

Why Students Dropout? Case Study of Dropout Attributions in West Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia

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Abstract: This study aims to find the factors and dominant factors causing drop out in West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The data collection used in-depth interviews and data analysis used an interactive model. The factors identified causing dropout are; laziness, poor motivation of children to go to school, negative perceptions about their cognitive abilities and their parents to pay fees, weak family economic, lack of motivation and guidance of parents, pessimistic towards the sustainability of children's education, weak parents' expectations in education, weak parents' expectations to the future of children, weak parents' attention to children's education, neglect of children, association with peers who are not in school, and gender-biased in culture. From these factors, the dominant factors are the poor motivation of children to go to school, gender-biased in cultures, lack of parents' expectations in education, weak parents' expectations of their children's future, and neglect of children.

Keywords: Students, dropout, attribution, dominant factors

INTRODUCTION

Education is an instrument to explore and develop one's potential (Gutek, 1974:18). Through education, children's potential will be developed, so that they have good competitiveness (The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, 2017). Therefore, many countries and international institutions that focus on education are very serious in fixing and improving the quality of education. Quality education must be obtained by everyone, not only by a handful of people. UNICEF emphasizes that everyone must get a good quality of education. This was confirmed in the World Conference on Education in 2001 which stated that all children in the world must have access to obtain and complete quality education in 2015 (Karim & Shahidul, 2015).

One of the problems faced by education throughout the world to date is dropping out of school (Andrei, *et al.*, 2011). Dropouts are an easy, frequent, and common phenomenon in many countries (Chirtes, 2010) and occur at all levels of education (Burrus & Roberts, 2012). School dropouts have been a ghost for many countries, even in Ghana dropping out of school has become life-threatening cancer (Adam, *et al.*, 2016). Data shows dropout in all countries is still quite high. The International Commission on Financing's

Global Education Opportunity report in 2017 (ICFGE, 2017:2) stated that as many as a quarter-billion children and adolescents had dropped out of school in 2016, even by 2050 it was predicted that 1 in 3 students in primary and secondary schools in Africa would still experience drop out of school. Data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2016) also shows that there were 263 million children aged 6-17 years in the world who cannot finish their schooling. the details are 23.2% drop out in elementary school, 22.81% drop out in junior high school and 53.99% drop out in high school.

The research showed that dropping out was not only a problem in developing countries but also in developed countries such as the USA, Europe and China. In the USA 1 out of 3 children or as many as 7,000 elementary students cannot complete their education (Moore, 2017), even at the high school level students drop out of school in the USA can be up to 50% so that schools are called "dropout factories" (Burrus & Roberts, 2012). In Europe the dropout rate is also still quite high, in 2011 there were 17.4% children aged 18-24 years who only graduated from elementary school, 14.4% (6 million) children aged 18-24 years dropped out of elementary and junior high schools (Andrei, *et al.*, 2011). Likewise in China, the dropout rate is also still high, which is around 10.7% - 22% (Yi, *et al.*, 2015).

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In Indonesia, dropping out of school is still relatively high. At the elementary level, Indonesia ranks 6th out of 6 countries with the biggest dropout contributors (2 million people). At the junior secondary school level, Indonesia together with Myanmar rank fifth out of 6 countries with the highest dropout rate (1.9 million) (UIS UNESCO, 2016). In West Nusa Tenggara Province, dropping out of school is still a problem in the education sector (Sutanto, 2017). In 2014/2015 the dropout rate in West Nusa Tenggara Province was 3,667 with details of 969 dropouts at elementary school level, 801 dropouts junior high school level, and 1,897 dropouts at the high school level. In fact, quantitatively the number decreased compared to the previous year, but specifically at the high school dropout rate increased by 2.63% (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2016; ANTARANEWS, 2016). Because dropping out of school has a serious impact not only on students but also on society, nation, and state (Burus & Robert, 2012), dropping out must be a concern of all stakeholders. Dropping out of school can cause failure in social integration and hinder even close one's opportunity for success (Chirtes, 2010). Dropping out of school reduces a person's chance of getting a job (Andrei, *et al.*, 2011; Burrus & Roberts, 2012), which means hindering a better life.

