



*Proceedings of the 1<sup>st</sup> English Education International Conference (EEIC) in conjunction with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reciprocal Graduate Research Symposium (RGRS) of the Consortium of Asia-Pacific Education Universities (CAPEU) between Sultan Idris Education University and Syiah Kuala University*

*November 12-13, 2016, Banda Aceh, Indonesia*



## FACTORS INFLUENCING SCHOOL DROPOUTS IN ACEH

**Faridah Yahya**

Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh, INDONESIA

Email: [yahyafaridah@unsyiah.ac.id](mailto:yahyafaridah@unsyiah.ac.id)

### **Abstract:**

*This research aims to find out of the factors that cause school dropouts in some parts of Aceh. The population in this research was 76 people. Data were collected through library research, documentation and interview. The data were then analyzed by using simple statistical formula. The results of this research showed that the economic factor caused 80% of the dropouts, ordinary family circumstances 60%, learners' learning motivation and interest 24%, peer relationships 16%, lack of parents' educational background 60%, and failing in exams 28%. Of all the factors, the economic situation is the dominant factor affecting the Acehnese's school dropouts.*

**Keywords:** Dropout factors, school dropouts, Aceh.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education plays an important role in contributing to the quality of human resources. Qualified human resources are needed in order to properly compete in today's globalization. Therefore, to improve the quality of the resources, Indonesia through its Law on the National Education System No. 20/2011 Article 3 has stipulated that the national education is aimed at developing the capability, character, and civilization of the nation to improve its intellectuality, and developing the learners' potentials to be pious and faithful to God, to possess noble characters, and to be healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent, democratic, and to be responsible citizens.

The manifestation of the Law No. 20/2011 is obtained through educational institutions. The reason such institutions can influence the nation's intellectuality is because education is the basis of the national development. Thus, they should be given proper attention from the national government and the society as well. The society acts as a social environment for the learners since they will interact with one another the most within the environment, a place for implementing the educational values obtained from the educational institutions. In this sense, schools work in line with the mission set in the opening of the 1945 Constitution, to educate the nation. Therefore, every school tries to create an equal opportunity for the learners to have proper education.

The concern of the national government and the society is that school dropout is commonly seen in our country. Dropout, in fact, is not a new issue in the education world. This has been deeply rooted and difficult to solve. One of the possible solutions is perhaps by improving the economic situation of the learners' families. The lack of family income has become a triggering factor of the learners' lack of education. This situation has nevertheless hindered them to continue pursuing their formal studies. These poor economic situations are caused by the parents having no fixed employment, no special skills, and lack of abilities, among others.

Other hindering factors include being influenced by unhealthy relationships and lack of parents' attention on their children's education. All of these have made the learners become less motivated to study further. Therefore, internal motivation is necessary to help do something for the sake of the thing itself (its own objectives) (Santrock, 2011, p. 514). In this regard, every child is highly dependent on their parents in material or non-material issues. Departing from above discussions, this present study explores the factors influencing the school dropouts in Aceh.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

Various issues in education have been the concerns of Indonesia's government. To tackle these, the Law on the National Education System No. 2/1989 was released. Education has been regarded as the main pillar of the national development since it enables the human resources to be intellectually and religiously developed. However, education does not merely focus on the cognitive aspect, but also the affective and psychomotoric ones. Tilaar (2004, p. 174) states that the improvement of basic education is through the compliance of social norms including order, discipline in common life, life habits, and high morality.

One of the important issues in today's education is school dropout. School dropout can be a factor that hampers the nation's development credibility. It is a term used for a former learner who is unable to complete a level of education and thus, cannot further continue to a higher level of education. Dropouts are possible to happen because the learners fail to complete a grade, which forces them to repeat the grade. Marzuki (as cited in Suyanto, 2013, p. 355) describes that repeating or failing a grade, though not always, can usually be an initial cause of dropout cases.

There are some factors contributing to school dropouts. Sukmadinata (as cited in Suyanto, 2013, p. 356) states that the main factor of dropouts is economic difficulty or the inability of the parents to afford school fees for their children. It is also not uncommon that the parents ask their children to quit school so that they can help earn a living for the family. This is in line with Dalyono (2005, p. 240) who mentions that the lack of economic situation leads to the lack of learning supplies, lack of education fees, and lack of education facilities. In this case, there is no option for the parents other than to improve the family income for the sake of their children's education.

