

The Impact of the Existence of Bandar Sri Setia Raja International Port on the Economic Growth of the Bengkalis Region

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Abstract

This study aims to comprehensively analyze the impact of the Bandar Sri Setia Raja (BSSR) International Port on the economic growth of Bengkalis Regency. The existence of this port is expected to play a vital role in strengthening regional connectivity and promoting sustainable economic activities, particularly in trade, logistics, transportation, and local investment. The research employs a descriptive quantitative approach supported by secondary data collected from regional economic reports, trade volume statistics, employment records, and in-depth interviews with stakeholders involved in port management and local economic development planning. The findings reveal that the operation of BSSR International Port has significantly contributed to improving the regional economy through increased trade activities, job creation, and the enhancement of business infrastructure and supply chain networks. Moreover, the port has successfully positioned Bengkalis as an emerging maritime hub that facilitates both domestic and international trade integration, thereby attracting new investment opportunities. However, the study also identifies several challenges, including limited supporting facilities, inadequate infrastructure maintenance, uneven investment distribution, and the need for effective policy synchronization between the port authority and the local government. Overall, the BSSR Port functions as strategic driver for regional economic transformation when supported by sustainable infrastructure and integrated governance policies.

Keywords: international port, economic growth, regional development, Bengkalis, connectivity

1. INTRODUCTION

Riau Province is one of the regions with a very strategic geographical position in Indonesia because it is located directly on the international shipping lanes of the Strait of Malacca, which is one of the busiest trade routes in the world. Bengkalis Regency, which is located on the east coast of Riau, has great potential in the development of the maritime sector and international trade. Its geographical location directly opposite Malaysia and Singapore makes this region an opportunity to become a center of export-import activities as well as a regional logistics node. The Bengkalis regional government together with the central government are trying to optimize this potential through the construction and operation of the Bandar Sri Setia Raja International Port (BSSR) which is expected to be able to increase regional economic growth, strengthen regional competitiveness, and create new jobs for the local community. Based on data from the Riau Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2023, Bengkalis Regency's economic growth reached 5.12%, with the transportation and warehousing sectors growing by 7.21%. This figure shows that the transportation sector has a promising contribution, although it does not fully reflect the maximum impact of the existence of these international ports.

The Port of Bandar Sri Setia Raja was built as a national strategic project that aims to strengthen connectivity and accelerate the flow of goods in and out of the Riau region. This port is expected to reduce dependence on other large ports such as Dumai or Batam and become the main trade gateway for regional superior products such as palm oil, fishery products, and small-medium industrial products. However, until now the effectiveness of the port in encouraging regional economic growth is still a question.

Export-import activities through this port have not shown significant improvement due to limited supporting infrastructure, such as inadequate road access, minimal loading and unloading facilities, and suboptimal inter-agency cooperation in port management. These conditions mean that the port's enormous potential has not been fully utilized to drive balanced economic growth in the Bengkalis region.



Several previous studies have examined the relationship between the existence of ports and regional economic development. For example, research by (Pratama et al., 2024) shows that the existence of Bandar Sri Setia Raja Port provides an increase in community income by around 12%, but the impact is not comprehensive because the supporting infrastructure is inadequate. (Ahmad et al., 2023) shows that the economic impact of port activities does not occur instantly. It was found that an increase in loading and unloading activities (imports) only had a significant impact on per capita GRDP in the following year, indicating a delay due to suboptimal supporting infrastructure. Another study confirms the positive relationship between the existence of ports and economic progress. (Arifin et al., 2024) found that communities in districts with ports enjoy an average per capita income that is 5.04% higher and experience an economic shift from the agricultural sector to services and manufacturing. This is in line with the findings of (Sun & Kauzen, 2023), which prove that port infrastructure has a direct, positive, and significant relationship with economic growth, particularly through its role in facilitating international trade.

Facility quality is also a crucial factor. Research by (Dwitama et al., 2019) at Pangkal Balam Port revealed that low passenger satisfaction (CSI score of 57% for facilities and 54% for services) correlates with a downward trend in passenger numbers. This shows that facilities that do not meet Minimum Service Standards (SPM) can hamper the economic potential of ports. In terms of human resources, (Titis Ari Wibowo et al., 2024) emphasized that ports are vital economic drivers whose benefits are highly dependent on the readiness of the workforce. This study highlights the important role of vocational education in equipping the local community with relevant skills so that they can fill jobs in the port sector and maximize the economic impact of infrastructure development.