There have been many attempts made by the Indonesian government in reducing school dropout namely; eliminating cost barriers by providing School Operational Assistance (SOA) funds for public and private primary schools, establishing one-roof elementary and junior high schools in remote areas whose populations are scattered, expanding access to high school levels, and conducting education and advocating the importance of education (Wirda, *et al.*, 2007:41). Specifically, in the Province of West Nusa Tenggara, the Provincial Government has given serious attention to education by launching the ADONO program (zero dropout rate) which began from 2009 to 2013. In addition, the provincial government also provides school operational assistance from regional budgets and revenues (ANTARANEWS, 2016). With these various policies, school dropouts in West Nusa Tenggara Province should be handled properly so that the dropout rate can be maximally suppressed. But dropping out of school to this day is still high. This means that dropping out is not caused by financing factors, but there are other factors that cause it. So that, to be able to deal with the problem of dropping out of school properly, it must first be known with certainty the empirical factors that cause the problem. Thus the stakeholders can take the right solution to overcome them. Therefore, comprehensive research on the empirical factors causing dropouts is very important. This study aims to uncover the factors that cause dropouts and the dominant factors of all the factors that have been identified.

CONTEXT AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The answer to the question "Why do dropouts occur?" It can be explored using the Attribution theory, and this theory is used to explore dropout factors in this study. Attribution theory explains logically why a person takes a particular action. This theory makes causality a key factor in understanding the occurrence of action by linking the structure of the mind, the dynamics of feeling, and the actions taken (Weiner, 1985; Weiner, 1986:22-23). So, Attribution theory helps to find the cause of events and behavior by someone (Solomon & Theiss, 2013:105). In this study, Attribution theory is used as a framework for understanding the factors that determine the attribution (Snead, *et al.*, 2014) of dropping out of school.

Attribution has two meanings, namely; attribution as explanation and attribution as inference. Attribution as an explanation serves to answer the question logically "why does a person behave in a certain way". As for inference, attribution explores thoughts and emotions (Malle & Korman, 2007). In this study, attribution as inference will be used to provide an explanation, why someone dropped out of school, whether intentional or forced (Malle, 1999), whether the locus of control is internal or external (Rotter in Thoron & Bunch, 2015). Explanation of the causes of dropping out of school is obtained from information provided by informants and logically concluded by researchers (Griffin, 2012:17).

According to attribution theory, there are two types of attribution why a person does an action, namely internal attribution and external attribution. Internal attribution assumes that factors from within an individual are the basis of behavior. Internal attribution is related to a person's thoughts and emotions. The external attribution assumes that external forces or the environment are the main causes of a person's behavior (Solomon & Theiss, 2013:105). Internal attributions (thoughts and emotions) are influenced by external attributions (the environment), that is, how a person perceives conditions that occur in groups and the social environment in which the person lives (Sarwono, 2006:184). According to Weiner (1986:226), thoughts are largely determined by emotions. So, external attribution affects emotions, and emotions determine how someone thinks about something. External attributions that influence a person are the hopes and influences of others. Both of these motivate someone to take certain actions. But whether the expectations and influences of other people can influence a person's motivation is largely determined by the person's perception. If their perceptions are positive then their motivation will be high, conversely, if their perceptions are negative then their motivations will be bad (Weiner, 1985). According to Wright & Mischel (Weiner, 1986:227), the induction of positive influences from the

environment will increase one's positive perception, positive perceptions will affect expectations, and expectations will arouse one's motivation to act.

The same opinion is also stated by Kelley (1967) that the causes of someone taking action are twofold, namely; internal and external. In the external attribution theory developed by Kelley explained that the external environment is the cause of an event. The opinion above is the same as the opinion put forward by Heider (1958:165) which says that individuals are not autonomous to determine themselves, but are determined by external influences, even external factors can stop factors originating from individuals. The attribution process is the process of one's perception of other people or the environment. A person's perception is very much determined by the amount of information that the person has relating to facts, experiences, hopes, and possibilities. Expectations and possibilities related to the future, while reality relates to the past and present (Sarwono, 2006:184). This perception will influence the decisions and actions taken by someone.