The family situation also plays a role in determining the children's level of education. This is because family is the main vessel for the children to depend upon, shelter, and get first-ever education prior to school. Abduh (2015) argues that family is the first educational institution and therefore, it is a very suitable place for any individual to get mental and character development which will further be shaped in school. In addition, parents' educational background is also a factor to determine their children's level of education. Suyanto (2013, p. 362) states that the relatively low or no educational background makes it difficult for the parents to be willing, responsive and appreciative of their children's educational activities.

The next learning environment after family is environment. Within the environment, the children tend to follow or take examples of their surrounding people. In this context, if a child is exposed to bad environment, it is highly likely that they will have bad characters especially when they interact with one another. Dalyono (2005, p. 246) agrees that peers have a great influence for the children's mentality. If the children like to befriend those who do not go to school, they will also be lazy to study. This is because the 'noschool' children have different lifestyles with the 'school' children.

Furthermore, motivation is a complex factor which should be planted within the children in order to make them continue learning. The less motivated learners will have difficulty in studying, as described by Dalyono (2005, p. 236) that learners with low motivation often show indifferent attitudes, easily discouraged, have unfocused attention, like disrupting class, and leave the lessons. As a result, they have learning difficulties. McDonald (as cited in Soemanto, 2006, p. 203) also claims that motivation is a force of change of a person which is characterized by effective encouragement and reactions to achieve a goal. Moreover, Uno (2011, p. 27) mentions that there are several important roles of motivation in learning including 1) determining things used to encourage learning, 2) making clear the set learning goals, 3) determining various controls over learning stimuli, and 4) determining the learning persistence. Motivation is marked by the changes in behaviors and the active involvement during learning. Therefore, it is necessary that motivation be instilled within the learners by all parties, including family, school (teachers), and surrounding community.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This is a descriptive qualitative study. The population is all students who had dropped out from several schools in Aceh of 76 people, coming from Lam Ujong Village of Aceh Besar District, Lambaro Village of Geulumpang Tiga Sub-district of Pidie District, SMP (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama* or public junior high school) of Pidie District, and Nisam Antara Sub-district of Aceh Utara District.

## **RESULTS**

Most of the Acehnese have enjoyed formal education, especially in primary and secondary schools. There are also those who continue higher education. However, in fact, there are many children in several regions in Aceh who drop out schools due to a number of reasons. The followings are the findings of the factors influencing the school dropouts in Aceh.

### **The Factors in Lam Ujong Village, Aceh Besar District**

The first reason to drop out school is the lack of education fees. It was found that the respondents often had problem to buy school supplies such as textbooks and other related materials. The total percentage of this factor reached 32%. The respondents also answered that their parents' jobs were in private sector, adding to the fact that their family included 5 to 6 members. So, most of the time, the income was not sufficient to cover the family expenses.

Aside from poor economic situation, the family is also an important factor in determining the success of the children's education. In this case, 60% of the respondents said that the highest level of their parents' education was primary school (SD). Also, the family situation can affect the children's success in education which can be seen from the respondents' answer of 44% of their family which were in ordinary state.

Furthermore, the reason for dropping out school is influenced by having no personal desire to continue school because the respondents felt that school was not interesting enough (24%). The uninteresting factor of the school might cause by many issues including the teachers, the ways the teachers teaching in classes in monotonous and similar methods, poor class management, and uncomfortable class atmosphere. All of these contribute to the lack of learners' motivation to study. The surrounding community or living environment is also the influencing factor of school dropouts. It can be seen from 16% of the respondents who answered that they did not go to school anymore due to social influence.

Failing exams is chosen by 28% of the respondents as the cause of school dropouts. Those who failed in exams were closely related to those who failed a grade. About 80% of the respondents mentioned that they had failed a grade. And those who failed were usually those who were lazy, missing classes, and class disruptors.

### **The Factors in Lambaro Village, Geulumpang Tiga Sub-district, Pidie District**

Interviews were done to 15 school dropouts to find out their reasons for quitting school. Six respondents or 40% of total respondents stated that they dropped out because of the lack of education fees including school transport and textbooks. Three respondents answered that they were not allowed to continue school by their parents, another three were less interested in education, and another three said their school was located far away from Lambaro Village.

In terms of the parents' response towards their children's education, nine respondents or 60% of the total respondents said their parents had neutral (not really responding) attitudes to their education. Only three respondents said their parents gave advice on their education, and another three or 20% of them mentioned that their parents were very angry when they found out they had dropped out school.

