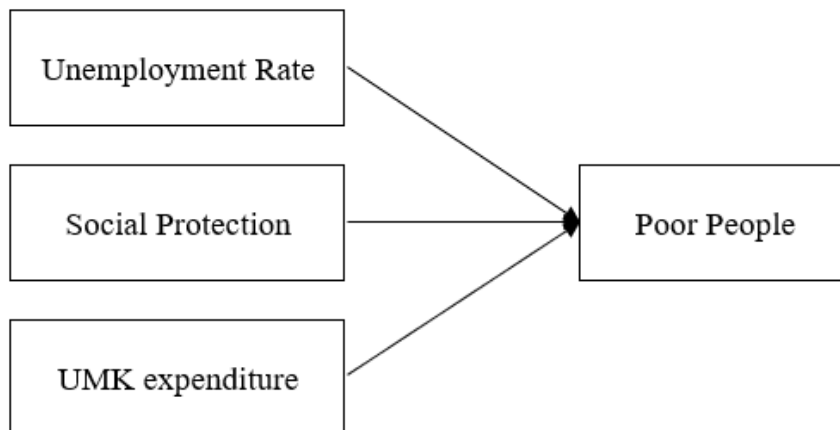


Figure 3. Research Framework

From the Research Framework that can be seen in Figure 3, it illustrates the relationship between three independent variables, namely unemployment rate, social protection, and UMK expenditure, to one dependent variable, namely the number of poor people. This framework is designed to show the direction and form of the causal relationship tested in the study. Hypothesis 1 states that unemployment rate has a significant effect on the number of poor people. Logically, the higher the unemployment rate, the more individuals lose their source of fixed income, so the risk of falling into poverty increases. Hypothesis 2 highlights the role of social protection as a government instrument in reducing the vulnerability of the poor. Effective social protection, such as cash assistance or subsidies, is expected to be able to stem the rate of increase in poverty. Meanwhile, hypothesis 3 tests the effect of UMK expenditure on the poor. Minimum wage policies in each district/city can affect the purchasing power and welfare of the community, especially low-income groups. Through this framework, the study attempts to evaluate the extent to which the three variables, both partially and simultaneously, affect the poverty rate in the area analyzed. The relationship shown in the figure is direct and is expressed through arrows leading from each independent variable to the dependent variable, namely the poor population.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research method uses a quantitative descriptive approach with panel data regression analysis techniques to test the effect of poverty rates, social protection, and UMK expenditure on the number of poor people in North Sumatra Province. This study was conducted in 23 of the 33 existing districts/cities, taking into account the completeness of the data. Dairi, North Nias, South Nias, West Pakpak, Samosir, and West Nias Regencies were not included because they did not have minimum wage data, while Sibolga City, Humbang Hasundutan, and North Padang Lawas did not present data on the number of poor people. South Tapanuli also occurred because there was no realization of social protection cost data.

The data used is secondary data collected from 2020 to 2024 and sourced from the North Sumatra Central Statistics Agency (*Badan Pusat Statistik/BPS*) and the Directorate General of Fiscal Balance (*Direktorat Jenderal Perimbangan Keuangan/DJPK*). However, the 2024 data for the realization of the social protection cost variable is not yet fully available, so the analysis was carried out until 2024 using the available data. The data collection technique was carried out through the documentation method by accessing data from the official BPS and DJPK pages, which include open poverty rate variables, district/city minimum wages, social protection budget realization, and poverty rate.

Panel data regression analysis was chosen because it has the advantage of combining cross-section and time series data, which allows researchers to control individual variables that cannot be observed and analyze the dynamics of change over a certain period of time (Munandar, 2017). This technique can also produce more accurate estimates in identifying the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The analysis process was

carried out with the help of E-Views 9 software to facilitate data processing and interpretation (Prasetyo et al., 2023). With this approach, it is hoped that the research results will be able to provide a significant picture of the influence of economic variables on poverty levels in the areas studied.

**RESULTS**

The results of the t-test to determine the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable partially, using the t-statistic test (partial t-test). This test aims to test the significance of the regression coefficient for each independent variable in the model, so that it can be known whether a variable has a significant effect on the dependent variable individually. In this study, the independent variables include unemployment rates, spending on social protection, and spending on UMK (Micro and Small Enterprises), while the dependent variable is the number of poor people. The test was carried out with a significance level of 5% (0.05), where the p-value results of each variable will be compared with that value. If the p-value <0.05, then H<sub>0</sub> is rejected and the variable is considered to have a significant effect. Conversely, if the p-value > 0.05, then H<sub>0</sub> is accepted.