Based on the explanation above dropout can be caused by two factors, namely; internal and external factors. Internal factors relate to motivation and emotions. Strong motivation will encourage someone to do something seriously, and positive emotions owned by someone will have an impact on perception and cognitive processes (Weiner, 1986:23-27). Both of these, motivation and emotion will definitely have an impact on the decisions and actions that someone will take. While relating to outside factors, Lewin's Medan theory (Heider, 1958:165; Sarwono, 2006:48) explains that individual behavior including dropping out of school is determined by environmental factors. In the social environment, those who are dominant will determine how someone will act. Murray (Heider, 1958:166) analogizes the environment to the press which has a significant impact on a person. He stressed that everyone needs the presence of others who he respects and trusts in order to be able to motivate him in achieving his goals.

From various studies that have been conducted, it is known that there are many factors causing school dropouts. The causes of dropping out from one region to another vary and are not single (Bridgeland, *et al.*, 2006; Sumardi *et al.*, 2017). Chirtes (2010) and Chinyoka (2014) group the causes of dropout into three factors, namely; personal factors, factors from family, and factors from school. Other factors that cause school dropouts are social environment (peers and surrounding communities) and nature (Morara, 2013; Chinyoka, 2014).

Personal factors that cause school dropouts include; children not interested in school (Majumder & Mondal, 2013), low motivation (Bridgeland, *et al.*, 2006) low learning ability, weak memory, weak vision

(Chirtes, 2010), low attendance, deviant behavior, (Khan, *et al.*, 2017), drug abuse, poor health, helping working parents, perception that school is not important, low discipline (Chinyoka, 2014), young pregnancy (Morara, 2013; Adam, *et al.*, 2016), religion and tradition (Kurebwa & Wilson, 2015). The family factors that cause school dropouts are reluctance of parents to send their children to school, help parents work, sick parents, dead parents, (Majumder & Mondal, 2013), parents' lack of interest in education, second marriage, family conflict, single parent, wrong method of education in the family (Chirtes, 2010), lack of parental support, low parental understanding (Khan, *et al.*, 2017), divorce, lack of parental supervision, (Chinyoka, 2014; Kurebwa & Wilson, 2015), parental neglect (Morara, 2013), employing children (Andrei, *et al.*, 2011), and poverty (Adam, *et al.*, 2016) while factors from schools that cause school dropouts include unattractive classes (Bridgeland, *et al.*, 2006) failed to adjust to school, discipline problems, school phobia, school violence, conflicts with friends, ethnic discrimination (Chirtes, 2010), ineffective curriculum, rigid school regulations, lack of educational facilities, hostile school environment (Khan, *et al.*, 2017), not going up to the next class, lack of motivation from school, lack of guidance from counselor teachers (Morara, 2013), stigmatization, not feeling safe in school, fat classrooms (Chinyoka, 2014), discriminatory teacher attitudes (Adam, *et al.*, 2016; Majumder & Mondal, 2013). Meanwhile, social and natural environmental factors that cause school dropouts are the influence of peers, the culture of young marriage (Morara, 2013; Kurebwa & Wilson, 2015), and the location of distant schools (Chinyoka, 2014; Adam, *et al.*, 2016).

METHODS

Research Approach

This research is qualitative with a case study type. The use of qualitative research because the data collected demands to be done intensively and is directly related to data sources in scientific settings as suggested by Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014:5). The type of case study was chosen because this study only explained a problem in one setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007:59). The problem examined in this study is the factors that cause children to drop out of school in Sasak society in West Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia.

Informants

The informants of this study are children and parents/guardians of children who have dropped out of school in the Sasak community in West Nusa Tenggara Province. Not all people who drop out of school can be informants in this study, only those who have dropped out of school no more than 1 year can be used as informants. The reason is that they are still considered to remember in detail the reasons why they dropped out of school. Whereas those who have dropped out of

school more than 1 year are not used as informants because it is feared they have not remembered in detail why they dropped out of school (Spradley, 1979:71). In determining the research informant the technique used is Snowball. Snowball is a research technique based on recommendations from previous informants (Wagiran, 2015:210) and rolling like a snowball until the data is declared saturated. Snowball was conducted in the research unit, which is the family of a child who had dropped out of school. The scenario is the researchers first determine the research areas that have high dropout rates based on the Central Statistics Agency data. After that, researchers look for key informants based on information provided by community leaders and from the key informant the next informant was obtained. The process of determining informants like this is rolling continuously until the data feels saturated. Children who are selected as research informants, automatically their parents/guardians also become informants in this study. Based on this technique, the number of informants is 47 people from 17 research units. The research unit in this study is the household of children who have dropped out of school. The details are that 17 informants are children who have dropped out of school and 30 other informants are parents/guardians of children who have dropped out of school.

