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**TAX POLICIES THAT SUPPORT INNOVATION COMPETITIVENESS OF SMALL
 BUSINESSES IN INDONESIA**

By

Heru Kreshna Reza¹, Cristofer Sumiok², Loso Judijanto³, Melly Susanti⁴

¹Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis, Universitas Esa Unggul

²Fakultas Ekonomi Jurusan Akuntansi, Universitas negeri manado

³IPOSS Jakarta

⁴Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis, Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu

Email: [1heru.kreshna@esaunggul.ac.id](mailto:heru.kreshna@esaunggul.ac.id)

Abstract

This study examines the impact of tax policy, competitive challenges, access to capital, and tax digitalization on the growth of MSMEs in Indonesia. The reduction of the Final Income Tax (PPh) rate and the exemption of PPh for entrepreneurs with a turnover of up to IDR 500 million per year have eased the financial burden of MSMEs and increased their production capacity. However, cartel and monopoly practices remain an obstacle to business competition. While the Kredit Usaha Rakyat (KUR) program improves access to capital, information about the program should be expanded, especially in remote areas. While not all MSMEs are ready to adopt the technology, the digitization of the tax system such as e-Filing and e-Invoicing has improved the efficiency and transparency of the taxation process. The main barriers that require further education and socialization are low levels of tax compliance and limited access to information. Policy recommendations include expanding tax incentives, improving access to capital, enforcing laws against cartels and monopolies, and supporting digitalization and education. With the right policy support, MSMEs can develop into a stronger economic backbone, contributing more to the national economy and community welfare.

Keywords: Msmes, Tax Policy, Business Competition, Access To Capital, Digitalization Tax

INTRODUCTION

By increasing employment, people's income, and innovation, small businesses greatly influence a country's economic growth and progress (Naumkin, 2020). However, a high tax burden can prevent small companies from expanding. Taxes are mandatory financing for governance, such as infrastructure and public services. Income tax, rent tax, excise tax, value-added tax (VAT), corporate tax, turnover tax, and others are some of the types of taxes imposed by local governments (Mwangangi, 2023). Although the high tax burden still hinders small businesses, the government plans to improve infrastructure to support economic growth.

Indonesia's economy relies on micro, small and medium-sized industries (MSMEs).

According to data collected by the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, the number of MSMEs in Indonesia will reach 64.2 million units by 2021, contributing 61.07% or IDR 8,573.89 trillion to GDP. They are also able to garner up to 60.4% of total investment and absorb 97% of the workforce. The government continues to strive to maintain and strengthen small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia. To provide tax incentives to MSMEs, one of the steps taken is to reduce the Final Income Tax (PPh) rate from 1% to 0.5%. Entrepreneurs with a business of IDR 500 million per year are exempted from the Final Income Tax. (kemenkeu.go.id).

In Indonesia, the collection of individual and corporate taxes belongs to the Directorate

General of Taxes (DGT), which is part of the Ministry of Finance. The DGT handles a variety of taxes, including income tax and value-added tax (VAT) (Sari et al., 2023). In addition to paying central and local taxes, taxed parties also pay cleaning and security fees (Maretanidanini et al., 2023). Small businesses often experience financial difficulties due to these additional burdens, which stops them from expanding and competing in the market (Wahyudin, 2023).

Cartels occurring in various industries in Indonesia, such as telecommunications, oil and gas, food, and beverages, have led to many cases of unfair competition and market manipulation (Baso et al., 2022; Jawani, 2022). The Indonesian Tire Business Association (APBI) noticed tire cartel violations and highlighted the challenges in enforcing anti-monopoly laws and held business associations accountable for encouraging anti-competitive behavior (Ramadhani, 2017). These cartels also often involve price-fixing agreements and market manipulation to control prices and hinder fair competition (Ramadhani, 2017).

According to Indonesian law, monopoly pricing is a significant consideration in business and economic transactions (Jusmadi, 2023). This occurs when one company or group of companies sets prices without considering competitors (Setiawan et al., 2022). Unfair business practices such as cartels, monopolies, mergers, and closed agreements can disrupt market dynamics and undermine fair competition (Akyuwen, 2017; Azalia, 2023; Saleh, 2019). Indonesian law aims to prevent and control these practices to maintain fair competition.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Taxation

In small-scale business management, taxes play an important role and can hinder company growth. The health of the MSME sector is vital to Indonesia's economic growth, especially in the face of the 2023 global recession (Maretanidanini et al., 2023). The

understanding of taxation, socio-economic position, and currency exchange rates are important in forming the basis of individual tax requirements, so good tax education and practice are indispensable (D. Wahyudin, 2023). Political reluctance undermines government efforts to mitigate negative impacts while pursuing various goals (Aryani & Tambunan, 2022). According to Faust (1928), workers' wages are equivalent to business costs and determine who pays for government actions. A wise spending strategy can increase business profitability. Governments collect funds through taxes from their citizens, which are essential for wealth distribution and public services (Wahyuni et al., 2020)