**Table 1.** Partial Test (T)

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
Unemployment rate	0.059877	0.021609	2.770925	0.0068
Social protection	0.011860	0.002764	-4.290138	0.0000
UMK expenditure	-0.203598	0.072253	-2.817861	0.0060

Based on the research results in Table 1, the data processing above obtained the probability value of each variable. Based on the results of the partial t-test, the unemployment rate has an estimated value of 2.770925 with a probability value of 0.0068 which is smaller than the significance level of 0.05. This t-count value is greater than the t-table (1.65857), so the hypothesis H<sub>0</sub> is rejected and H<sub>1</sub> is accepted. This means that there is a significant influence between the unemployment rate and the number of poor people. The higher the unemployment rate, the more the number of poor people tends to increase. This shows that employment conditions play an important role in determining people’s welfare. The increase in unemployment indicates low employment absorption, which contributes directly to increasing poverty. This finding is in line with the research of Jadoon et al. (2021) and Ogujiuba and Mngometulu (2022) which state that unemployment is one of the main determinants of poverty.

Changes in government spending in the realization of social protection costs show a significant effect on the number of poor people. Based on the results of statistical tests, the estimated value of -4.290138 is smaller than the critical value of the t-table (0.05; 112) of 1.65857, with a probability value of 0.0080 which is below the significance threshold of 0.05. This indicates that statistically, there is a significant relationship between government spending on social protection and the number of poor people, but the direction of the influence is negative. Thus, the proposed hypothesis H<sub>2</sub> is rejected, which means that increasing government spending in social protection programs has a significant impact on reducing the number of poor people. This finding shows the effectiveness of government budget allocation in reducing poverty through social protection policies. However, the rejection of this hypothesis can also reflect that the variable of government spending has a significant influence on the target of poverty reduction, so it needs to be optimized through more targeted and sustainable programs. Inclusive and equitable fiscal policies are key to strengthening social protection and reducing socio-economic disparities.

The results of the analysis show that the variable amount of expenditure for MSE (Micro and Small Enterprise) has a significant effect on the number of poor people. The t-count value of -2.817861 is smaller than the t-table (0.05; 112) which is 1.65857, and the probability value of 0.0060 is below the significance level of 0.05. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the H<sub>3</sub> hypothesis is rejected, which means that expenditure for MSE has a real impact on the number of poor people. The rejection of this hypothesis does not indicate that there is no influence, but rather that there is a significant influence, but it is not

in accordance with the direction or form assumed in the initial hypothesis. The negative direction of the coefficient indicates that increased expenditure for the MSE sector tends to contribute to a decrease in the number of poor people. This shows that strengthening support for micro and small business actors can be an effective strategy in reducing poverty. Government spending allocated to encourage the MSE sector needs to be increased and directed appropriately to strengthen business capacity and create wider employment opportunities for vulnerable groups. This policy is important as part of the inclusive and sustainable development agenda.

The F test or simultaneous test is used to test whether all independent variables in the model together have a significant influence on the dependent variable. In this context, the test is conducted using a fixed effect model with a significance level of 5% (0.05) as the reference limit. The results of the F test show that the probability value (p-value) is below 0.05, which means that simultaneously, all independent variables in the model contribute significantly to the dependent variable, namely the number of poor people. Thus, the model used is considered statistically feasible to explain the relationship between the variables analyzed. This strengthens the finding that government spending on social protection and spending on the MSE sector collectively play an important role in influencing poverty levels. This simultaneous influence indicates the need for an integrated policy approach, where various components of government spending are directed synergistically to reduce poverty rates sustainably.

**Table 2.** Test (F)

<b>Metric</b>	<b>Value</b>
R-squared	0.996023
Adjusted R-squared	0.994905
SE of regression	0.046265
Sum squared residual	0.190496
Log likelihood	204.9978
F-statistic	891.4966
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000000
Mean dependent variable	10.50838
SD dependent var	0.648173
Akaike information criterion	-3.113005
Black criterion	-2.492411
Hannan-Quinn critter	-2.861109
Durbin-Watson stat	2.798782

