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Dropout Cause of Elementary School Children in West Java, Indonesia: A Descriptive Study from The Academic-Economic Perspective, and Its Relation to The Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to identify the dropout cause of elementary school children in West Java, Indonesia, especially from the academic and economic perspective. Method: The method used is a descriptive study by distributing an online questionnaire on the relation of schools having dropout children in elementary and junior high school in West Java, Indonesia. Results: The study results show that the reasons for dropouts are the pandemic condition, the environment, laziness, and there is no budget for the school. Most children who dropped out of school during the pandemic stated that learning was not fun, most children desire to return to school, and most dropout children are girls. Most of the dropout families are in the lower middle-class economy. Novelty: The study explained the dropout cause of elementary school in West Indonesia using primary data, which contained the academic and economic factors and their relation to the pandemic that the other previous studies have not revealed.

INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations member states in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future (https://sdgs.un.org/goals). Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has 17 goals in some sector. Goal 4 is "Ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." Based on that goal, ideally, all children could achieve education until higher education. From a global perspective, it is an ascertained fact that the development of a nation is highly dependent on its citizens' education, which plays a central role and a cross-cutting impact on all aspects of human life. Today education is crucial to enhance the ability of tomorrow's leaders to create innovations and find new paths for a better and more sustainable future (Wahyudin, 2018). Furthermore, an individual ability to access education sustainability influences the ability to increase the welfare positioning level. When someone can afford his/her welfare, collectively, this welfare will influence national development (Simanjuntak, 2018). Thus, either directly or indirectly, the contribution of education to the economy and development must be recognized (Widiansyah, 2017). Moreover, through education, a country has enormous power not only in the field of economic development but also in global competition (Rokhmaniyah, 2021).

Regarding this matter, Indonesia, as a developed country, is still struggling with human development issues. West Java has the largest population in Indonesia, with almost 50 million people (Badan Pusat Statistik Jawa Barat, 2022). Faces the education issue. Education is one of the most critical aspects of the West Java planning program, as one of the development priorities mentions "Education access for

all" (Pemerintah Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2021). The reality in recent years is that there are still some dropout children in West Java, consisting of 6,030 dropout children in primary school and 3,684 dropout children in junior high school in 2019/2020 (Dinas Pendidikan Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2021) that could be seen in Figure 1.

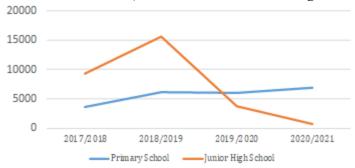


Figure 1. Dropout case in elementary school in West Java from 2017/208 to 2020/2021.

Figure 1 depicts the number of dropout children in elementary school, both primary school and junior high school in West Java, from 2017/2018 to 2020/2021. Based on the graph, the dropout number in primary school increased slightly from 2017/2018 to 2020/2021. The dropout number in junior high school increased rapidly from 2017/to 2018. However, it decreased dramatically from 2018/2019 to 2020/2021. From 2017/2018 to 2018/2019, the dropout number in primary school was lower than the dropout number in junior high school; however, from 2019/2020 to 2020/2021, the dropout number in junior high school decreased rapidly and changed the position became lower than the primary school (Ingersoll et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2022; Martindale, 2019; Mireles-Rios et al., 2020; Zulaika et al., 2022).

There are some previous studies related to this topic, dropout cases. The dropout rate in elementary schools in Indonesia was still high. However, the government had launched the government funding program named Bantuan Operasional Sekolah (BOS) or School Operational Assitance (Aniza, 2023; Bandur et al., 2022; Fatima et al., 2022; Martindale, 2019; Purwaningsih & Dardjito, 2021; Romlah et al., 2023; Sutanto et al., 2021). Some previous studies identified the factors influencing dropout. Rumberger & Lim (2018) identified two types of factors that predict whether students drop out or graduate from high school: factors associated with the individual characteristics of students and factors associated with the institutional characteristics of their families, schools, and communities. Another study classified the influencing factors into two: intrinsic and extrinsic. The dropout factors are divided into two: intrinsic (studentrelated) factors such as sickness, work/school conflict, and others, and extrinsic (institutional-related) factors such as study methods and materials, educational approach, and tutor influence. Dropout into four categories: individual, school, family, and neighborhood-based. Furthermore, another previous study grouped the factors causing dropout into socioeconomic factors, physical factors, geographical factors, teacher-related factors, family-related factors, teaching-learning material-related factors, administrative-related factors, child-related factors, and facilities in school-related factors (Shah et al., 2019). Influencing factors for school dropouts were classified into (1) individual factors, such as intellectual disability and behavioral disorders; (2) group factors, such as peer groups, family problems, and children's reduced interests in school, and (3) significant factors, such as educational system and the change of value, economic, cultural, and political issues.

