



E-ISSN:  
2721-13988

# A Portrait of Government Policies in Addressing Unemployment among the Young Generation in Indonesia

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## Abstract.

Since 2014, high youth unemployment has become a social phenomenon in Indonesia. In response to this challenge, the government has implemented policies to facilitate foreign investment and initiated programs such as the pre-employment card program and several scholarships for study and internships. This article aims to analyse the right to employment and a decent income for young people, and to review government programs to address this social challenge. The method used in this article is normative, with a statutory approach and a comparative analysis of the Youth Guarantee program, initiated by the European Union, to provide more comprehensive observations. The result shows that the right to employment and a decent income for young people is currently hampered by several factors, including technological disruption, skills mismatches, and the country's economic recession due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Government-initiated programs also show the ineffectiveness of foreign investment, which has led to rising unemployment. The pre-employment card program has also proven ineffective at reducing unemployment, and scholarships benefit only a small number of young people. Based on these findings, the government is advised to revise the implementation of the pre-employment card policy and improve the sustainable investment climate to ensure continued economic growth and lower unemployment among the younger generation.

**Keywords:** Government, Skill Mismatch, Unemployment, Youth Guarantee.

## 1. Introduction

Recently, a social phenomenon has emerged where a growing number of university graduates with high GPAs are unable to find jobs. This is evident in the soaring unemployment rate among university graduates, from 495.143 in 2014 to 981.203 in 2020, even though there is a small decline to 842.378 in 2024 (Addini, 2025). Even worse, a study found that recent graduates, especially men, experienced a decline in employment opportunities in the formal sector. This finding indicates a wait-and-see attitude among recent graduates, who prefer unemployment rather than working in the informal sector (Natalia & Febri, 2024). It is understandable that university graduates, who have spent a lot of money on formal higher education, demand to work in accordance with what they have learned at university in the hope of getting a stable white-collar job.

Other data also shows that the number of unemployment in Indonesia, as of 2024, reached 7.20 million people with more than 59% of them being young generations aged 15-29 years, the majority of whom are from Generation Z which includes Vocational High School graduates who contributed the highest unemployment rate of 8.62%, followed by High School graduates at 6.73%, and college graduates at 5.63% (Safitri & Rezza, 2025). These data show



the ineffectiveness of the government's programs, requiring improvements across various aspects.

Ironically, the cost of education continues to rise by 10% to 15% year over year (Arsal & Hidayat, 2024). With rising education costs, education should be more responsive to workplace challenges and help reduce unemployment rates. Ironically, current job market trends, especially in developed countries, show that employers are increasingly hiring based on skills rather than formal educational background. This is because technological advances, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), are reshaping the job market, demanding new and broader skills that are often not acquired through university courses (Ehlinger & Stephany, 2024). This issue creates a skills mismatch: university graduates lack the skills required by the job market, even though they have spent large sums on formal education, leaving them what is known as 'educated unemployed'.

The 1945 Constitution protects citizens' rights to obtain employment and a decent living, as stated in Article 27, paragraph 2: "Every citizen has the right to employment and a decent living for humanity." Furthermore, Article 28D paragraph 2 states, "Everyone has the right to work and to receive fair and appropriate remuneration and treatment in employment." Citizens, especially the younger generation, also have the right to obtain employment and a decent living, as explained in these articles. Therefore, the difficulty in finding employment in this case constitutes a violation of the rights of the younger generation, which must be addressed through a legal solution.

Law No. 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower actually also regulates various efforts to bridge the younger generation, including fresh graduates, with the world of work, such as internship programs, for example, as stated in Article 21, as well as job training, as stated in Article 13, which can be carried out by the government and the private sector to improve workers' skills. However, there are still problems in its implementation, such as the failure to fulfil the rights of students or fresh graduates to receive allowance while participating in the internship program, as should be required according to Article 22 paragraph (2) of the Manpower Law, and the Minister of Manpower Regulation Number 6 of 2020 concerning the Implementation of Domestic Internships (Milenia, Karsona & Singadimedja, 2022). One study also shows the ineffectiveness of the government's job training program held in Subang Regency, for example, because the community did not fully understand and know about the program, as well as minimal monitoring carried out, which resulted in a difference in the number of participants' data who had worked did not match the results of the informants' agreement (Kusnadi, Luki & Faqihudin, 2021). Things like this are also factors in unemployment among young people because they feel their rights are not being fulfilled.

