

# IDENTIFYING THE CAUSES OF SCHOOL DROPOUT IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN SUMBER DISTRICT

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## ABSTRACT

**Abstract:** *The problem of dropping out of school is still a challenge in the world of education in Indonesia. This study aims to identify the factors that cause students to drop out of school in three primary schools in Sumber District, Probolinggo Regency. This study used a descriptive qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to explore the social experiences and behaviors of students who dropped out of school. The research subjects included dropout students, parents, teachers, principals, and the surrounding community. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documents and then analyzed using coding techniques. The results showed two main factors causing students to drop out of school, namely internal and external factors. Internal factors include low awareness of the importance of education, low interest in learning, and students' views on non-formal education. External factors include lack of parental support, social and environmental conditions, limited accessibility, and limited school facilities and infrastructure. This study concludes that cooperation from the government, families and communities is needed to reduce the dropout rate in Sumber District.*

## A. INTRODUCTION

Education has a very important role to improve the quality of Human Resources (HR) so that it becomes a pillar in facing global challenges. According to Jannah (2023), education is an effort that is carried out in a very planned manner so that the learning process is able to make students develop their potential. Education can lead students to become competent and adaptive individuals (Kořir et al., 2023). The existence of these abilities makes students have high competitiveness in the midst of rapid global development.

Increasing the education participation rate is part of the Ministry of Education and Culture's policy direction in accordance with the Ministry of Education and Culture's Strategic Plan 2020-2024. There are conditions that reflect an increase in the education participation rate, including 1) Increased early childhood education participation rates; 2) Completion of the Nine-Year Compulsory Education and the increase in the Twelve-Year Compulsory Education; and 3) Increased participation rate in higher education.

In an effort to achieve Indonesia's goal of educating the nation, the government runs a twelve-year compulsory education program. However, the problem of many students dropping out of school remains a major challenge. Pandu et al., (2022) stated that school dropout is a crucial problem often faced by developing countries including Indonesia. This statement is in accordance with (Choi et al., 2023) that the phenomenon of students not completing their education until graduation is a major challenge faced by the world of education today. Nomoto (2024) explains that the dropout rate is an indicator of increased educational achievement, an indicator of the quality of education, and an indicator of students' future opportunities.

Data obtained from the Central Bureau of Statistics shows that the number of out-of-school children in 2023 at the elementary level reached 0.67%, junior high school reached 6.93%, and high school reached 21.61%. The data shows that many elementary school students are not in school or have dropped out of school. Of course, this phenomenon is very unfortunate considering that the developmental phase at elementary school age will be the

foundation for forming students' mindsets in the future. This statement is in line with the opinion of Zhao et al., (2024) that at the elementary school level, students experience a critical phase of development. Students begin to learn to build the foundation of academic, behavioral, emotional, and social skills needed to support further education (Horoz et al., 2022).

Sumber District in Probolinggo district is one of Indonesia's regions rich in cultural heritage and tourist destinations. However, it is unfortunate that most of its people have a low level of education. Based on data collected from the Ministry of Education and Culture's Data Portal page, it is known that in 2023 there were 132 elementary school students who dropped out of school. This figure is high when compared to other regions. The high dropout rate in Probolinggo district illustrates a deep and ongoing problem.

Dropping out of school is a complex issue because it not only limits individual potential but also has a long-term impact on the wider community. Dropping out of school is a condition where students stop going to school before they are declared to have graduated according to their level of education (Gulo et al., 2021). Students who drop out generally experience economic, social, and career limitations due to the lack of various basic skills (Choe, 2021). The low level of education of most of the population will hinder the development of the region because education is the foundation for an individual to acquire the basic skills and insights needed in carrying out daily life and facing the world of work. Thus, dropping out of school is not only an individual problem but also a social problem (Choe, 2021).

Szabó et al., (2024) state that students who do not have adequate skills will tend to find it difficult to obtain decent work and can place them at a low level of socio-economic life. Dropping out of school can also affect students' social relationships with their surroundings, increase the social and economic burden on society, and reduce overall national productivity (Kořir et al., 2023). Failure to complete school, especially at the primary school level, will also affect students' opportunities to develop their potential (Szabó et al., 2024).