The taxes imposed by the government on the goods in question cause the associated costs to increase. The Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, which is responsible for tax collection in Indonesia, is represented by the Directorate General of Taxes, which is one of the main work units (Hafiz & Muhibban, 2024)

Tax Facilities, Stricter tax rules or lack of incentives can hinder the growth of small businesses (Khairiyah & Akhmadi, 2019). In addition to the Directorate General of Taxes (DGT), there are several other national organizations or groups that are also involved in law enforcement, especially in relation to certain types of imprisonment. People's Business Credit (KUR), the purpose of this low-interest loan program is to help MSMEs gain access to capital. According to Sangadah & Mutmainah (2021), Kredit Usaha Rakyat (KUR) is important for loan access and improving cash flow and savings of MSMEs. Although KUR is not directly related to tax policy, the program can develop MSMEs and influence their tax compliance Gunarto & Dermawan (2022), KUR increases production capacity, formalizes businesses, and improves financial management. Tax digitization, the use of digital technology is optimized for payment systems, payroll, invoicing, and payment processing (Sangadah & Mutmainah, 2021).

Tax digitization aims to improve efficiency, transparency, and legal compliance, while lowering administrative costs and reducing errors. One form of this is e-Filing, an online tax reporting system for filing annual tax returns (Mauliza, 2022; Saragih et al., 2022). According to Indriana et al. (2023), e-Filing makes it easy for taxpayers to view tax reports without having to go to the tax office. Second, e-Invoicing replaces manual invoice checks and reduces the risk of forgery Wahyuni et al. (2020). e-Bupot makes it easier for businesses to manage tax withholding evidence. Finally, Digital Tax (e-Tax) integrates various tax services in one digital platform for more efficient access (Aji et al., 2022).

Business Competition

In an economy, unfair competition is of four types: cartels, restrictive covenants, mergers, and monopolies. A cartel is an organized group that aims to manage a particular industry or business for profit. Cartel members collaborate to control the price or production of goods/services in the market, often by lowering expenditure to increase revenue. These practices include price fixing, market regulation, or production adjustment to form a de facto monopoly or oligopoly (Miranda Garibay et al., 2019) Closed-door agreement, in business or private law, private agreements are often used to resolve disputes without disclosure to the public or customers. These agreements can reduce business costs or foster cooperation (Law, 2023). However, they can lead to legal problems if they violate provisions or undermine market stability. Therefore, it is important to ensure the legal process respects the interests of the public and relevant parties.

Merger, in a business context, this refers to the merger of two or more companies that were previously competitors in the same or other markets. Business mergers often raise questions regarding their impact on fair market prices, which auditors and antitrust authorities should be aware of (Noufal azmi, 2022). Monopoly, In Indonesia, a monopoly market occurs when one

company or group of companies controls the market independently or has very strong resources, allowing them to set prices and production without being affected by significant price fluctuations (Tira et al., 2023)

Monopolies can occur in several economic sectors in Indonesia, including banking, energy, telecommunications, and other sectors. The causes of market monopoly can be regulations that restrict the entry of new competitors, anti-competitive practices by large firms, or control of critical resources or infrastructure within the industry (Lagutin, 2023).

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia play an important role in the economy, both in employment scheduling and contribution to GDP (Ismadi et al., 2023). However, capital constraints discourage many MSMEs from participating in complex projects James (2024). MSMEs also experience frequent fluctuations in assets and capital, and are thus stuck with small-scale loans or direct financing from stock exchange companies Mhlongo & Daya, (2023). Marketing and Market Access: MSMEs often face difficulties in accessing domestic and international markets due to limited distribution and marketing networks, as well as fierce competition from large enterprises and cheaper imported products (Yose, 2023)

Small Business Enterprise Performance

Small businesses are vital to the Indonesian economy due to their contribution to GDP, job creation, and poverty alleviation (Areyne et al., 2023). Factors such as profit margin, market size, and number of sales determine the success of a business. According to Kumari (2023), high taxes make it difficult for small businesses to succeed. Disorganized tax administration also hinders economic growth and small businesses. Poernamasari (2023), emphasizes the importance of economic activities based on profitability, market size, and the type of products sold.