Data Collection

In this study, data collection was carried out by triangulation, namely sources triangulation where the data was collected from informants of children who dropped out of school and the parents/guardians of these children. Data collection techniques used were deep interviews with face-to-face interviews (Creswell, 2010:267). In-depth interviews were conducted separately between the child and parents/guardians so as not to influence the answers given by the child informants. The in-depth interview was first conducted with the child informant then followed by the parent/guardian informant. The instrument used in gathering data was an open interview guide (Wagiran, 2014:271-274), where the instrument only contained general questions about the problems to be explored. Questions asked to informants were about time to drop out of school, causes of dropout, and how these factors caused dropouts. Starting from these questions, the researchers deepened the information until all the required data was collected.

Data Nanalysis

In analyzing research data, the analysis technique used was an interactive model analysis technique developed by Miles and Huberman (Salim, 2006:22). There are three stages of data analysis in this model, namely; data condensation (selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming data), data display (organizing and compacting descriptions), and conclusion drawing (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014:8-9). Based on the steps of the analysis technique, the data analysis process in this study was carried out

from the time the data was first collected until the conclusion. The data analysis process carried out was: First, examine all data obtained from informants, then the data was abstracted to get a picture of the tendency of the data obtained. Second, display data by compiling data in predetermined categorizations, such as data categories based on theoretical factors that cause school dropouts. After that, the data was checked again to find out the validity of the data. Third, draw conclusions and re-examine conclusions to fit the data collected. After all, data has been authenticated, the next step was to compile the results of the study in the form of a research report.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results The findings of this study reveal twelve factors causing dropouts at the elementary level, there are; (1) laziness, (2) weak motivation of children to go to school, and (3) negative perceptions about the cognitive abilities of themselves and their parent's ability to pay school fees, (4) weak family economic conditions, (5) lack of motivation and guidance to children, (6) pessimistic attitudes towards the sustainability of children's education, (7) weak expectations on education, (8) Weak expectations for their children's future, (9) lack of parents' attention to their children's education, and (10) neglect of children by parents, (11) association with peers who are not in school and (12) gender-bias in culture. These factors can be categorized into three groups, namely; factors originating from children, families, and the socio-cultural environment. Firstly, factors originating from children, consisting of laziness, lack of motivation to go to school, and negative perceptions about the cognitive ability of themselves and their parents/guardians to pay for school fees. Secondly, factors originating from the family, consisting of weak family economic conditions, lack of motivation and guidance of parents to their children, pessimistic attitude towards the sustainability of their children's education, weak expectations on education, weak expectations of the future of their children, lack of parents' attention to their children's education, and neglect of children. Thirdly, factors originating from the social environment, consisting of association with peers who are not in school and social culture that is gender-biased. The sources of the causes of school dropouts are in line with the opinion expressed by Bridgeland, et al. (2006) which says that dropping out is not only caused by one factor but several factors.

Not all of the causes of dropouts above can be categorized as dominant factors or attributions. According to Weiner (1986:22-23) just the causes of dropouts that show causality can be called attributions. Causality according to Heider (Griffin, 2012:17) is the real cause of something that happened, and causality is a key factor for understanding attribution (Weiner, 1985), including in the problem of dropping out of school. From the data analysis that has been done, there

are only five factors that can be categorized as causes of dropout, namely; gender-biased in culture, weak parents' expectations on education, lack of parents' expectations to the future of their children, children's neglect, and poor motivation of children to go to school. Factors beyond the five factors are not included in the dropout attribution. Factors included as drop-out causality are called "primary factors" because all of that became the dominant cause of dropping out of school. Whereas the factors which are not included as causality are called "secondary factors" because these factors are not the dominant cause of dropout. These five primary factors by Rotter (Thoron & Bunch, 2015) are called "Locus of Control". Locus of control consists of two types; internal and external. According to Kelley (Malle & Korman, 2007), locus of control is everything that causes people to do something. Of the five primary factors, which include the locus of internal control is the child's weak motivation to go to school. Meanwhile, gender bias in culture, parents' lack of expectations on education, weak parents' expectations for their children's future, and children's neglect are included in the locus of external control.