Students who have decided not to continue school will find it very difficult to choose to return to school. Murphy-Graham et al., (2021) in their

research stated that the percentage of students' likelihood to return to school after dropping out is very low, only 9.1%. This condition also occurs due to the encouragement of students' parents and better job opportunities. Of course, this phenomenon occurs for a reason.

The factors that cause dropout are very diverse and often interrelated. According to Rohmah et al., (2022) some of the factors that cause students to drop out of school include limited funds, inadequate educational facilities, and environmental or social factors. Therefore, various efforts must still be made to prevent the dropout rate from increasing. All efforts made so that students continue their education are the key to success so that students are able to achieve their success (Tong et al., 2023)

Based on the previous explanation, it can be understood that it is necessary to know the factors that become the reasons why students decide to drop out of school in the Probolinggo Regency area. Many students in Sumber Sub-district, Probolinggo Regency choose not to continue their schooling and start entering the workforce at an early age. The dropout phenomenon that occurs in the area reflects a deep problem. This condition not only impacts on the individuals themselves but also on the wider community due to the increased social burden of school dropout.

In addition, the development of students at primary school age is a very important phase because students at that time begin to form the foundation of soft skills and hard skills. Therefore, high dropout rates can pose a serious threat to the development of the quality of human resources (HR). Based on this description, it shows that research conducted to examine the factors that cause students to drop out of school in Sumber Subdistrict, Probolinggo Regency is very important to do.

Research conducted by Hakim (2020) in Aceh Province shows that the factors that cause students to drop out of school in the area can be seen from several variables, namely the education of the head of the household, participation in government assistance programs, number of family members, poverty, working children, and area of residence. This condition is also in line with what happened in Tuutu Village, West Minahasa Tondano Regency. Research by (Lanawaang and Mesra, 2023) showed that the causes of many students dropping out of

school in the area were influenced by factors such as pregnancy outside of marriage, promiscuity, lack of parental attention, and low awareness of the importance of education.

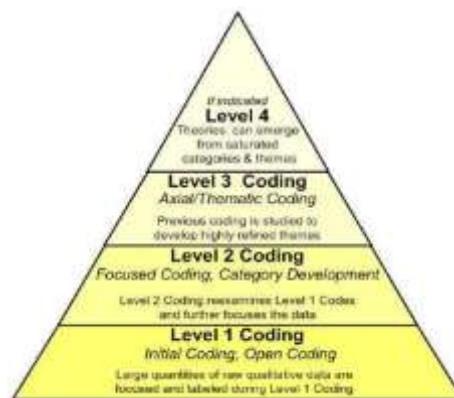
When reviewing previous research, the novelty of this study is that it focuses on examining the phenomenon of dropping out of school in remote rural areas. This research focuses on Sumber District, which is characterized by the problems of rural areas in the mountains. The study discusses the factors of school dropout by linking them to the geographical cultural context so that it can be seen that there is a unique interaction between the social, economic and cultural factors of its distinctive community. The study analyzed internal factors (students' level of awareness, motivation to learn, and views on non-formal education) and external factors (lack of parental support, social and environmental conditions, limited accessibility, and limited school facilities and infrastructure).

This research highlights the lack of prioritization of formal education from the community, which has an impact on students' decisions to work and marry, which has rarely been reviewed in depth in previous studies. Therefore, this study aims to identify and analyze the factors that cause students to drop out of school at the primary school level in Sumber District.

## B. RESEARCH METHODS

The research was conducted in Sumber District, Kabupaten Probolinggo. The type of research used was descriptive qualitative research to examine the causes of student dropout at three primary schools in Sumber District. The approach taken focuses on a phenomenological approach that aims to explore the social experiences and behaviors of students who drop out of school. The research subjects consisted of students who dropped out of school, parents, teachers, school principals, and other community members.

Data collection techniques through interviews, observation, and documentation with the aim of obtaining a comprehensive understanding. The data collected were then analyzed using coding analysis techniques through two stages, namely initial coding and focused coding as described by (CHARMAZ, 2006).



Picture 1. Coding Stages

Source: Hasan (2023)

In this research, the data obtained must be consistent. Therefore, data validity was carried out through time triangulation by asking the same questions at different times to obtain consistency and reflexivity.