Mubarak et al. (2023), state that many small businesses around the world have a significant impact on economic growth. People buy goods in the market (Ar, 2022; Jatmika, 2017). A company is considered successful if it has strong demand and a stable market, which is achieved through high-quality products and attractive prices. Small businesses must meet customer needs and offer products at affordable prices to gain a large market share. According to Widiarty (2023), the sustainability of small businesses is crucial to ensure their business continuity.

Small Business Entities (SBEs) simply need to cater to the needs of the market keeping in mind the right tax parameters. Small and medium-sized businesses can threaten and reduce market share as they usually have smaller capital. According to Nasrah et al. (2023), large market power has a greater influence on performance improvement. With a stable supply of various goods at reasonable prices, the market can survive.

Every business wants to maximize profits to stay in operation with sales revenue exceeding costs incurred (Putri et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2022). However, constraints such as industrial taxes and unrecorded cartel influence often hamper small businesses (Hapsari & Puspitasari, 2024), especially as high taxes on retail prices make it difficult for them to compete with competitive prices.

Retailers need a variety of goods to match changes in demand to be successful (Imran, 2023). However, rules that limit the types of products that can be sold often restrict small businesses. For example, only brands with official licenses can sell cooking gas at retail, limiting product variety (Kumaran & Hemalatha, 2023). As a result, customers may lose interest in other brands. Small firms may also be unable to stock certain products due to these restrictions (Perera, 2024).

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with two main focuses. First, the economic analysis examines the tax burden on small businesses and its implications for income, economic growth, and the manufacturing sector. Second, the quantitative approach (implicit) uses statistical analysis or empirical data to support claims about the relationship between tax reduction and small business growth and manufacturing sector performance. This case study collects data through interview, observation, and documentation analysis. Thematic qualitative analysis finds, analyzes, and reports patterns in the data.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals important findings on how tax policy supports small business development in Indonesia. The findings cover several aspects of taxation, business competition, and small business performance. First, taxation policies implemented in Indonesia have a significant impact on the operation and growth of small businesses. The policy of reducing the Final Income Tax (PPH) rate from 1% to 0.5% and exempting Final PPH for entrepreneurs with a turnover of up to IDR 500 million per year provides great benefits to small and medium-sized businesses (MSMEs). With lower tax rates, MSMEs have a lighter financial burden, allowing them to allocate more resources than before.

The Final Income Tax exemption for entrepreneurs with a turnover of up to IDR500 million per year has helped early-stage MSMEs reduce administrative and financial burdens. In addition, the government also provides other tax incentives, including tax reductions for export-focused businesses and tax write-offs for certain sectors deemed important. Overall, these tax incentives help MSMEs reduce their tax burden. With this help, MSMEs become more emboldened to develop innovative products and enter into international markets,

which in turn increases their scale and competitiveness in the global market.

Both Kredit Usaha Rakyat (KUR) programs have proven successful in assisting small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) by providing access to capital at low interest rates. While KUR is not directly related to tax policy, the program helps improve MSMEs' capabilities in production, business formalization, and preparation of better financial statements. This in turn increases tax compliance and MSME participation in the formal tax system. In Indonesia, MSMEs continue to face cartel and monopolistic practices. Cartel agreements between businesses to control prices and production harm MSMEs by encouraging unfair competition. Conversely, the dominance of large players in monopolies prevents MSMEs from entering certain markets.

MSMEs in sectors controlled by cartels and monopolies often face difficulties maintaining market share and growing. Government policies to eliminate competition practices are not always effective, as the main obstacles are weak enforcement and lack of cooperation between government agencies. The digitization of tax systems, such as e-Filing, e-Faktur, and e-Bupot, improves the efficiency and transparency of tax administration as well as the compliance of taxpayers, including MSMEs. The use of e-Filing and e-Faktur enables online tax reporting and payment, reducing costs and time for MSME tax administration. Digital technology also reduces the risk of fraud in tax reporting, helps MSMEs fulfill tax obligations quickly and easily, and enables business expansion and product innovation. In addition to KUR, the government encourages banks and financial institutions to facilitate access to credit for MSMEs. This includes credit guarantees and alternative financing schemes such as fintech and crowdfunding. Digital systems allow the government to monitor business transactions in real-time, preventing tax evasion. With an

easier and more transparent process, MSMEs are more motivated to comply with taxes, increasing tax revenue and helping them better manage their tax obligations.

MSMEs in Indonesia continue to face competition challenges such as cartels, restrictive covenants, mergers, and monopolies. Despite the many incentives offered, challenges in improving tax compliance among MSMEs still exist. Some MSMEs are reluctant to register as taxpayers due to lack of understanding of tax benefits and procedures. More intensive socialization and technical support from the government is needed to help MSMEs understand the importance of tax compliance. The ability of MSMEs to compete fairly in the market is also affected by the Antitrust Law created by the government.