Related to the school level, elementary levels such as elementary school and junior high school are assumed to be essential levels because the student learns about the basic knowledge and skills there as a provision to continue to the higher level. Moreover, specifically in elementary school, some students are still in the golden age. However, in reality, dropout is more pronounced at the primary level of schooling (Khan & Ahmed, 2021). In 2020, the world faced the COVID-19 pandemic, and all aspects of life were affected, including education. Associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, learning loss was something that could not be denied. In other words, the pandemic consistently boosted learning inequality (Moscoviz & Evans, 2022). While in Indonesia, Halid's study (2022) uses panel data analysis from 34 provinces in Indonesia from 2017 to 2021. The result indicates that the COVID-19 Pandemic is associated with the dropout rate increasing at the primary school level. The association is related to the learning system implemented in the pandemic, distance learning. Distance or online learning differs from direct learning, no matter how well it is implemented. The high dropout rate is one of the main concerns of online learning. Moreover, the dropout rates for online education are generally higher than for conventional education.

Those previous studies explained the dropout cause from various countries and contained some factors, including the pandemic. However, a previous study has not tried to identify the dropout cause and its relation to the pandemic factor, specifically in West Java, Indonesia. There is a study about the dropout rate in Indonesia. This study tries to fill in the gap by using primary data, adding the academic aspect, and revealing the correlation between the dropout rate and the pandemic. Based on the explanation, this research objective is to identify the dropout cause of elementary school children in West Java, specifically on academic and economic aspects. Furthermore, this study also tries to analyze the relationship between dropout cases and pandemic conditions.

RESEARCH METHOD

Based on the research aim, identifying the dropout cause of elementary school children in West Java, the method used is a quantitative, specifically descriptive study with distributing an online questionnaire to the relation in schools having dropout children in elementary school and junior high school in West Java. Based on Arikunto (2013), descriptive study is research that explains what is contained or occurs in a particular arena, field, or area. The collected data is classified by type, nature, and condition. The relations were from Dinas Pendidikan, consisting of the principal, staff, and teachers. It also could be the researchers' relatives. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, which is associated with the possibility of distributing an online questionnaire in the form of Google Forms. Online questionnaire distribution was influenced by the ease of contacting informants who have dropped out of school, gadget ownership, internet connection, accessibility to open it, and willingness to fill. The online questionnaire was distributed to the dropout children and the dropout children's parents. There are questionnaires for the children and questionnaires for the parents. The parents' questionnaire aims to delve into the economic aspects related to dropout. The possible informants who can easily access the questionnaire can be the research informants.

The research instrument used is an online questionnaire. The literature review shows two variables: internal school and external school. Based on Hatch and Farhady (Sugiyono, 2014), a variable could be defined as an attribute, someone, or an object that has variations between one object and other objects. The internal school is everything

associated with the school or the learning process. At the same time, the external school is everything besides the school or learning process. The internal school variables contain motive, learning climate, and distance. At the same time, the external school variables contain parent affection, economy, culture, health, and environment. Firstly, the researchers arranged the instrument grid and the questions. Each variable contains one or more questions that develop the questionnaire—the expert judgment used in the construction of the questionnaire for validity and reliability.

