



Factors Influencing High Dropout Rates Among Vocational High School Students in Janapria District, Central Lombok Regency

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Abstract

Equitable distribution and improvement in the quality of education are expected to help citizens develop life skills to recognize and address personal and environmental problems. The purpose of this study was to determine the factors causing vocational school-aged children to drop out of school in Janapria District, Central Lombok Regency. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study method conducted in Janapria District, Central Lombok Regency. Data collection techniques utilized observation, interviews, and documentation. The results showed that the factors causing children to drop out of school in Janapria District are both internal and external. Internal factors include low interest in learning due to a preference for working to help parents. Meanwhile, external factors include difficult family economic conditions that force children to work, the influence of promiscuity, and lack of family attention. Based on research into the factors causing children to drop out of school in Janapria District, Central Lombok Regency, it was found that family economic difficulties are the main factor, where children are forced to work to support the family economy. Other factors include an unsupportive social environment and low interest in learning.

Keywords: *Dropping Out, Social Interactions, Causes of Dropping Out*

A. Introduction

Education is a fundamental right for every individual that the state is obligated to fulfill. It plays a vital role in human life, as education can liberate individuals from backwardness, ignorance, and poverty, thereby fostering high-quality and capable human resources. According to Zuhara et al. (2019), the progress of a nation is significantly influenced by the quality of its citizens' education. Consequently, education serves as the foundational pillar for building a nation's civilization and achieving its national development goals

In the current era of globalization, education remains a serious challenge for the government, as segments of society still receive inadequate schooling or experience school dropouts. According to the

Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBBI), dropping out of school is a condition in which an individual stops their education before graduating or completing the appropriate educational level. This term refers to a situation where a person is unable to finish their formal education. Such cessation of education can be caused by various factors, including economic issues, social pressures, cultural influences, or other personal reasons. In other words, dropping out occurs when a student ceases learning at an educational institution before completing their current level, resulting in the failure to obtain a diploma or certificate of graduation.

As mandated in the fourth paragraph of the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution, the objectives of the Indonesian State are to promote public welfare and intellectualize the nation's life. To achieve the goal of intellectualizing the nation, every citizen must be granted equal opportunities to pursue education to foster high-quality human resources. It is a well-established fact that a nation's progress is significantly influenced by the educational quality of its people; thus, education represents a strategic initial step for national development through the enhancement of human resources.

The enhancement of human resources through education has been launched by the government through the Twelve-Year Compulsory Education Program, spanning from Elementary School (SD) to Senior High School (SMA). Based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 19 of 2016 concerning the 'Program Indonesia Pintar' (Smart Indonesia Program), Article 2 stipulates that the program aims to provide educational access for children aged 6 to 21 years. It is designed to prevent students from dropping out and to provide opportunities for those who have already left school or could not continue their education due to economic difficulties to return to their studies. The 12-year compulsory education program was established to ensure equal educational access for all citizens, fostering human resources equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate competition in the current era of globalization.

In line with the era of globalization, gender equality has become a highly relevant global issue concerning the integration and cooperation between men and women. Gender equality and justice represent one of the eight global goals committed to by nations worldwide under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs targets leading up to 2015 included: 1) eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; 2) achieving universal education; and 3) promoting gender equality and empowering women (RPJMN, 2004-2009). This commitment is essential, as women frequently face discrimination, marginalization, subordination, double burdens, and acts of violence. Such unequal treatment is the result of accumulated socio-cultural values within society that have persisted for centuries.

Therefore, a shift in mindset is required from all stakeholders to align perspectives on gender. This change in mindset regarding the importance of gender in development for both central and local policymakers is essential, based on the following rationales: (1) As citizens, both men and women are protected under national and international law, which guarantees equal rights, justice, and equality in terms of participation, access, control, and benefits. Gender is a cross-cutting issue across all global development goals, specifically highlighted in the third of the eight primary goals: 'Promoting gender equality and empowering women.' (2) Every citizen, regardless of gender, has an equal right to protection, business opportunities, and education, in accordance with the 1945 Constitution. Furthermore, the National Development Vision for 2004-2009 is directed toward achieving: a) a secure, united, harmonious, and peaceful society and nation; b) a society and nation that upholds the law, equality, and human rights; and c) an economy capable of providing employment opportunities and a decent livelihood, while establishing a solid foundation for sustainable development.