The performance of small businesses in Indonesia is affected by profit margins, market access, and operating costs, including the tax burden. MSMEs that can control costs and take advantage of tax incentives show better performance in profitability and growth. However, tax burdens and cartel influence often prevent small businesses from achieving desired profits. Many MSMEs do not know about tax incentives or financing programs such as KUR, and struggle to obtain information on tax policies and government assistance.

According to this study, proper taxation policies and supporting programs such as KUR can boost the growth of MSMEs in Indonesia. However, to reach its full potential, continuous efforts are needed in combating unfair competition and improving efficiency through tax digitalization. The government, tax agencies, and competition watchdogs should continue to work together to create a fair and favorable business environment for MSMEs.

Discussion

Government and Tax Policy: The Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE) regulates various types of taxes in Indonesia. It collects import and excise taxes on certain goods such as alcohol, tobacco and

luxury goods. It also handles the collection of taxes related to import duties, excise, and domestic customs. Meanwhile, the State Revenue Agency (BPN), formerly known as the State Revenue Office (KPN), manages tax and levy revenues for the benefit of the regions. At the district or city level, the Regional Tax and Levy Office is in charge of collecting local taxes and levies. Although it does not collect direct taxes, the DJKN manages state assets to generate revenue. Tax Policy Towards MSMEs: The government eased the burden on MSMEs by exempting Final Income Tax for turnover up to IDR500 million per year, as well as lowering the Final Income Tax rate from 1% to 0.5%. However, MSMEs still need socialization and technical guidance to take advantage of this policy.

Influence of Cartels and Monopolies: Cartels in Kenya often control the business sector through bribery, extortion, and monopolization, creating an unfair business environment and squeezing small businesses. Although the government has made policies to stop these practices, further efforts are needed for their effectiveness. The role of the KPPU and other relevant agencies is important in monitoring and addressing violations, while increased transparency and public participation can help create a healthier and fairer competitive environment for MSMEs.

Small Businesses and Markets: Small businesses depend on stable markets and strong demand. High taxes and additional costs often hamper competitive pricing, affecting performance in the market. The KUR program helps address capital limitations, but it is difficult to spread to all MSMEs, especially in remote areas. Collaboration between the government and financial institutions is important to expand the KUR program equitably. Meanwhile, access to capital can be improved through fintech and crowdfunding.

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that MSMEs have benefited greatly from the reduction in the Final Income Tax rate and the exemption of income tax for entrepreneurs with a turnover of up to IDR 500 million per year. However, the success of this policy largely depends on the understanding and utilization of MSMEs, which currently needs to be improved through more intensive socialization and government guidance. Appropriate tax policies and supporting programs such as KUR can boost the growth of MSMEs in Indonesia. However, the government, tax agencies, and competition watchdogs must continue to collaborate to create a fair business environment for MSMEs to reach their full potential. Efforts are needed to address the challenges of unfair competition and improve efficiency through tax digitalization.

Small and medium-sized businesses (MSMEs) still face key challenges, including low tax compliance rates and limited access to information on government programs and tax policies. It is important to improve education and socialization on tax policies and government programs, so that MSMEs understand the benefits of tax compliance and the incentives available. To ensure accessibility of information to all MSMEs, collaboration between the government, business associations, educational institutions, and the media is necessary.

Theoretical Research : The basic concepts of tax policy, business competition and digitalization that affect MSMEs are discussed in the theoretical research presented in this plan. Taxes are mandatory financing for public governance and can hinder the growth of small firms. In some sectors of the Indonesian economy, cartels have led to market manipulation and unfair competition which the law seeks to regulate to ensure fair competition. Tax digitization is intended to increase transparency and efficiency and reduce administrative costs and errors.

Empirical Research: The empirical research focuses on how tax policy, access to capital, and digitalization have a real impact on MSMEs in Indonesia. Policies that help small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are the reduction of the Final Income Tax (PPh) rate from 1% to 0.5% and the exemption of Final PPh for entrepreneurs with a turnover of up to IDR 500 million per year. In addition, the Kredit Usaha Rakyat (KUR) program helps small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) by providing access to capital at low interest rates. According to the use of e-Filing and e-Invoicing reduces the cost and time of MSME tax administration.

Future Research : This paper suggests increased socialization and technical support from the government to help MSMEs understand the importance of tax compliance and the incentives available. This will be used for future research. To ensure equitable access to information, the government, business associations, educational institutions, and the media should work together. Further research is needed to evaluate how effective government policies are in addressing cartel and monopoly practices that harm MSMEs. With continuous research, MSMEs are expected to thrive and contribute more to the national economy.

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