## C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The dropout phenomenon in Sumber Sub-district, Probolinggo Regency is one of the complex problems of education. Probolinggo Regency is a region with rich culture and great tourism potential. Unfortunately, many of its residents are still at a low level of education, especially in Sumber District. In one primary school in Sumber District, it is known that out of fifteen students in grade VI in 2023, only seven students will continue their education to junior high school. A similar situation also occurred in the other two primary schools. This shows that only a small proportion of students continue their education.

Most prefer to work after completing primary education. There are factors that influence students to drop out of school. After conducting in-depth observations and interviews, this study identified two main factors that cause dropouts: internal factors and external factors. Internal factors are factors that come from within the students themselves. While external factors are factors that come from outside the student such as parental attention, parents' educational background, and the environment (Himayati and Hardiansyah, 2022). The following is an explanation of the internal and external factors that cause students to drop out of school.

## **1. Internal Factors**

### **a. Low Student Awareness of the Importance of Education**

Based on direct interviews with several students who dropped out of school, it is known that these students have the assumption that school is not very important. Many of them consider that education does not provide direct benefits that can be felt by them. The students, especially those in grade VI, are more interested in working and earning money rather than continuing their education. This is consistent with what Murphy-Graham et al., (2021) explained that the reason students stop going to school is that they have no desire to go to school.

Based on the results of the interviews, it is known that children in Sumber District prefer to become vegetable ojek instead of continuing their education. In this area, some students even started working since they were in grade IV. Students who are already in grade VI are considered adults by the surrounding community so they are eligible to work. One of the children said that they get a fairly large daily income when working, which can even reach Rp500,000 to Rp600,000 per day. This amount is certainly very lucrative for them, especially because most of these children have been accustomed to being independent from an early age.

Children in Sumber District also feel that by working, they gain status and an important role in the family. In this area, there are only one or two students who are motivated to pursue higher education. Even this year, in one hamlet consisting of seven RTs, only one student continued his education to senior high school. This is unfortunate because in the modern era, education plays an important role so that students are able to keep pace with the development of science and technology. (Kusumaningrum et al., 2024).

### **b. Low Student Motivation and Interest in Learning**

In addition to the low awareness of the importance of education, students' motivation and interest in studying in Sumber District is also very low. Most students feel that studying at school is not interesting and provides no direct benefits. This factor is supported by the lack of

parental attention to education. Whereas parental support is very important for children. According to Thalib and Istiqamah, (2021), positive support from parents can increase children's enthusiasm for learning. Many parents are more focused on their work in the fields or as laborers, so they do not have the time or energy to encourage their children to study diligently.

According to Lanawaang and Mesra (2023), parents' educational background, students' lack of interest in school, and children's environmental conditions will affect students' learning motivation. Long school distances, inadequate facilities, and unfavorable environmental influences also exacerbate this situation. These factors are in line with the opinion of Choi et al., (2023) that school involvement and self-motivation have a major impact on students' interest in learning.

According to Murphy-Graham et al., (2021), there are several phenomena that occur when students are in the transition stage from elementary school to junior high school, including 1) Difficulties experienced while learning and low achievement in academics, as well as parental decisions are the causes of students dropping out of school; 2) Male students are more likely to continue school than female students because they are influenced by prevailing social norms; and 3) Parents think that finishing school at the primary school level is enough. Meanwhile, at the stage leading to senior high school, the phenomena that occur are 1) Lack of access and cost to continue school is the reason students do not continue their schooling; 2) Female students drop out due to pregnancy or work while male students drop out due to work; and 3) Students have the idea that school is not very useful for their lives.

The results of interviews with teachers show that various efforts are made by teachers such as implementing interesting learning and utilizing all available facilities. However, teachers' efforts in applying interesting learning methods often fail to increase students' motivation. Students with low learning motivation tend to miss school more often. Thus, teachers' efforts to motivate students do not have a significant impact.

- c. Students think that non-formal education is sufficient to fulfill job requirements

As many as 90% of teachers in primary schools in Sumber District are not local. Only about 5% of local children are teachers. Most of them did not complete twelve years of formal education but were junior high school graduates who then pursued non-formal education by taking packages. One teacher revealed that she initially had no plans to become a teacher. However, because of the job opportunity, she decided to become a teacher. She was only a junior high school graduate who got married and then took a package education. Istiqomah and Amin, (2020) explain that the impact of students who drop out of school is the anxiety of getting a decent job.