For the actions taken by the parents related to school dropouts, there were six respondents who stated that their parents gave advice about school, three respondents reported their situations to the school, and another six respondents mentioned that their parents let them continue their education.

On the schools' responses about school dropouts, there were 12 or 80% of the total respondents who said that their schools had never visited the dropouts' houses. Another three or 20% of the respondents said that their schools cared enough for the dropouts by doing home visits.

Another 12 respondents stated that their schools had asked them to go back to school, and the rest three respondents said that the schools had never asked them to go back to school.

In terms of the difficulties faced by the learners, there were nine or 60% of the total respondents who said that they had difficulty at school while six or 40% of the total respondents had no difficulty. The difficulties include fees. Three respondents stated they had problems to buy textbooks while three respondents had difficulty in affording transport fees and school uniforms.

Furthermore, there were six respondents who chose to help their parents after dropping out. Six respondents worked for other people, however, the rest three respondents (20%) did not work at all. In this case, it can be said that while some learners dropped out school due to the economic factor, the rest of them was due to their lack of willingness to study further.

### The Factors in Junior High Schools in Pidie District

The results of the interviews in SMP Terbuka Delima, SMP Terbuka Bandar Baru and SMP Terbuka Kembang Tanjong are presented in the following table

**Table 1.** The summary of the factors in the junior high schools (SMP) in Pidie District.

No	School	Class	Reason	Total Students	%
1.	SMP Terbuka Delima	I	- Unable to afford the transport fees	8	34.78
			- Must help parents to earn a living	12	52.17
			- Feeling ashamed having different age from the regular junior high students	2	8.69
			- Getting married	1	4.34
		II	- Unable to afford the transport fees	4	17.39
			- Must help parents to earn a living	17	73.91
			- Feeling ashamed having different age from the regular junior high students	1	4.34
			- Getting married	1	4.34
2.	SMP Terbuka Bandar Baru	I	- Unable to afford the transport fees	2	13.33
			- Must help parents to earn a living	12	80
			- Feeling ashamed having different age from the regular junior high students	1	6.66
			- Getting married	0	0
		II	- Unable to afford the transport fees	4	15
			- Must help parents to earn a living	10	62.50
			- Feeling ashamed having different age from the regular junior high students	1	6.25
			- Getting married	1	6.25
3.	SMP Terbuka Kembang Tanjong	I	- Unable to afford the transport fees	4	40
			- Must help parents to earn a living	5	50
			- Feeling ashamed having different age from the regular junior high students	1	10
			- Getting married	0	0
		II	- Unable to afford the transport fees	5	35.71
			- Must help parents to earn a living	7	50
			- Feeling ashamed having different age from the regular junior high students	1	7.14
			- Getting married	1	7.14

There were 41 subject teachers (31 had bachelor's degrees, 9 had Diploma III, 1 had Diploma I, and 2 had vocational secondary school teacher education). Every subject teacher has been teaching since 1995/1996, and they could meet the learners' needs. As for the tutor teachers who regularly guided the learners' study groups in the learning activity centers (TKB), they consisted of 28 teachers, 25 of whom were graduated from teacher education schools. The tutor teachers were adequate to teach because they have had enough experience and had taken teacher's upgrading held by Aceh's Provincial Education Office in 1998 and Teacher Establishment Center (BPG).

The interviews were also done with the principals, subject teachers, and tutor teachers on the school policy. Below are the results:

- The principals chose to do internal consolidation with the teachers in managing the Open SMP program, and as a result, they were prepared for running the Open SMP even though with further exploring the program.
- Following up the internal consolidation by providing letters of assignment to manage the Open SMP.
- Socializing the program to near institutions by having weekly meetings in the sub-district office.
- The principals decided to find for alternative solutions such as by looking for donators to help the Open SMP students, either from institutions or from individuals.
- The principals decided to deliver the learners' reports when the elementary schools had grade promotion since the schools were the TKB for the learners. This was done for getting the trust from the public, socialization, as well as promotion.
- Providing proper classrooms for every class meeting.
- Allowing the learners freedom of using the sport facilities.
- Getting the learners involved in regular SMP activities.

Then, the interviews were also done with the local community. The community stated that the Open SMP was needed there. Their supports were shown by providing donations or scholarships for the school learners.