The data collection was conducted in October 2021. From the online questionnaire distribution, 18 informants comprised five informants from the Regency of Bandung, five from Kuningan Regency, six from the Regency of Cirebon, and two from West Bandung Regency. The data collected was analyzed using the quantitative method with descriptive analysis. The quantitative data was processed using Microsoft Excel. The data is sorted into several categories and presented as graphs and diagrams. Furthermore, the data processing results were analyzed by comparing and contrasting with the results of related previous studies. Visually, the research procedure can be seen in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Research procedure.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Demography Condition

Figure 3 illustrates that most of the dropout children are from junior high school, consisting of seven children from public junior high school and four from private junior high school.

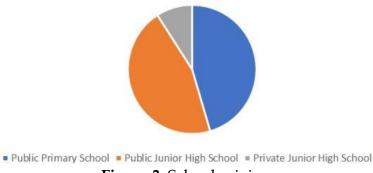


Figure 3. School origin.

While just seven children drop out of primary school, the dropout children from primary school are from public schools. There are no dropout children from private primary schools. Related to gender, there are more girls than boys, and the respondents consist of 10 girls and eight boys.

Motive

From Figure 4, it can be seen that most schools' motive is searching for knowledge and achieving future goals. The second is better job and economy. The lowest is parental demands, and the bottom two fill the time.

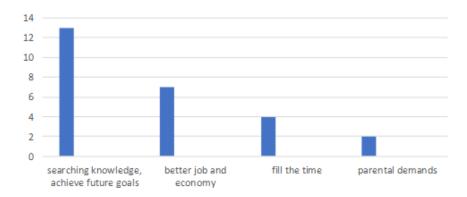


Figure 4. School Motive

The Importance of School

Figure 5 shows that most informants think school is essential, and just a fraction think school is less important. Most children know the importance of education.

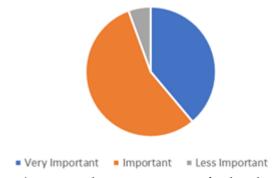


Figure 5. The importance of school.

Dropout Cause

Figure 6 depicts that the most significant cause of dropout is a pandemic condition, followed by environmental factors at the second and laziness, and there is no budget for school at the third position. At the same time, the lowest cause is sickness with just one informant.

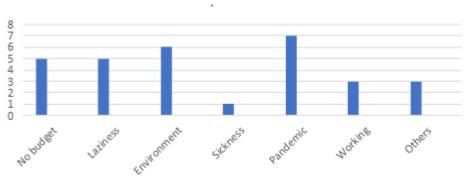


Figure 6. Dropout cause.

Academic Achievement at School

From Figure 7, it can be seen that most of the dropout children had good and average academic achievements while they were at school. There was just one informant who needed better academic achievement.

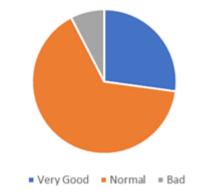


Figure 7. Academic achievement.

Pandemic Learning

Figure 8 depicts that most dropout children stated that the pandemic learning is less and no fun. There are just three informants who said the pandemic learning was fun.

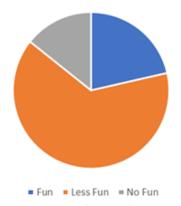


Figure 8. Pandemic learning.

From the collected data, the number of children dropping out after the pandemic is more than those dropping out. Most of the dropout children said there was an effect of pandemic conditions and distance learning applications on their decision to drop out.

Economic Aspect

The economic aspect was identified by distributing a questionnaire to the dropout children's parents. It consisted of parents' income, occupation, the relation between pthe pandemic and the economy, and the relation between the economy and education.

Parents' Income

From Figure 9, it can be seen that most of the parents' income is about 500,00-1,000,000 rupiahs every month. The second position is 0-500,000 rupiahs. From that data, the income of dropout children's parents is very measly.

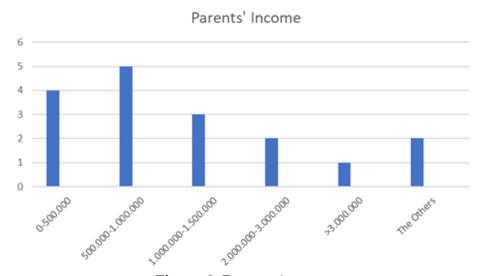


Figure 9. Parents income.