Interestingly, this phenomenon of educated unemployment is not unique to Indonesia but also to other countries. As of July 2025, the unemployment rate among recent graduates in the United States reached 13.4%, the highest level since the 1980s. Several factors, such as the reduction in entry-level positions, have led employers to seek only experienced individuals, while AI will handle entry-level jobs (Desk, 2025). In China, the unemployment rate among young graduates of higher education has reached 21.3% due to several factors, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as "Degree Inflation", a phenomenon where too many graduates apply for one position in a company (Miller, Batsaikhan, Gankhuyag & Ganbaatar, 2023). However, it is important to examine the solutions and efforts of other countries to overcome this phenomenon as a basis for comparison in Indonesia.



Based on the background provided, it is important to examine the broader picture of Indonesia's high youth unemployment rate and the role of government policy in addressing this challenge. To conduct a more in-depth study, a more detailed comparison will be made with other countries, particularly the European Union, that have implemented a strategy such as the Youth Guarantee policy. This is necessary to examine the legal enforcement of youth unemployment and ensure their rights to find work that aligns with their interests in the rapidly growing industrial world. This study aims to provide a portrait of government in Indonesia to ensure youth rights to decent work and income, and to offer recommendations on how the government should address the high youth unemployment rate, drawing on insights from comparisons with the European Union's Youth Guarantee program.

## 2. Method

This article uses a normative legal research method that examines the system of norms governing legal events to provide legal arguments as a basis for determining an event (Sihombing & Hadita, 2022). This normative method is used to examine the big picture of government policies for addressing unemployment in Indonesia, drawing on secondary sources such as regulations, journals, books, and websites. The approaches used are the statutory and comparative legal approaches.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1. The Rights and Obstacles of Employment and Income for the Young Generation

The right to obtain employment and a decent living is mandated by the 1945 Constitution, particularly Article 27, paragraph 2, which emphasises this right. This right is fundamentally based on the belief that the younger generation will be the driving force of the nation in the future. Therefore, it is crucial to provide space for the younger generation to exercise their right to obtain employment and earn a decent income. The government plays a crucial role in upholding this right, as it is the state institution responsible for protecting the people's rights as stipulated in the 1945 Constitution. The government also plays a significant role in driving the national economy and addressing social issues, particularly the high unemployment rate among the younger generation. However, data show that the unemployment rate among the younger generation remains relatively high, indicating that this right is not being adequately fulfilled.

The high unemployment rate among Indonesia's youth is caused by several factors across various fields that contribute to this phenomenon. This article will focus on legal and social factors as relevant areas for further in-depth study.

From a social perspective, one factor contributing to unemployment among young people, especially recent graduates, is uncontrolled technological disruption, which makes what university graduates learn less relevant to job-market needs. Lacking adequate skills for the current industry market brings a significant impact to the psychology of recent graduates, leading to low self-confidence (Chalid, 2021).

The lack of confidence among fresh graduates is understandable. Technological disruption has led to a rise in the national unemployment rate. Research has found that



technological developments actually increase unemployment in Indonesia. The shift in the economy toward capital-intensive industries (technology and machinery) will, in theory, lead to technological unemployment. Furthermore, technological progress can only reduce unemployment in regions with resources ready to accommodate technological change, such as the islands of Sumatra, Java, and Bali (Sumanto et al., 2020). Unequal economic development has made technological disruption a factor, widening the social gap in Indonesia.

Technological disruption has led to a skills mismatch among young graduates. Research reveals that around 46 percent of companies in Indonesia are struggling to find the right candidates despite high unemployment rates (Kurmala, 2024). This illustrates the wide gap between the skills companies require and those higher education graduates have learned.

There are also forms of discrimination in job recruitment that reflect structural social inequality. Fresh graduates, as a transitional group between education and the workforce, are particularly vulnerable to systemic injustices disguised as narratives of efficiency and professionalism, as seen through the lens of the sociology of development economics (Imam et al., 2025). With the complexity of administrative and technical requirements, such as work experience, certifications, and foreign language skills, as well as the considerable financial costs of finding work, it has proven difficult for job seekers, especially fresh graduates.

It is quite ironic to see this fact, because the world of education is becoming increasingly industrialised, which even creates educational disparities in remote areas (Syafril et al., 2025), and is unable to address the challenges posed by the job market in the era of technological disruption. However, several universities in Indonesia have taken various measures to address this issue. For example, the Certified Internship program at the Indonesian Ombudsman aims to improve student competency and develop personal skills beyond the scope of lectures (Rizkynata et al., 2023). Training and provision of National Professional Certification Agency tests to enhance students' expertise at the Mitra Gama Institute of Technology (Candra et al., 2025). Debate training for law students, organised by Tarumanegara University (Adhari, 2022), and so on, to deal with the skill mismatch phenomenon that is currently increasing among young graduates.