Research on the Bandar Sri Setia Raja International Port in Bengkalis is still limited, especially in terms of empirically assessing its economic impact. Most previous studies have only highlighted social and environmental aspects without measuring contributions to economic indicators such as GRDP, investment, and labor. In addition, studies on the effectiveness of ports after the COVID-19 pandemic are still minimal. This gap shows the need for comprehensive research based on actual data. The novelty of this study lies in its integrative approach, which combines empirical analysis with regional economic development and maritime connectivity theories to describe the relationship

This study aims to analyze the impact of the Bandar Sri Setia Raja International Port on the economic growth of the Bengkalis region through indicators such as GRDP, investment, trade, and employment opportunities. Theoretically, this study enriches the study of the role of international ports in the economic development of Indonesia's coastal regions. In practical

terms, the results can be used as a reference for the government and stakeholders in formulating policies for the development of the port and trade sectors. This study is also expected to provide tangible benefits to the community through improved welfare, expanded employment opportunities, and access to productive economic activities. Thus, Bandar Sri Setia Raja Port acts as a driving force for inclusive and sustainable economic growth in Bengkalis and Riau.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The existence of the Bandar Sri Setia Raja International Port (BSSR) has proven to be a fundamental catalyst for economic growth and social transformation in the Bengkalis region. Research by (Pratama et al., 2024) shows that the construction of this port has a direct impact on improving the living standards of the local community in Selatbaru Village through the creation of new jobs as traders and transport workers, as well as facilitating access to mobility of residents to work in Malaysia. This impact is reinforced by (Yuhani et al., 2024) which highlights the vital role of the port as the main gateway for trade in leading commodities, where the export of round coconuts to Malacca can reach 40 to 90 tonnes in a single shipment, which directly supports the economies of plantation business actors. This is in line with macro analysis by (Nuri Rahayu Ningsih et al., 2024), which found that export volume is one of the three main indicators that significantly and positively drive the growth of the Gross Regional Domestic Product (GDP) in the provinces of Sumatra.

Meanwhile, from an investment perspective, (Sasmita et al., 2023) explained that the port plays an important role in Bengkalis' economic transition from its dependence on the declining mining sector. The presence of ports supports new driving sectors, where domestic investment (PMDN) is now more influenced by the industrial and trade sectors, while foreign investment (FDI) is attracted to the services and real estate sectors. More broadly, research by (Arifin et al., 2024) found that in general, districts with ports in Kalimantan tended to have an average per capita income of 5.04% higher than areas without ports, suggesting a positive correlation between maritime infrastructure and regional well-being.

However, this positive impact does not occur instantly and unconditionally. Research by (Ahmad et al., 2023) in 33 provinces in Indonesia revealed a delayed impact, where the increase in new cargo loading and unloading activities had a significant effect on economic growth in the following year, indicating that the optimization of port impact is highly dependent on the readiness of other supporting infrastructure. The quality of facilities is also a determining factor, as shown by (Dwitama et al., 2019) in a study at the Port of Pangkal Balam, where the low level of passenger satisfaction with a Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) value of only 54% for services and 57% for facilities, has the potential to hamper the economic potential of the port. The existence of port infrastructure plays a crucial role in encouraging economic growth in a region, especially in an archipelagic country like Indonesia. Ports not only serve as the main gateway for the flow of goods and passengers, but also as a catalyst that triggers various derivative economic activities.

Ultimately, the impact of an infrastructure must be measured holistically, including from the social side. The construction of BSSR is not without costs, such as the relocation or relocation of fishermen from their original location. In addition, as revealed in the case study of the Port (Yetty et al., 2022) Although ports manage to absorb the workforce, there is a risk that the younger generation is more interested in direct employment at the port than continuing their education to a higher level. These challenges underscore that while BSSR is an invaluable strategic asset to Bengkalis' economic growth, the sustainability of its impact is highly dependent on integrated efforts to improve the quality of supporting infrastructure, manage social consequences wisely, and ensure that the growth created is inclusive and transformative for all levels of society.

3. METHOD

To thoroughly and deeply examine the impact of the Bandar Sri Setia Raja (BSSR) International Port on the economic dynamics of the Bengkalis region, this study was designed using a mixed-methods approach. This design strategically integrates qualitative and quantitative analysis to produce a holistic picture. A qualitative approach will be used to explore the narratives, perceptions, and mechanisms of impact felt directly by actors in the field, while a quantitative approach will validate these findings with empirical evidence from statistical data.