Based on the EViews output results in Table 2, the simultaneous F test shows that the F-count value of 891.4966 is much greater than the F-table value at a significance level of 5% (0.05;  $df_1 = 3$ ;  $df_2 = 111$ ) which is 2.69. In addition, the probability value (Prob. F-statistic) of 0.000000  $< 0.05$  indicates that the results of this test are statistically significant. Thus, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, which means that simultaneously, the variables of the number of unemployed, the realization of social protection costs, and spending on MSEs (Micro and Small Enterprises) have a significant effect on the number of poor people. The very high R-squared value, namely 0.996023, indicates that 99.6% of the variation in the number of poor people can be explained by the three independent variables together. This reflects a very good model in explaining the observed phenomena. The Durbin-Watson stat of 2.798782 also shows that there is no significant autocorrelation in the model. Overall, these results emphasize the importance of a comprehensive policy approach, where unemployment reduction, increased social protection, and support for MSEs must be carried out in an integrated manner to effectively reduce poverty rates.

## **DISCUSSION**

The number of unemployed and poor people are interrelated, where high unemployment leads to increased poverty (Suryani & Woyanti, 2021; Jardim et al., 2022). Unemployment creates multidimensional issues—social, educational, and economic—leading to loss of income and declining welfare (Sulistyaningrum et al., 2022). Studies in North Sumatra

confirm that unemployment positively and significantly affects poverty levels by Khamilah (2018), consistent with findings by Masjkuri (2018) and Putra (2021). Unemployment relates to population growth and limited job opportunities, which if unmanaged, threatens economic and political stability due to low human resources (Murni, 2009). Social protection plays a transformative role in improving the status and opening up livelihood opportunities for marginalized groups, with the government acting as the main policy holder in enhancing the welfare of the poor (Nangarumba, 2015; Nadya & Syafri, 2019). Based on data testing results, H<sub>0</sub> is rejected, indicating that government health spending negatively affects the number of poor people in districts/cities in North Sumatra. Similar findings were reported by Padang and Murtala (2020), Putra (2021), Rizki (2021), and Safitri et al. (2023), emphasizing social protection's role in overcoming vulnerability, risk, and excessive poverty.

So it shows that the driving factor of social protection costs is very much needed for a group of people who need it with the right target. With attention to marginalized communities in terms of human resources, these communities can have better productivity. Better human resource productivity will have an impact on the growth of a country (Aini, 2020). The minimum wage is an important aspect in society in meeting the needs of life. Increasing the minimum wage for workers will increase people's purchasing power and can increase work productivity (Priyono & Yunitasari, 2022; Sirait et al., 2022; Agussalim et al., 2024). Based on the results of data testing in this study, H<sub>0</sub> is rejected, which means that the UMK has a negative effect on the number of poor people in districts/cities in North Sumatra Province. The results of previous research conducted by Putra (2021) stated that the UMK had a negative and significant effect on the number of poor people. This finding shows that if the Provincial Minimum Wage (*Upah Minimum Provinsi*/UMP) increase factor is considered, it will certainly be an attraction for people to make purchases and provide a spirit of productivity for workers. This is in accordance with the theory of Kuncoro (2000) and Adelowokan et al. (2019) which states that the minimum wage has a negative effect on poverty.

Poverty occurs due to differences in the quality of human resources. Having low human resources means low productivity, and in turn low wages. High income will increase their consumption and avoid poverty. This study is in line with research conducted by Khamilah (2018), Aini (2020), and Rizki (2021) which states that the number of unemployed, the realization of social protection costs and the UMK have a joint effect on the number of poor people. Thus, the number of unemployed, the realization of social protection costs and the UMK are very important and have an effect on the number of poor people so that they can provide community welfare (Nangarumba, 2015; Nadya & Syafri, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the number of unemployed, the realization of social protection costs, and the district/city minimum wage (UMK) simultaneously have a significant effect on the number of poor people in North Sumatra Province. The high unemployment rate has been proven to increase the number of poor people, because the inability of people to earn income causes a decrease in welfare. Meanwhile, the realization of social protection spending and the increase in UMK show a negative effect on poverty, meaning that both factors are effective in reducing the number of poor people. This confirms that government intervention through social and economic policies is very important in creating overall public welfare. This study emphasizes the importance of integrated policies that include expanding employment opportunities, improving the quality of human resources, and distributing social protection in a targeted manner. Further research is recommended to expand the scope of variables by adding other indicators such as education level, human development index (HDI), or distribution of social assistance. In addition, comparative research between provinces or a spatial approach can provide a more comprehensive picture of the dynamics of poverty in various regions of Indonesia, as well as assess the effectiveness of more specific policies according to local characteristics.

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