Another social factor driving unemployment among the younger generation is COVID-19. Based on published studies, the number of educated unemployed during the pandemic was dominated by undergraduate and postgraduate graduates, accounting for 65.54%. Furthermore, 29.66% of the total workforce with Diploma 1-3 degrees were unemployed during the pandemic, while 4.80% of Diploma 4 graduates were unemployed. Several factors, including the lockdown and the prolonged effects of the economic decline, contributed to the increase in unemployment during the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has also impacted the Indonesian economy. Bank of Indonesia even predicted an economic depression of up to 2.1%. Bank Indonesia also lowered its projection for the country's economic growth to below 5%, to only around 2.5%, compared to the usual growth rate of around 5.02%, due to the impact of the pandemic in 2020 (Caraka et al., 2020). The government has undertaken various economic recovery efforts influenced by two main domains: the structural domain (economic, political, legal, and social institutional structures) and the real domain (creativity, competition, and culture), which encourage innovation and adaptation. Government policies focused on strengthening impacted sectors and accelerating digital transformation have made positive



E-ISSN:  
2721-13988

contributions, both in the short and long term. However, challenges such as cross-sectoral coordination and the need for inclusive policies still need to be addressed (Puspita et al., 2025).

From the data presented above, it can be concluded that several factors, including technological disruption that creates a skills mismatch, discrimination in job recruitment, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the national economy, contribute to this social phenomenon. The difficulty younger people face in finding work is an issue that must be addressed immediately. This is because the mandate of the 1945 Constitution, Article 27, paragraph 2, which states that "every citizen has the right to employment and a decent living for humanity," indicates that employment and a decent living from it are the rights of the younger generation that must be protected. Law No. 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower also states in Article 29, paragraph 1, that the government is also obliged to provide job training and apprenticeships to, as stated in paragraph 2, increase the relevance, quality, and efficiency of the implementation of job training and productivity. Therefore, it is also important to examine the government's efforts to address the high unemployment rate among the younger generation, as mandated by its obligations under the Constitution and the Law of Manpower.

### 3.2. Government Policies in Addressing Unemployment Issues

The government has a significant responsibility regarding unemployment issues. Therefore, it is the government's obligation to develop and implement programs to reduce the country's unemployment rate. Over the past ten years, the administration of Indonesia's seventh president, Joko Widodo, has implemented several initiatives to address unemployment, including the creation of the Pre-Employment Card and policies to facilitate foreign investment to boost the country's economy and create more job opportunities.

Indonesia's economic diplomacy has been enhanced during the Joko Widodo administration. To boost the country's economy, Joko Widodo's administration has employed the principle of free and active diplomacy to attract foreign investors through several policies. However, the end result of this foreign investment policy has been a slowdown in investment-driven GDP growth, rather than economic growth. Within the infrastructure sector, for example, Indonesia's overall infrastructure quality ranks 81st out of 140 countries. Meanwhile, according to a UNDP report, the Human Development Index ranked 110th out of 187 countries in 2015. Even more concerning is the downward trend in the average number of jobs absorbed by Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) by 15 percent per year. In 2015, US\$29.27 billion in FDI created 930,905 jobs in Indonesia. However, in 2018, the US\$29.30 billion in FDI absorbed only 490,368 jobs, a 47 percent drop (Saputro & Taufiequrrohman, 2021). It can be concluded that foreign investment efforts during the Joko Widodo era were not very successful, especially in expanding employment opportunities.

During the administration of Prabowo Subianto, Indonesia's eighth president, Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka stated during his campaign that the government would create 19 million jobs. This promise encompassed downstreaming, equitable development, the transition to green energy, the creative economy, and strengthening MSMEs (Febriari, 2025). This certainly raises high expectations among the public, given Indonesia's still-high unemployment rate. Despite data indicating that Indonesia's economic growth in the second quarter of 2025 reached 5.12 percent year-on-year (YOY) (Statistik, 2025), the challenge of creating enough jobs to address current unemployment remains significant. This is further



E-ISSN:  
2721-13988

reinforced by the Prabowo-Gibran administration's goal of ensuring 8% economic growth by 2029. Achieving this target will not be easy. Therefore, the government needs to make extra efforts to strengthen Indonesia's economic cycle by increasing international cooperation to boost purchasing power, investment, and export markets. Affirmative action and down streaming policies are also needed to strengthen several sectors (Harefa, 2025).