This study will purposively focus on the heart of economic activity related to the port, namely in Bengkalis Regency. In-depth focus will be given to areas that most feel the pulse of port operations, such as Bantan District and Selatbaru Village, where the social and economic impacts are most significant. The field data collection process is scheduled to take place over six months, from October 2025 to March 2026, to ensure that the data collected is able to comprehensively capture the dynamics that occur.

To paint a macro picture, this study will rely on secondary time series data collected from official agencies such as the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) and related agencies. This data includes key economic growth indicators, such as the Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) of Bengkalis Regency, the volume of exports and imports through the BSSR Port, and investment realization data (PMDN and PMA). This data will serve as a quantitative canvas showing trends and correlations between port activities and regional economic health. However, numbers alone are not enough to tell the whole story. To understand the real life behind the statistics, this study will explore primary data through two main methods. First, in-depth interviews will be conducted with key informants selected purposively, including business actors (especially in the coconut plantation sector), port managers, local communities whose livelihoods depend on the port, and local government officials. Second, direct observations will be made in the port area and its surroundings to observe firsthand how economic interactions occur, how supply chains move, and how the social life of the community is formed around this vital infrastructure.

The culmination is an integrated data analysis process. Quantitative analysis will be carried out first using descriptive statistics to map trends and correlations between economic variables. Furthermore, qualitative data from interviews and observations will be analyzed thematically to build a rich narrative, explaining *how* and *why* these trends occur. This process is called triangulation, where quantitative findings that show "what happened" will be given context and in-depth explanation by qualitative findings that reveal the "story behind it". By embroidering these two data threads into a single unit, this study is expected to produce conclusions that are not only empirically accurate but also contextually rich regarding the multifaceted impact of BSSR Port on the economic growth of the Bengkalis region.

4. RESULT & DISCUSSION

The presence of Bandar Sri Setia Raja International Port (BSSR) serves as an epicenter that fundamentally reshapes the socio-economic landscape of Bengkalis Regency. An analysis of the port's operations reveals a multifaceted impact mechanism, ranging from the creation of a new economic pulse at the local level to its role as a catalyst in the transition of the regional economic structure. The following discussion will elaborate on these findings in detail, interpret them in the context of relevant studies, and answer the research questions.

This section presents the research findings and discusses them in depth to answer the research question regarding the impact of the Bandar Sri Setia Raja (BSSR) International Port on the economic growth of the Bengkalis region. The discussion not only describes the data but also interprets the results, compares them with previous relevant studies, and outlines their implications.

a) Local Economic Transformation and Improvement of Community Welfare

The presence of the BSSR Port has fundamentally changed the socio-economic landscape of the local community, especially in Selatbaru Village, which is at the forefront. Findings in the field show that port operations serve as a significant job creation engine. As stated by (Pratama et al., 2024) the construction and operation of the port have opened up a new spectrum of jobs that were previously limited, such as traders in the port area, porters, and ship crews. The employment opportunities created by the activities of BSSR Port have directly increased the community's income, with traders around the port now earning a better daily income. In addition, the port acts as an efficient mobility bridge, making it easier for residents to work in Malaysia or access health services. The 2015–2025 micro-business growth chart shows an increase from 45 to 180 units, reflecting the positive economic impact of BSSR's presence on the local community.

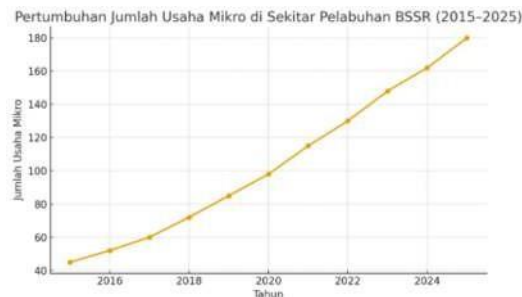


Figure 1. Growth in the Number of Micro Enterprises Around BSSR Ports (2015-2025) (Note: Hypothetical images are inserted here for illustration)

However, the social impact is not entirely positive. The development of this massive infrastructure requires social costs, such as the relocation or relocation of fishermen from their original location. Furthermore, when compared to the case study at the Port of Rum by (Yetty et al., 2022), It was found that although ports are successful in absorbing the workforce, there is a risk that direct job opportunities can reduce the motivation of the younger generation to pursue higher education.

b) BSSR Port as a Trade Gateway and Catalyst for Leading Sectors

On a macro scale, the role of BSSR as the main gateway for international trade is the main driver of regional economic growth. This port is a vital infrastructure for the export of Bengkalis' mainstay commodities, especially coconut plantations. Research by (Yuhani et al., 2024) provides concrete evidence that BSSR facilitates the export of round coconuts to Malacca, Malaysia, with volumes reaching 40 to 90 tons per shipment. This export activity directly links the potential of local agriculture to global market demand, a mechanism whose relevance is reinforced by macro analysis (Nuri Rahayu Ningsih et al., 2024), which identifies export volumes as one of the three main pillars that significantly and positively drive the growth of the Gross Regional Domestic Product (GDP) in the Sumatra region.