Nevertheless, in reality, gender gaps remain prevalent across various sectors, including social-cultural, economic, legal, national security, technological, educational, labor, and property ownership. The root of these issues lies in socio-cultural disparities at the family and local community levels. These include marginalization, inequity in role distribution, gender stereotyping of women, the double burden

placed on women, and the misuse of the concept of 'natural destiny' (kodrat) to restrict women from participating actively in the public sector.

As a consequence of these disparities, Indonesia continues to face a low Human Development Index (HDI); stagnant economic growth; and poor educational quality, characterized by low school enrollment rates (APS, APK, APM) and high illiteracy. Furthermore, health standards remain low, evidenced by high Maternal and Infant Mortality Rates (AKI/AKB). The country also grapples with significant social issues, including unemployment, crime, and human trafficking. Additionally, the quality of family and community welfare remains inadequate, alongside an increase in regenerative and structural poverty. Finally, environmental management remains poor, marked by deforestation, erosion, and high population density.

To address these issues, it is essential to foster understanding and awareness across all levels of society and among all state officials regarding the root causes of the problem. Consequently, a mindset shift in understanding gender concepts and the vital role of gender in a nation's development is imperative. To overcome long-standing gender disparities in society, government intervention is necessary through the formulation of Gender Mainstreaming (PUG) policies at the National, Provincial, and Regency/City levels. These should be implemented through various programs and activities that create synergy among stakeholders across all government tiers to achieve gender equality and justice (KKG) by ensuring equal access, participation, control, and benefits for both men and women.

Data regarding female participation in one of the regencies on Lombok Island, specifically within the workforce, shows that there are 1,800 male employees compared to only 622 female employees. In the field of education, male participation stands at 5,425, while female participation is significantly lower at 4,785, with another recorded group showing 3,682 males versus 3,082 females. Furthermore, in terms of structural leadership positions (echelons), out of a total of 739 officials, women hold only 139 positions, whereas men hold a much larger share with 600 positions (BPS, NTB, 2008).

The government's intensive 12-year compulsory education program should theoretically provide educational opportunities for everyone; however, reality dictates otherwise in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) Province. Data from 2019 reveals that NTB's education quality ranked 33rd out of 34 provinces (Irawan, 2019). This low educational quality is driven by high dropout rates and low school participation figures. In the 2018/2019 academic year, the total number of school dropouts in NTB reached 4,231 students (PDSPK, 2018: 17-19). This figure comprises 750 students at the elementary level (SD), 1,122 at the junior high level (SMP), and 2,359 at the senior high/vocational level (SMA/SMK). The Gross Enrollment Ratio (APK) stands at 106.46 for elementary and 97.99 for senior high, while the Net Enrollment Ratio (APM) is recorded at 92.12 for elementary, 78.39 for junior high, and 72.56 for senior high (PDSPK, 2018:47). Regarding the educational landscape on Lombok Island, BPS NTB noted that in 2006, 615,823 people—or approximately 21.21% of the population aged 15 and above—were illiterate. Central Lombok Regency had the highest illiteracy rate with 179,946 people (39%), followed by East Lombok with 142,376 (20.79%) and West Lombok with 142,476 (20.79%). According to Martinus, this high illiteracy rate on Lombok Island is caused by four factors: 1) lack of community learning facilities, hindering students from progressing to higher education; 2) high student dropout rates; 3) poverty; and 4) cultural factors. Gender-based data indicates that the illiteracy rate among the population aged 15 and above is significantly higher for females, totaling 410,989 (26.45%), compared to 204,834 males (15.18%) (Martinus, 2007).

Based on the aforementioned data, it is evident that Central Lombok Regency holds a significantly high position in terms of illiteracy. High dropout rates are also prevalent in Janapria District, Central Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara. In the 2020/2021 academic year, the number of school dropouts in Janapria District reached 30 students; among this total, 26 students dropped out at the Vocational High School (SMK) level, while 4 students dropped out at the Senior High School (SMA) level (Satu Data NTB, 2021).

B. Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, conducted in Janapria District, Central Lombok Regency, from September to November 2025. The study utilizes two types of data: primary data, obtained directly from the field through interviews with 20 school dropouts, and secondary data as supplementary information regarding the factors causing school dropouts. Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, the study utilized source and technique triangulation, whereby the obtained data were verified across various sources and different collection methods to ensure the credibility of the research findings.