### The Factors in Nisam Antara Sub-district, Aceh Utara District

The results of the study in Table 2 show the statistics of 18 school dropouts, followed by the parents' educational background in Table 3, parents' attention towards their children's education in Table 4, parents' economic background in Table 5, and finally the disharmonious family background in Table 6.

**Table 2.** The statistics of 18 school dropouts.

Education Level	Age	Number of dropouts	
		Males	Females
SD (primary)	-	-	-
SMP (junior)	12-14	6	6
SMA (senior)	15-17	2	4
Total		8	10

**Table 3.** Parents' low educational background.

No.	Answer	Total
I	Level of education:	
	1. Not completed primary school (SD)	9
	2. completed primary school (SD)	8
	3. Completed junior high school (SMP)	1
		18
II	Reasons for not continuing education:	
	1. Wanting to continue to boarding school ( <i>dayah</i> )	3
	2. Lack of financial supports	4
	3. No support from the parents	3
	4. Getting influenced by peers	4
	5. Far from school	3
	6. Parents getting divorced	1
		18

**Table 4.** Parents' attention towards their children's education.

No.	Answer	Total
I	Parents' supervision on children's education:	
	Have supervised children to school	5
	Never supervised children to school	5
	Supervised children to school only if notified	8
		18
II	Parents' motivation on children's education:	
	Have motivated children on education	6
	Never motivated children on education	12
		18

Table 4 continued...

III	Parents' advice to children:	
	Have advised children to keep going to school	10
	Never advised children to keep going to school	6
	Did no advice, due to wishing to go to boarding school	1
	Did no advice, due to sickly children	1
		18

Table 5. Parents' low economic background.

No.	Answer	Total
I	Parents' income:	
	1. Rp. 500,000 – Rp. 1,000,000	10
	2. Rp. 1,100,000 – Rp. 1,500,000	4
	3. Rp. 1,600,000- Rp. 2,000,000	2
	4. Rp. 2,100,000 – Rp. 2,500,000	2
		18
II	Meeting family needs:	
	1. Sufficiently meet	5
	2. Do not meet	8
	3. Very low	5
		18

Table 6. Disharmonious family background.

No.	Answer	Total
I	Family situation of the dropouts:	
	1. Normal	16
	2. Already divorced/separated	1
	3. Separate house but not yet divorced	1
		18
II	Communication within the family:	
	1. Communicating often	2
	2. Communicating only when needed	6
	3. Seldom communicating	9
	4. Never communicating	2
		18

## DISCUSSION

Economic limitation is the primary cause of school dropouts. This is confirmed with the findings in several areas in Aceh including Aceh Besar with 32%, and Lambaro Village, Pidie with 40%. In addition, in Nisam Antara Sub-district, Aceh Utara there were eight families could not meet the family needs, and five were in very poor economic situation. In Open SMP Pidie, about 80% were dropouts because the learners had to help their families earn a living. This shows that Aceh's economy is still low. There are still learners who drop out due to lack of financial capability. The family income highly determines the level of children's education. Sufficient income will make the learners be able to get adequate learning facilities such as uniform, textbooks, and stationery. Dalyono (2005:240) remarks that lack of economic situation leads to lack of learning supplies, lack of education fees, and poor learning facilities.

Further, parents' educational background can also influence the children's education level. Educated parents will provide enough supports for their children to continue school because they understand the importance of education. The study found that in Aceh Besar, low parents' educational background reached 60%, in Aceh Utara, nine parents had not completed primary school, and only eight of the total 18 respondents graduated from primary school. It shows that low parents' education may cause the children's low level of education too. Suyanto (2013, p. 362) states that relatively low or no educational backgrounds of the parents make it hard for the parents to be responsive and appreciative towards their children's learning activities.

Another factor is the environment of the learners. The surrounding environment is the place for the children to express themselves. Therefore, it is not uncommon to find them have wrong relationships. The study found that in Lam Ujong Village, Aceh Besar, about 16% of school dropouts were caused by unhealthy relationships. Dalyono (2005, p. 246) argues that peers have a high

influence and can easily affect the children. When the children like to hang out with those who do not go to school, they will follow their friends' example by being lazy to study. It should be understood that the lifestyle of without school children is different from that of with school children.