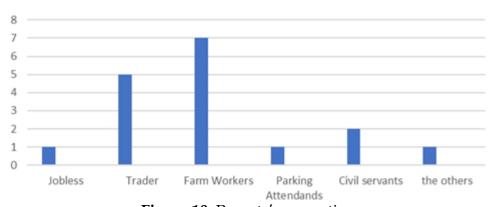


Figure 10. Parents' occupation.

Figure 10 shows that most of the parents work as farm workers as we know that their income is so measly. The second position is the trader. Ironically, there are two parents who work as civil servants and have fixed incomes.

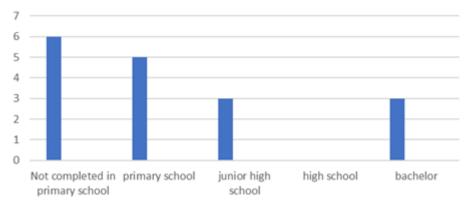


Figure 11. Parents' educational background.

From Figure 11, it can be seen that most parents still need to complete primary school. Ironically, two parents are bachelors while their children dropped out of elementary school.

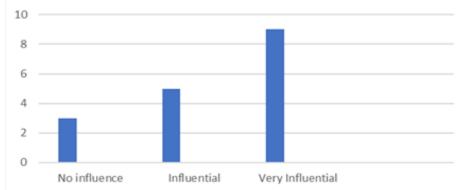


Figure 12. Impact of the pandemic on the economy.

From Figure 12, the pandemic greatly influences the economy, especially family finances. Moreover, most of the parents said that the economic factor greatly influences the dropout. Related to government funding, most parents receive educational funding from the government during their children's studies at school.

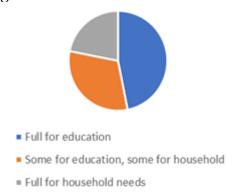


Figure 13. Funding utilization.

The parents receiving the government funding could answer the question about funding utilization. The question filling is aimed to identify whether the funding is used for its allocation. From Figure 13, it can be seen that most of the utilization is complete for education. However, some parents use the funding for household needs, some for education, and some for household needs. Furthermore, there is a question

about early marriage culture. Most of the informants have an early marriage culture in their environment. Early marriage culture is also associated with the dropout.

Discussion

From the result, demographically, it is known that most dropout children are girls. It is related to Moscoviz & Evans' study (2022), which stated that girls are at higher risk of dropping out in some countries. It also can be associated with a high number of early marriages. Early marriage/pregnancies are one of the reasons leading to school dropouts. The result also shows that some early marriage culture tends to drop out. In the other previous studies from other countries, such as Kenya and Nigeria, girls are at higher risk of dropping out. Interestingly, contradictory to those studies, another previous study showed the data showed that males are more likely to drop out than females. However, no explanation for this finding emerged in this study.

Based on the research result, one of the dropout causes is the children who become workers. The children workers variable significantly negatively influenced the school enrollment rate. Insufficient economic needs result in high activity of parents looking for money to meet family needs, and even children are directly involved in earning a living to help parents' economy. In line with this, Taddese (2019) stated that parents' need for child labor is one factor contributing to school dropout. The other dropout influencing factor is laziness. One factor that influences school dropout is laziness. Laziness is related to a lack of interest. In line with this, a lack of interest is one of the dropout factors (Solekhah, 2018). Laziness is also related to the motive factor. Motive is one of the internal factors. However, human attitude is decided by internal factors, not by the environment or knowledge. Motive is the main self-propulsion that causes someone to do something or behave (Husein, 2017). Most of the school's motive is to search for knowledge and achieve future goals, which is a positive motive. Related to psychological factors, every student experiences symptoms of psychological ill-being, and those exhibiting these symptoms might be at greater risk of dropping out of school than their peers (Parviainen, 2020).

Most dropout children also stated that school is essential, a positive perception. That means most of the children are aware of the importance of education. Furthermore, when the dropout children were asked about their plan to study at school again, most of the children said "yes." From the results, most of the children have a positive perception about school and have a motive to continue the study. From the academic achievement most of the children have regular and even outstanding academic achievement. From that result, some of the dropout children have potential on the academic side, and there is no strong relation between dropout and academic achievement. That result contradicts Itsnaini (2015), who said that the academic factor is one factor that influences the dropout rate. Associated with academic factors, the study showed that late school entry, repetition, and low achievement were the leading causes of throughout the grades.