C. Results and Discussion

The factors causing school dropouts among vocational high school-aged children (SMK) in Janapria District, Central Lombok Regency, are categorized into two main groups: internal factors and external factors.

a) Internal Factors

According to Millen & Whitener in Suryadi (2014), factors originating from within a child that can lead to the cessation of their education include laziness, an excessive tendency to play, and low interest in learning. Based on the research findings conducted in Janapria District, Central Lombok Regency, several internal factors causing school dropouts at the vocational high school (SMK) level are identified as follows:

1. Lack of Interest and Motivation for Schooling

Internal factors affecting students' continuation of their education include a lack of interest and motivation for school. Based on the research findings in Janapria District, Central Lombok Regency, the lack of interest in learning is a significant cause of the high dropout rate among vocational high school-aged children. Furthermore, many children prefer working over attending school due to poor economic conditions, choosing instead to assist their parents in meeting the family's basic needs. This reflects a highly pragmatic view of education, where students perceive schooling as providing no immediate financial benefit to the family's economy.

One of the primary reasons for the low interest in continuing education is the family's economic condition, which compels children to enter the workforce. Sahlan, a student who decided to drop out of vocational high school (SMK) during his 11th-grade year, chose to leave school to work and assist his family in meeting their daily needs. He stated that working provides immediate financial returns and helps support the family's economy, whereas attending school is perceived as an activity that primarily incurs expenses and costs.

"I work almost every day to help my family meet our economic needs, which is why I decided to drop out of school. The financial situation forced me to stop my education; I believe that by working, I can earn money more quickly, whereas attending school does the exact opposite—it requires spending significant amounts of money and incurring various costs."

This phenomenon illustrates a gap between short-term economic needs and the long-term benefits of education. Children in Janapria District, Central Lombok Regency, tend to opt for immediate results through employment, as they perceive that education offers no significant impact on their current circumstances. In reality, education is intended to provide broader opportunities for their future, even though such benefits are only realized over the long term.

2. Higher Propensity for Recreational Activities

Beyond the issues of interest and motivation, an excessive inclination toward playing also contributes significantly to school dropout rates. This factor has become a prominent cause for children leaving school in Janapria District, Central Lombok Regency. In today's digital era, rapid access to information has fundamentally changed the social landscape, particularly for youth who are drawn to gaming. Playing video games has become a primary choice for children to unwind after school. However, an intense preoccupation with gaming often leads them to neglect their schedules for rest and school attendance. Consequently, a substantial amount of time is wasted due to excessive gaming habits that persist late into the night or even until dawn.

Alebani is one of the children who dropped out of school due to a gaming addiction. He revealed that he played video games every night until the early hours of the morning, often forgetting to sleep despite having to attend school the next day. Living with his grandparents granted him a sense of excessive freedom; every morning, before he was supposed to leave for school, his grandparents would already be heading to the fields to work. Consequently, there was a lack of direct supervision. They assumed their grandson was going to school, simply leaving money on the table for him before departing for their farm work. In reality, he rarely attended classes because his habit of gaming until dawn left him unable to function during school hours.

"I dropped out because I rarely attended class. I often woke up late because I played games until dawn; I wouldn't go to sleep until after sunrise and would stay in bed until noon. My homeroom teacher even came to see me to ask why I was never in school, but I always made the excuse that I was sick. I found it impossible to sleep early; sometimes, even if I did, I would wake up at 1:00 AM and play games until morning. My grandparents assumed I had already left for school and would simply leave money for me in the drawer. One time, when my teacher came to the house and asked about my absences, my grandparents defended me, insisting that I attended regularly. It was only then that I revealed the truth—that I rarely went to school because I woke up late from gaming all night. Because I had accumulated too many absences, I eventually chose to drop out rather than continue lying to my teachers and my family."

Research conducted by Talakua (2018) reveals that limited parental concern for a child's education constitutes the second major factor. This lack of attention is often exacerbated by economic conditions, specifically low income, which forces parents to prioritize fulfilling daily family needs over educational supervision. This situation reflects a significant challenge in motivating children in Janapria District, Central Lombok Regency, to continue their education. Furthermore, consistent parental attention and monitoring of a child's activities—both inside and outside the home—are crucial to ensuring the child feels fully supported by the family. Consequently, concerted efforts from the government, the community, and educational institutions are required to raise awareness about the importance of education while providing solutions to mitigate the economic barriers that prevent children from remaining in school.

b) External Factors

External factors refer to influences originating from outside an individual. In alignment with the research findings presented in the previous chapter, the external factors contributing to school dropouts among vocational high school-aged children (SMK) in Janapria District, Central Lombok Regency, are identified as follows:

1. Family Economic Factors

Family economic issues constitute one of the primary factors influencing the decision of children to drop out of school in Janapria District, Central Lombok Regency. Hard economic conditions frequently force children to choose employment to help meet the family's basic needs rather than continuing their

education. In such situations, education—which should be every child's fundamental right—becomes neglected due to intense economic pressure.