Unhealthy relationship is an effect of disharmonious family. Many children become the victims of this situation. The study found that in Lam Ujong Village, Aceh Besar, about 44% of the parents had neutral attitudes towards their children's education, in Lambaro Village, Pidie, 60% of the parents also had neutral attitudes, and in Nisam Antara Sub-district, Aceh Utara, 16 parents also had neutral attitudes. Uncaring attitudes of the parents towards their children's education plays a role in school dropouts because they show no interest of their education. Parents should be the biggest motivator for the children. M. Abduh (2015) states that family is the suitable place for any individual to have mental and character development, which will be later established in school. Thus, if the parents show neutral attitudes which can be interpreted as uncaring, the children can easily drop out the school.

Parents' attention is very much needed by the children in order for them to do their activities well, especially in terms of education. The attention can increase the children's interest or motivation in studying further. In addition, the school's conditions (i.e. class management, learning methods) can also affect the learners' motivation. In Lam Ujong Village, Aceh Besar, about 24% of the children mentioned that the school's conditions were not interesting which caused them have no motivation to continue studying. In Open SMP Pidie, however, the teachers there had sufficient capability in teaching since they were already experienced. McDonald (as cited in Soemanto, 2006, p. 203) describes that motivation is the change in the internal self of an individual which is marked by effective stimuli and reactions in order to obtain the goals. If there is no motivation, the children will do no reactions to reach their goals.

Lack of motivation can cause the children to have learning difficulty. They will not be able to complete their studies according to the completeness standard set by the school. The study found that school dropouts were due to failing in exams (28%), and failing a grade (80%). This is very unfortunate because the children had low awareness in learning, which then made them fail in exams. Marzuki (as cited in Suyanto, 2013, p. 355) states that repeating or failing a grade, though not always, is the initial reason for school dropouts. In this regard, learning awareness needs to be improved in order to increase the learners' completeness level.

## CONCLUSIONS

School dropouts caused by poor economic factor reaches 80%, average family attention or situation reaches 60%, low parents' educational background also reaches 60%, failing in exams is at 28%, low learners' motivation and learning interest is 24%, and peer influence is 16%.

Of above factors, the most dominant one is the economic factor at 80%. Most respondents stated that economic difficulty as their main reason to drop out school. On the other hand, the less influencing factor is the geographical condition. Long distance or far location of the schools did not make the children to quit school.

Education is an essential element in the national development. Without nurturing the education properly, the nation will find it hard to develop. In order to achieve proper education, the learners need to have adequate supports from their families, teachers, and environment, both in material and non-material aspects. This will eventually lead to the learners be able to continue pursuing their education to the higher levels.

## REFERENCES

- Abduh, M. (2015). *Keluarga sebagai lembaga pendidikan utama dalam pembentukan kecerdasan spritual*. Retrieved from <http://sumsel1.kemendiknas.go.id/index.php?a=artikel&id2=cerdaspritual>.
- Asmawiyah. (2005). *Faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi anak putus sekolah (Studi kasus di Desa Lambaro kecamatan Geulumpang Tiga kabupaten Pidie)*. (Unpublished Master's thesis). Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh.
- Dalyono. (2005). *Psikologi pendidikan*. Jakarta: Penerbit Rineka Cipta.
- Nasir, M. (2006). *Faktor penyebab putus sekolah pada siswa SMP Terbuka di Kabupaten Pidie*. (Unpublished Master's thesis). Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh.

- Safrida. (2015). *Faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan anak putus sekolah menengah dikemukiman Lam Ujong kecamatan Krueng Barona Jaya Kabupaten Aceh Besar*. (Unpublished Master's thesis). Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh.
- Santrock, J. W. (2004). *Psikologi pendidikan* (Translated by Tri Wibowo B. S. in 2011). Jakarta: Kencana.
- Soemanto, W. (2006). *Psikologi pendidikan*. Jakarta: PT. Rineka Cipta.
- Suyanto, B. (2013). *Masalah sosial anak*. Jakarta : Kencana Prenada Media Grup.
- Syarifuddin. (2012). *Faktor-faktor penyebab anak putus sekolah di kecamatan Nisam Antara kabupaten Aceh Utara*. (Unpublished Master's thesis). Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh.
- Tilaar, H. A. R. (2004). *Manajemen pendidikan nasional*. Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Undang-Undang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional nomor 20 tahun 2011. Retrieved from <http://sindikker.dikti.go.id/dok/UU/UU20-2003-Sisdiknas.pdf>
- Uno, H. B. (2011). *Teori motivasi dan pengukurannya*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.