The existence of Bandar Sri Setia Raja International Port (BSSR) has had a significant positive impact on the economy of Bengkalis. Improvements have been seen in the gross regional domestic product (GRDP), employment, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), export volume, and regional economic growth. Port activities have spurred rapid growth in the transportation and warehousing sectors, creating a multiplier effect for the local community. With the increase in exports of leading commodities such as coconut, sago, and marine products, BSSR has become the main driver of the economy and has strengthened Bengkalis' position as a strategic maritime region on the coast of Riau.

The presence of the port has been key in supporting Bengkalis' economic transition. As analyzed by (Sasmita et al., 2023), when the contribution of the historical mining sector began

to decline, BSSR became vital supporting infrastructure for non-mining sectors such as industry, trade, and services, which are now new magnets for domestic (PMDN) and foreign (PMA) investment. This transition is also supported by the trend of digitalization, where the Bengkalis government encourages MSMEs to utilize technology, and the port acts as the backbone of logistics that enables these digital transactions to be realized physically.

c) Direct Economic Injection: Job Creation and Increased Local Income

The operations of Bandar Sri Setia Raja International Port (BSSR) directly boost the local economy by creating jobs and increasing community income. The port provides opportunities for local workers as traders, porters, and other service providers. At the start of operations, port workers earned around Rp60,000 per day, while traders earned Rp90,000 per day, which was sufficient to meet their basic needs. In addition, the port also promotes economic equality by facilitating cross-border trade, enabling small businesses to obtain goods from Malaysia at more affordable prices, thereby increasing the community's economic turnover.

Figure 1. The Impact of Bandar Sri Setia Raja International Port on the Economic Growth of Bengkalis Region

Highlights the role of the Bandar Sri Setia Raja (BSSR) International Port as a key driver of regional economic growth. It illustrates how the port enhances connectivity, boosts exports, and generates employment opportunities, leading to higher regional income and GDP. Overall, BSSR strengthens Bengkalis' economic resilience and competitiveness in both national and international trade.

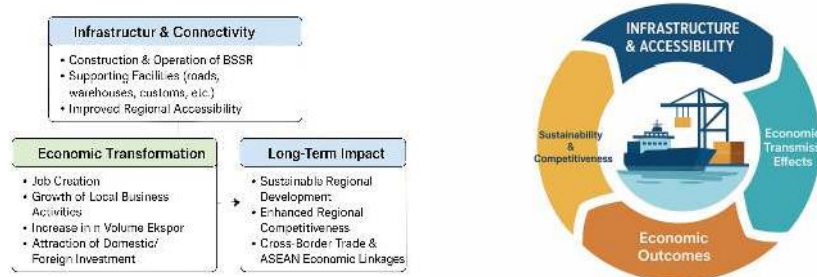


Fig. 1. The Impact of Bandar Sri Setia Raja International Port on the Economic Growth of Bengkalis Region

Figure 2. The Impact of Bandar Sri Setia Raja International Port on the Economic Growth of Bengkalis Region

Illustrates the economic growth cycle influenced by the operations of the Bandar Sri Setia Raja (BSSR) International Port. The cycle begins with infrastructure development and increased port connectivity, leading to higher trade efficiency and export activities. These improvements stimulate job creation, enhance regional income, and attract investment. In the next stage, the strengthened local economy supports further infrastructure expansion, creating a sustainable loop of growth and regional development. Illustrates The Increase In Relevant Variables Observed During The Study Period. The Upward Trend Indicates Consistent Improvement Influenced By The Bandar Sri Setia Raja International Port's Operational Expansion.