The government has also created a program, such as the Pre-Employment Card, to address domestic unemployment. The Pre-Employment Card system aims to develop competencies for those seeking work, laid-off workers, or those in need of competency enhancement. This program is a collaborative project between the government and the private sector, providing value to users and the private sector. By participating in this program, Pre-Employment Card holders will receive financial assistance, totalling Rp. 3,550,000. The Pre-Employment Card is intended for Indonesian citizens aged 18 and over who are not currently in formal education (Wijayanti & Humardhiana, 2020). Even though there is a scheme to address unemployment, it is important to examine the reality on the ground regarding the effectiveness of these programs.

A study conducted in Jambi Province, specifically in Tebo Regency, concluded that the program was ineffective because, despite training, participants still faced no guarantee of employment. This aligns with data from the Tebo Regency Central Statistics Agency, which found that the open unemployment rate increased from 2.90% in 2019 to 2.95% in 2020 (Rahman & Rahman, 2021).

Another study was conducted in Minahasa, specifically in the Sonder District. In this study, the authors concluded that the implementation of the training outcomes from the Pre-Employment Card was not going well, and there was a significant mismatch in interests among the job training participants (Ilat, Rorong & Tumangkeng, 2024). This indicates that the government's oversight system is inadequate, which makes the training program off target and unable to deliver maximum results.

Research on the effectiveness of the Pre-Employment Card program has also been conducted in Lombok Regency, specifically in Bonjeruk Village, Jonggat District. As in the two previous studies, Pre-Employment Card recipients in this area also failed to reduce unemployment. The main reasons for the program's failure in Lombok Regency were a mismatch between the interests of program recipients and the training provided, as well as the ineffectiveness of the training programs (Pratiassandi, Fuadi & Arini, 2023).

Finally, research conducted in Mandailing Natal Regency also revealed implementation failures. Several factors, such as a lack of outreach and government support, made it difficult for participants to register for the program. A lack of initiative and commitment from the Regency's Manpower Office, as well as ineffective training methods, also contributed to the program's failure (Nasution et al., 2023).

In addition to the Pre-Employment Card program, the government, through the Ministry of Manpower, has officially opened the National Internship Program for College Graduates Batch I in 2025. Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto stated that the ratio of 1 internship position to around 200 applicants is contested in this program. Minister of Manpower Yassierli also explained that in Batch I, there are 20,000 interns, of whom 15,000 have been determined. The interns will also receive an allowance equivalent to the Regency/City minimum wage, which is being implemented for the first time under the



E-ISSN:  
2721-13988

leadership of President Prabowo Subianto, as well as direct guidance from company mentors (Binalavotas, 2025).

However, it is also important to note that the weaknesses of the scholarship system stem from the fairly strict requirements and the difficulty of accessing scholarships for people in low-income situations (Dalla & Kewuel, 2023). This results in an uneven distribution of scholarship recipients, and it is likely that scholarships are accessible only to a select few who possess high intelligence or come from a social class with sufficient or above-average economic status. Furthermore, one study stated that although the policy stipulates that 20% of new student admissions to universities must come from low socio-economic status (low SES), the field shows that the proportion of students from low SES remains very small (Fadhil & Sabc-El-Rayess, 2021). Therefore, it is clear that scholarship programs in Indonesia still benefit only a select few, and their implementation remains ineffective in ensuring equitable education grounded in the principle of justice. It is hoped that this new program will run more effectively and reduce unemployment among the younger generation.

### **3.3. Comparison with the European Union's Youth Program in Addressing Unemployment Issues Among the Young Generation**

A study shows that some companies, especially in developed countries, are increasingly employing workers through a skills-based approach, regardless of degree. In the United States, individuals with multiple skills are increasingly unable to translate their skills into job advantages. They earn lower wages and experience persistent career losses compared to workers with similar skill levels (Shin & Bills, 2021). The issue of skills mismatch is also prevalent in China, where a growing number of college graduates are graduating in fields such as business, finance, and the humanities, but there remains a shortage of skilled workers in engineering and technology, which are crucial for sustaining growth in technology-based sectors. As a result, many graduates face challenges finding jobs that match their skills, while industries crucial to China's economic future struggle to fill technical roles. This mismatch poses risks to overall economic efficiency, potentially leading to lower productivity and slower innovation in key sectors (Shi, 2024).