Based on the results of interviews with non-formal school organizers, it is known that many people are interested in taking packages. Students' motivation to take packages is generally due to having a background from an educated family. This fact is in accordance with what was conveyed by Murphy-Graham et al., (2021) that parental support and better job opportunities are the reasons why students continue school.

## 2. External Factors

In addition to internal factors, there are several external factors that greatly influence students' decisions to drop out of school.

- a. Lack of Support from Parents

The family environment plays an important role as the first and main place of education. Education from family or parents is the main foundation in an educational process (Tamrin, 2020). If the education provided by the family is inadequate, it can affect children's interest in learning, reduce academic achievement, and so on. This statement is in line with Ki Hajar Dewantara's statement (in Rohman, 2009) that the support and attention provided by parents have a major impact on children. Therefore, the role of parents in providing attention, affection, responsibility, and appreciation is very important for children.

According to Thalib and Istiqamah (2021), positive attention and support from parents can increase children's enthusiasm and motivation to

develop. However, most people in Sumber District work as farmers or laborers, which means that parents have to work from early morning until late afternoon. This results in a lack of attention given to children. Students who do not get full attention from their families are also among the causes of students dropping out of school (Choe, 2021).

Parents of students said that they had no choice because they still had to work to make a living. Parents are worried that if they do not focus on working then they will lose their jobs. This condition will certainly make it more likely to become a new cause for students to drop out of school. Based on the opinion of Zeragaber et al., (2024), students with unemployed parents or guardians have a greater chance of dropping out of school than students whose parents are employed.

Limited information about education and a lack of understanding about the importance of knowledge cause parents to not prioritize their children's education. In the case of dropout students in one of the primary schools in Sumber District, it is known that the parents of these students have a low level of education. Most of the parents did not graduate from primary school and some even never received an education. This condition indirectly affects the parents' mindset towards education.

The level of education of individuals, including parents, will affect the way they view their children's education. Not a few parents only send their children to school to the extent that they can read and write. Based on the results of interviews with parents of students, it can be understood that many parents consider education important but only until the child can read, write and count. Some parents think that school is a waste of time and money. They think that working is better because they get the results immediately (Deswita and Nora, 2022).

This understanding means that they are not serious in supporting their children to continue their education. Most parents in Sumber District tend to feel that it is enough if sons can help in the fields and daughters can take care of housework. They prefer not to spend a lot of money on education because they assume that their

children will eventually lead lives like other villagers who do not pursue formal education.

b. Social Environment

The social environment in Sumber District has a major influence on the dropout rate in the area. The behavior of rural communities in sending their children to school is more influenced by environmental factors. Most people in this area have the view that education is not that important. They think that without going to school or continuing their education to a higher level, their children can live a decent life. They can even become vegetable vendors like other children who go to school. Unfortunately, this condition is used as a basis in determining the future of their children.

The view that many children have many fortunes makes people in rural areas direct their children who are still of school age to help their parents in earning a living. Murphy-Graham et al., (2021) stated that the dropout rate will increase due to several factors such as students working, students being older than their peers, and students having low academic achievement. In addition, in an interview conducted by one of the teachers, it was found that the school had been closed because there were no students attending school. After being asked directly, it turned out that the students preferred to come to weddings.

This statement was reinforced by an interview with the school principal. He stated that students are often absent from school during the planting season, harvest season, and many weddings. Sometimes only one or two students choose to stay in school. This condition occurs because students participate in working in the fields and when one of the residents holds a wedding event students also help their parents to help at the wedding. This habit is passed down from generation to generation because the community mindset tends to regard formal education as non-essential. In fact, dropping out of school can increase the likelihood of students having a low social and economic life (Choe, 2021; Košir et al., 2023).

In addition, children's association with peers who also do not continue their schooling makes them accustomed to this condition. The social

environment is the environment where an individual hangs out so that interactions occur that will affect the individual's personality either directly or indirectly (Deswita and Nora, 2022). Suyanto (in Maghfirah, 2019) states that dropout students are affected by their environment, which is generally children who have dropped out of school. Unfortunately, these children often cause social problems.