Based on an interview with Dani, a child who decided to drop out of school to assist his parents by working in the rice fields and making bricks, it was explained that his family's economic condition was extremely poor and insufficient to cover daily necessities and school expenses.

"The extensive needs at home, combined with the numerous school-related requirements, made me feel deeply for my parents. Sometimes my school expenses were covered, but the family's basic needs at home remained unfulfilled, which are equally important. I felt so much sympathy for my parents that I decided to drop out and help them in the fields making bricks," explained Dani.

This illustrates the profound influence of economic circumstances on a child's decision to leave school and work to alleviate their parents' financial burden. Similarly, Anti, a child who has lived with her grandmother since infancy following her parents' divorce, shared a similar sentiment. Anti stated:

"My grandmother's economic situation is very concerning; our family's needs are vast, not to mention the expenses required for school. I feel deep sympathy for my grandmother, who has to scavenge for scrap metal and occasionally work in other people's fields for very low wages, despite her old age. This situation has forced me to drop out and discontinue my education, choosing instead to work as a shopkeeper so that I can help support her."

This testimony reflects how a family's inability to meet basic needs leads some children to choose dropping out of school to assist their families through work and to secure daily necessities, such as food and water. This phenomenon mirrors the reality faced by many families in rural areas with limited economic conditions, including those in Janapria District, Central Lombok Regency, where education is perceived as a secondary priority compared to more urgent basic needs like food and shelter. Such conditions compel children to enter the workforce as a form of devotion to their families, driven by a high sense of empathy that makes them feel deeply burdened if they do not contribute financially.

Poor economic conditions are indeed often the primary cause of high school dropout rates in areas with significant poverty levels. Research by Magfirah (2019) reveals that economic factors can trigger school dropouts, starting with unstable daily parental income and a large number of dependents, both of which require substantial funds—not only for schooling but also for other essential needs. This is further reinforced by the findings of Baiq et al. (2023), which indicate that family finances failing to meet both basic and supplementary needs result in a lack of necessary school facilities. This situation often leads children to feel reluctant to ask for more and develops a sense of insecurity or inferiority (*minder*) regarding their attendance at school.

2. Social Environment and Peer Associations

The social environment plays a vital role in shaping an individual's mindset and behavior, including the decision to continue or discontinue their education. This has become a major contributing factor to school dropouts in Janapria District, Central Lombok Regency, as shared by one of the respondents, Bayu, who had to drop out of school due to negative peer influences. He stated:

"I used to leave for school, but I never actually made it to class. Almost every day, friends from other schools would invite me to skip school. My parents thought I was attending classes, but in reality, I was hanging out with them. I would leave the house in my uniform, but I wouldn't go to school; sometimes my friends would pick me up, but we wouldn't head to the school building. Once the school found out and notified my family, I was asked to transfer to a different school. However, I felt that instead of transferring and potentially repeating the same patterns, it was better for me to simply drop out."

An unsupportive social environment is a significant factor contributing to school dropouts, as pressure or persuasion from peers often encourages children to experiment with negative behaviors. This is particularly true for adolescents who are in a phase of seeking self-identity and pleasure, often leading them to prioritize leisure over their academic responsibilities. Consequently, social circles exert a significant impact on a child's educational success, highlighting the necessity of parental supervision. According to research by Wardani (2021), both family and peer environments can be catalysts for dropping out; a positive environment consists of support systems that encourage the educational process. Conversely, if the environment provides a poor example regarding education, children are likely to imitate those behaviors, leading to school withdrawal. Furthermore, Akilasari (2020:4) notes that peer relationships involve individuals of similar ages and a high degree of intimacy. Therefore, the peer environment plays a crucial role in helping children distinguish between good and bad behavior and in honing their maturity by comparing themselves with their peers.

3. Early Childhood Marriage

In addition to external factors such as family economics and social circles, early childhood marriage is a highly significant factor, given that the rate of early marriage in Central Lombok remains remarkably high. This factor has also evolved into a widespread cultural phenomenon within the community, particularly in the Janapria District of Central Lombok Regency. Many children drop out of school specifically due to early marriage, as revealed in an interview conducted with Aldo, who stated:

"Rather than constantly taking someone's daughter out and wandering around, I felt it was better to marry her, and she wanted to marry me as well. In the end, everyone gets married eventually, and my parents gave me their permission. I was worried someone else might take her away, and besides, I don't see the point of higher education if the ultimate goal is simply to earn a living for the family," explained Aldo.