In Europe, youth unemployment is a serious concern today, as young people are particularly affected by the economic recession. As of August 2014, 7.5 million young Europeans were unemployed, not in education or training (NEET). To address this issue, EU members have adopted a scheme called the Youth Guarantee, which includes a range of state-funded measures that offer high-quality training, education, or internships to all young people under the age of 25 who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) (Selenko & Pils, 2019). The study also shows that the loss of employment, education, and training is very likely to leave a scar. It seems that people who are more likely to suffer while they are NEET may need an extra boost to their well-being.

The Youth Guarantee program was originally a European Union scheme, launched in response to the Great Recession of 2013, to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 receive a job offer, continuing education, an internship, or vocational training within 4 months of becoming unemployed. Between 2014 and 2020, the Youth Guarantee was partially funded with a total of EUR 12.7 billion from the EU budget. Even recent proposals to strengthen the Youth Guarantee have been revised. The program now covers young people aged 15 to 29 (up



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from 25) and aims to be more inclusive and provide a wider range of skills needed by companies (Tamesberger & Bacher, 2021).

One study shows that, in order to combat youth unemployment, around 9 million young people have benefited from the European Union's Youth Guarantee. The main objectives of this framework are to improve the transition from school to work, invest in young people's employability, and prevent the risk of social exclusion. Efficiently utilising support from EU and national programs requires significant effort, and this support must be more targeted to achieve the desired results. Many scientific publications examine measures to increase youth employment by improving pathways from education to the labour market, providing more information on companies' interests and today's young people's desires, and proposing ways to avoid conflicts between representatives of different generations. However, less attention is paid to assessing the measures implemented to include young people in the labour market or, at least, to return to education, training, or apprenticeship (Stabingis, 2020).

As reported on the European Parliament website, it is stated that the European Union has reduced the unemployment rate among the younger generation from 25% in 2013 to 14.6% by January 2025 (Parliament, 2019). It could be said that this is a fantastic achievement, given the many challenges the younger generation has had to overcome recently.

The study found that participants in the program, particularly the Italians who were the focus of the study, were 7.4 and 4.4 percentage points more likely to find employment and be offered an open-ended contract, respectively. Active labour market policies, such as the internship program promoted within the Youth Guarantee framework, have been shown to help individuals overcome labour market exclusion, not only by providing jobs but also by promoting quality employment through permanent contracts. The success of these programs is influenced by several factors. First, the nature of the active labour market policy, which is specifically designed to improve the skills of the individuals involved; second, local authorities having specific EU guidelines that can help them understand the policy's ultimate goals; third, the quality of the training offered at selected companies; and fourth, the policy's objectives (Focacci, 2020).

In addition to research, the European Commission also provided information on factors that have been key to the success of the Youth Guarantee in addressing youth unemployment in the EU. These include the widespread use of youth-focused information channels, particularly social media; effective coordination between local youth groups, NGOs, and relevant government departments and agencies; and data sharing, particularly data that facilitates effective early intervention. The profiling results, by identifying those most vulnerable to long-term unemployment, enable Public Employment Services (PES) to focus their resources on ensuring, to the greatest extent possible, sustainable outcomes for this subset of the NEET population. This is achieved by creating a range of support tailored to each individual's needs and capabilities (Commission, 2018).

#### **4. Conclusion**

The right to employment and a decent income, as stipulated in Article 27, paragraph (2), of the 1945 Constitution, is a basic right that must be protected by the government because young people are the driving force and investment in the nation's future. However, this right is quite hampered in Indonesia due to several factors, such as skill mismatch caused by



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2721-13988

technological disruption, and the economic recession due to COVID-19, which has led to the social phenomenon of unemployment among the younger generation. The Indonesian government, under the mandate of the Manpower Law, has made efforts to address the high unemployment rate by improving the investment climate and providing pre-employment cards to ensure workers' skills match company demands. However, field data show that efforts to increase foreign investment have led to a decrease in labour absorption rates. Furthermore, pre-employment cards have not yielded positive results for several reasons, including a lack of government oversight, misalignment of participants' job-training interests, and a lack of guaranteed employment after training. Reflecting on the European Union's Youth Guarantee policy, we can see that good coordination, accurate program targeting, and effective funding distribution are the main factors determining its success in addressing the challenge of youth unemployment. Thus, it can be concluded that the government's overall policy approach to addressing youth unemployment has proven ineffective, depriving young people of their right to employment and a decent living. Therefore, improvements in policy and implementation are needed to decrease the unemployment rate among young people in the country.

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E-ISSN:  
2721-13988

PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF GRADUATE  
SCHOOL ON SUSTAINABILITY (ICGSS)

10<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Sustainability (ICoS10)

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