According to Tamrin (2020), students who drop out of school will create moral, economic, social, and future chaos. After the children finish primary school, many of them turn to vegetable taxi drivers to help the family economy. Some girls who do not continue their education to junior high school even choose to marry at a young age to men from their own neighborhood.

c. Limited Accessibility to School

Difficult accessibility is often a reason for students not to continue their schooling. The lack of internet access prevents children from getting information about education and learning opportunities. In addition, access to school is often a challenge especially for students who have to travel long distances every day. This condition is experienced by students because Sumber District is located in a mountainous area with inadequate infrastructure. Zeragaber et al., (2024) explain that inadequate infrastructure and resources in rural areas, including the distance between students' homes and schools, are often a problem and a reason for increased dropout rates.

Distance to school is also a factor in students dropping out of school. The distance between the village and the primary school in this area ranges from three to four kilometers. Based on observations made directly in the field, it is known that the long distance between school and home causes students to choose to use motorcycles. The journey to schools in Sumber District must be traveled along rocky and slippery roads during the rainy season. These steep and dangerous road conditions increase the risk of accidents, especially for students who are underage. Therefore, the long distance between students' homes and schools creates several challenges that students must face, including limited access to transportation, travel time, and

safety while traveling. Students who face these challenges can experience fatigue, delays, and decreased motivation to learn (Zeragaber et al., 2024).

#### d. Facilities and infrastructure

Schools in Sumber District face serious limitations in terms of facilities and infrastructure. Of the 23 primary schools in Sumber District, only three schools are in decent condition because they are located close to the regional center. Based on the results of the observations, it was found that the facilities and infrastructure in the three primary schools that the researchers studied were far from adequate. The three schools only have three classrooms so they are very limited. One room consists of two classes separated only by a plywood board. The learning process is carried out at the same time but teachers take turns explaining the subject matter. This condition makes the teaching-learning process ineffective because the sound from other classes disturbs students' concentration. Setyosari (2017) explains that focusing students' attention is very important for an effective learning process to occur.

In addition, facilities such as libraries, laboratories and access to the internet are still minimal. This lack of facilities causes students to feel that the school does not provide enough comfort or motivation to learn. According to De Witte dan Rogge (in Szabó et al., 2024), the factors that cause students to drop out of school include 1) Grade and type of school; 2) Educational attainment; 3) Students' attitudes; 4) Parents' attitudes; and 5) Socioeconomic status. Limited facilities and infrastructure make students prefer to work rather than spend time in schools that do not support the learning process. Students will be motivated to obtain good learning achievements if their environment is able to help create a pleasant and comfortable atmosphere for learning (Deswita and Nora, 2022).

The government has a big role in improving the quality of education, especially in remote areas. However, the government's attention to Sumber District is still low. The lack of empowerment of facilities and infrastructure as

well as socialization programs on the importance of education contribute to the cause of students dropping out of school. Based on an interview with one of the principals of a primary school in Sumber District, it was found that the school land was donated by the community. The school only receives 35% support from the government. Hakim (2020) explains that access to government assistance and the area of residence can influence students' decisions to drop out of school.

Based on several factors, both internal and external, overcoming the dropout phenomenon in Sumber District requires the cooperation of various parties, including the government, families and communities. Efforts to raise awareness about the importance of education should be promoted through programs that involve parents and children. In addition, improving accessibility to schools and improving facilities and infrastructure must be a concern for the government. Only with a holistic approach and continuous support can the dropout rate be reduced and the younger generation in Sumber District have the opportunity to achieve a better future through education..

## D. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The dropout phenomenon in Sumber District, Probolinggo district reflects a complex educational problem with various factors influencing each other. Based on the findings, the main causes of dropping out of school can be grouped into two: internal factors and external factors. Internal factors include students' low awareness of the importance of education, minimal motivation to learn, and the view that non-formal education is sufficient to fulfill job requirements. Many students prefer to work to help the family economy, considering that the immediate results obtained are more attractive than continuing their education.

Meanwhile, external factors include the lack of support from parents who mostly focus on working in the fields or as laborers, the lack of infrastructure at school, and limited accessibility to schools due to distance and poor road conditions. Environmental factors also exacerbate the situation as local communities tend not to prioritize formal education for their children. So children are more influenced to work or get married at a young age. The

government's lack of role in improving infrastructure and providing socialization about the importance of education is also a cause of students dropping out of school. The suggestion for further research is to examine efforts to reduce the dropout rate in 3T areas, either in Sumber District or other areas.

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