The perception that marriage is a commonplace occurrence has solidified early marriage as an entrenched cultural norm that is difficult to eradicate. This is mirrored by public sentiment, which often views education as less important since children will eventually focus on managing a household. As highlighted by the research of Baiq et al. (2023), early marriage is a decisive factor because children who marry must sacrifice their education, inevitably leading to school withdrawal. The cultural factors mentioned here relate to the deep-seated habits of the surrounding community, specifically the low awareness among parents and society regarding the importance of education. The community's attitude toward schooling is heavily influenced by their environment; there is a prevailing belief that children can thrive just like their educated peers even without a formal education. Consequently, because the number of out-of-school children in these villages is high and they appear to live adequately, such conditions are used as a benchmark for parents in determining their children's future (Sarfa, 2016).

Other respondents expressed similar sentiments. Neti married at a young age to her boyfriend, who was also still a vocational high school (SMK) student. Neti decided to marry because her boyfriend brought her home late, which led to negative social stigma and judgment from the community. Rather than enduring the collective shame, she felt it was better to get married. Her parents could only resign themselves to Neti's decision, as she seemed to have chosen her own path. Neti stated:

"To be honest, I didn't want to get married yet because I was still in school. However, because I was brought home late at that time, many people in the community started gossiping about me, which made both me and my parents feel ashamed. My parents also suggested that I get married so I could be freer to go out without being judged by others. My boyfriend was already prepared to marry me, and the promises he made further convinced me to marry at a young age," explained Neti.

This condition indicates that family decisiveness and motivation remain insufficient, compounded by a low level of parental attention toward education. Furthermore, the diverse perceptions within the

community play a significant role. This factor is particularly prominent compared to others, as the majority of respondents in this study identified early marriage as the primary reason for dropping out of school. Such low parental supervision is often rooted in the family's economic struggles or low income, which forces parents to focus their energy almost entirely on meeting basic household needs. Consequently, a significant percentage of children drop out due to this lack of guidance. In impoverished families, various survival-related issues tend to arise, disrupting a child's learning activities and making it difficult to keep up with school lessons (Sarfa, 2016). Many dropout cases are triggered by domestic circumstances, typically occurring during the middle and high school years. During this phase of seeking self-identity, children often become resistant to parental advice, which frequently results in disharmonious relationships between parents and their children.

In addition, school-based education is essential to addressing this issue, particularly through providing education on the importance of formal schooling and the risks associated with early marriage. According to Hidayat & Abdillah (2019:118), a school is an institution or organization authorized to conduct learning activities, operating under specific requirements and regulations. However, an unfavorable school environment—characterized by peers who frequently engage in negative activities such as truancy, free association, and various forms of juvenile delinquency—can severely diminish a child's interest in studying. Thus, environmental factors exert a profound influence that can ultimately lead to school dropout (Baiq, 2023).

Overall, the role of the family in supporting a child's education is paramount. When a family fails to provide sufficient support—whether in the form of attention, supervision, or an understanding of the child's needs—the decision to drop out of school becomes much easier to make. Therefore, it is crucial for families to consistently provide appropriate attention and motivation, ensuring that children can persevere with their education despite facing various challenges.

Conclusion

Based on the research regarding the high factors of school dropouts among vocational high school (SMK) aged children in Janapria District, Central Lombok Regency, it is found that family economic difficulties are the primary factor, where children are forced to work to assist the family's economy. Other factors, such as an unsupportive social environment and early childhood marriage, also significantly contribute to the high dropout rates in this region. The role of the family is paramount in providing support and motivation, as the absence of emotional support or the presence of excessive expectations can increase psychological pressure, leading to school withdrawal. The impact of dropping out is severe, ranging from limited economic opportunities to potential psychological issues that may create an intergenerational cycle of poverty. To address this, several recommendations are proposed: parents need to better understand the importance of education and seek alternative funding such as scholarships; the local government should improve educational facilities and provide financial assistance for underprivileged families; and future research is encouraged to delve deeper into non-economic factors—including psychological, social, and cultural aspects—that influence the decision to drop out, in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding and effective solutions for this issue.

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