Associated with the economic aspect, there are also some interesting findings. Most parents have a range income of 0-1,000,000 rupiahs per month, most have an educational background, did not finish primary school, and are farm workers and traders. Based on those facts, it concluded that the dropout children's parents economically have middle to lower economic conditions. There is a strong association between economic factors and low family income. Lower family income is related to poverty (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020; Hung et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2019; Tomasik et

al., 2021). Some previous studies explained the effect of poverty on the dropout rate. There are also related to the occupation and the educational background. Some previous studies revealed the influence of educational family background on the dropout rate (Perhati & Susetyo, 2017; Mujiati, 2018; Hakim, 2020). Parents' educational background is related to their mindset and how they educate their children. However, ironically, from the result, it is known that some parents have bachelor's degrees. It is very contradictive with their children's dropout; typically, every parent wants their children to be better than them. , another study revealed an interesting factor in household structure. Earlier born, non-biological children and children living with one parent drop out more.

We could find some exciting findings if the results are associated with pandemic conditions. Most of the dropout children dropped out after the pandemic. Pandemic conditions have also become the most significant cause of dropout, among other factors. Moreover, when the informants were asked whether pandemic conditions and distance learning made them drop out, most said yes. Furthermore, when they were asked whether learning during the pandemic was fun, most said less and no fun. Based on that result, learning during the pandemic became a problem for the students since they must study virtually due to the impact of social distancing. However, online learning is different from offline learning. There is the possibility of learning loss. Learning loss was consistently much higher among students with lower socioeconomic status. In other words, the pandemic consistently boosted learning inequality (Moscoviz & Evans, 2022). A previous study related to the pandemic revealed financial conditions, lockdown effects, mode of learning, government policies, fear of death, the psyche of the parents, socio-cultural effects, the role of teachers and administrators, most affected level, and some contributory factors amongst the significant factors (Shuja, 2022).

From the questions about the pandemic and the economy, most of the dropout children's parents said that the pandemic is very influential to the economy; moreover, the economy is influential to the children's dropout. Based on that explanation, the relationship between dropout and the pandemic is also associated with the economic factor as the bridge. The pandemic has destroyed the global economy, and the economic decline influenced the dropout. Related to the economic condition, the study delves into government funding in education. From the result, it is known that most of the parents received government funding when their children were still at school. This government funding is associated with previous studies, such as Lestari (2018), that stated funding variables could decrease dropout probability. Interestingly, government funding has no significant effect on reducing dropout rates. From the results about funding utilization, it is known that some parents still use the funding besides educational needs, such as household needs, and some other parents use the funding purely for education needs.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: Based on the research result, it could be concluded that by gender, most of the dropout children in elementary school in West Java are girls. The reasons for dropouts are the pandemic, the environment, laziness, and no school budget. Most of the children drop out of school during the pandemic. There is a strong relationship between pandemic and dropout, both the learning process and the economic factor. Most of the children stated that learning during the pandemic was not fun. Most of the dropout families are in the lower middle-class economy. Furthermore, the dropout rate is influenced by the pandemic that devastated the global economy.

However, both dropout children and parents have positive perceptions about education and realize the importance of education. Most of the children have a desire to go back to school. **Implication:** From the findings, there are some implications from this study, such as strengthening the importance of education for parents and communities by the government and the activists, evaluation of the funding scheme by the government that the funding can be used for the urgent and valuable needs, and awareness of the principals and teachers to create the fun and enjoy learning in the school environment. **Limitation:** This study is limited to the population, which is just in some regions in West Java and only for dropout children in elementary school. The method was also limited to an online questionnaire and was analyzed by descriptive analysis. **Future Research:** It is suggested that the subsequent researchers conduct future research in other and more varied regions and populations. Future researchers can also develop the following studies with more advanced and in-depth methods; thus, the knowledge will be enriched and more comprehensive.

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