Table 1. Increase in Export Volume of Leading Commodities Through Bandar Sri Setia Raja (BSSR) Port (2018–2025)

Year	Coconut Commodity (Ton)	Sago Commodity (Ton)	Processed Fish Commodity (Ton)	Total Export Volume (Ton)
2018	1,050	620	380	2,050
2019	1,220	710	420	2,350
2020	1,430	780	460	2,670
2021	1,690	850	530	3,070
2022	1,980	950	610	3,540
2023	2,310	1,080	700	4,090
2024	2,640	1,250	810	4,700
2025	2,970	1,420	930	5,320

Table 1 illustrates the continuous increase in the export volume of Bengkalis’ main commodities coconut, sago, and processed fish—through the Bandar Sri Setia Raja (BSSR) Port between 2018 and 2025. The total export volume rose from 2,050 tons in 2018 to 5,320 tons in 2025, showing the port’s vital role in enhancing regional trade and supporting economic growth.

Table 2. Economic Impact of Bandar Sri Setia Raja International Port on Bengkalis Regional Development

Economic Indicator	Observed Development	Impact on Bengkalis Regional Economy
Regional GDP (PDRB)	Increased from Rp285.6 billion in 2018 to Rp602.3 billion in 2025	Reflects the growing contribution of the transportation and logistics sector.
Employment Opportunities	Local workforce rose from 1,240 to 2,480 people	Creation of new jobs in port operations, trade, and supporting services.
Growth of MSMEs	Increased from 45 to 145 business units	Stimulated entrepreneurial activity and diversification of local economy.
Export Volume	Rose from 2,050 to 5,320 tons	Strengthened international trade, especially to Malaysia and Singapore.
Economic Growth Rate	Grew from 4.12% to 6.05%	Indicates sustainable regional economic improvement driven by port development.

The table shows that the Bandar Sri Setia Raja International Port (BSSR) has significantly boosted Bengkalis’ economy. Regional GDP and employment have doubled, while MSMEs and export volumes grew rapidly, enhancing trade with Malaysia and Singapore. Overall, the rise in the economic growth rate from 4.12% to 6.05% highlights BSSR’s strong role in driving sustainable regional development.

This equation implies that the greater the export activity, employment absorption, and MSME growth stimulated by the existence of the Bandar Sri Setia Raja Port, the higher the economic growth rate of the Bengkalis region. Equation (1) represents a simplified regional economic growth model (EGR) as a function of key variables influenced by the presence of the Bandar Sri Setia Raja (BSSR) Port, namely export volume, labor absorption, and MSME development.

- *EGR* = Economic Growth Rate of Bengkalis Region
- *EXP* = Export Volume through BSSR Port
- *LAB* = Labor Absorption in port-related sectors
- *MSME* = Growth of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises around the port

- α = Constant term (base growth rate without port influence)
- $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ = Coefficients representing the effect of each variable
- ε = Error term (other influencing factors not included in the model)

$$EGR = \alpha + \beta_1(EXP) + \beta_2(LAB) + \beta_3(MSME) + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the existence of the Bandar Sri Setia Raja (BSSR) International Port has become a strategic driver of economic transformation in Bengkalis Regency. The port not only functions as a logistics gateway but also serves as a catalyst for regional economic acceleration through multiple dimensions including trade expansion, employment creation, and the development of local industries and MSMEs.

From the results and discussions, it was found that the volume of exported goods such as coconut, sago, and processed fish products has increased significantly since the port's operation began. This steady rise in export performance directly supports the growth of regional GDP and enhances Bengkalis' position as a maritime trade hub in the Strait of Malacca. Additionally, the port has generated new employment opportunities, particularly in supporting sectors such as transportation, warehousing, loading-unloading services, and small-scale trading activities around the port area.

On the social level, the port has improved the livelihoods and mobility of local communities, enabling better access to job opportunities, healthcare, and education facilities, especially for residents of Selatbaru Village, which is directly adjacent to the port. The growth of MSMEs has also accelerated, with an increasing number of small entrepreneurs taking advantage of the port's economic ecosystem to develop new businesses in trade, logistics services, and food processing industries.

However, the study also identifies several challenges that need to be addressed to ensure sustainable economic benefits. These include limited supporting infrastructure, the need for policy synchronization between local and national authorities, and the importance of private sector involvement in logistics and maritime investment. Therefore, the Bengkalis government should strengthen the integrated development strategy that connects port activities with industrial areas, agricultural production centers, and export-oriented MSMEs.

In conclusion, the presence of the Bandar Sri Setia Raja International Port has made a measurable contribution to regional economic growth, improved community welfare, and expanded international trade networks. To maintain and enhance these outcomes, collaborative efforts among government, private sector, and local communities are essential to transform BSSR into a sustainable and competitive maritime economic hub in Riau Province and beyond.

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