To find out whether the five factors include causality or not, it is seen from the thoughts, feelings and motivations expressed by the informants. This is consistent with the opinions expressed by Weiner (1986:22-23) and Malle & Korman (2007) who said that causality can be known from thoughts, feelings, and motivations. Aspects of thought and feeling according to Weiner (1985) are interconnected, actions are related to feelings, and feelings are related to thought structures. Weiner (1986:226) asserts that feelings have a strong influence on cognitive processes. Feelings function is like filters that justify what the mind thinks. Therefore, the mind is very easily influenced by feelings. Positive feelings will increase positive perception and do positive information processing. Conversely, negative feelings will increase negative perceptions and process negative information. Someone's thoughts and feelings according to Fraenkel (1977:33) can be known from the statements and actions that were taken.

The informant's explanation that said *"the women is not important to go to school, there is no benefit, because when they get married they will return to the kitchen, wells, and mattresses (to become housewives)"* illustrating that parents/guardians of students in the Sasak community are very gender-biased. Such cultural values surround the minds of many research informants. A gender-biased in culture makes girls far more vulnerable to dropping out of school than boys. These findings are consistent with the results of research conducted by Sumardi & Hanum (2019) and Rispawati & Sumardi (2020) which explains that the culture of the Sasak community is indeed gender-biased. The gender bias have a significant effect on attitudes and treatment of parents towards

their children that have different sexes (Sumardi, *et al.*, 2019; Rispawati & Sumardi, 2020). Regarding the socio-cultural influence on the sustainability of a child's education, Holcamp (Shahidul & Karim, 2015) explained that the socio-cultural environment is very influential on the problem. This opinion is the same as the results of this study which shows that cultural factors are one of the main causes of school dropouts.

As for the statement of the informant stating *"what they go to school for, many people have been finished their education but they are still unemployed, the school cannot be a guarantee for someone to get a job"* illustrates that the informant has a bad perception about education. These bad perceptions make the parents/guardians' expectations low for their children's education and future. It happened because they were wrong in understanding the social reality that occurred. This condition causes them to care less about the education of their children, even consciously asking their children not to go to school and continue their education. This is similar to the results of a study conducted by Burrus & Robets (2012), Khan, Hussain, & Suleman (2017) who revealed that many children drop out of school due to parents who do not support the education of their children.

In addition, the findings of this study also indicate that the child's lack of motivation to go to school and neglect of children are the main factors causing dropouts. These two factors are interconnected with one another. Children who are abandoned by their parents have weak enthusiasm and motivation to go to school. This can be seen from the explanation given by the informant *"I'm lazy to go to school. Not excited. There are no my mothers and fathers at home, they went to Malaysia. During this time I lived with my grandmother. She let me not go to school, he was not angry"*. The explanation of the informant illustrates that children who are abandoned by their parents lose motivation and enthusiasm to go to school. This happens because they do not get an induction of motivation from the people around them (Sarwono, 2006:46). Even though children at this age really need motivation induction from the closest people, they really need the presence of an authoritative person to motivate them (Heider, 1958:126) because they are still very dependent on older people (Suryabrata, 1982:28; Slavin, 2000:32). The importance of motivation in maintaining the continuity of one's education was also stated by Nur (2000:2) and Wahyudiati *et al.* (2019; 2020) which revealed that motivation is a very important factor in education, not only in maintaining the sustainability of education but also relating to all aspects of education. The findings of this study are also in line with the results of research conducted by Burrus & Robets (2012), Chinyoka (2014), and Chirtes (2010) which show that motivation so far is one of the factors causing dropouts. Motivation according to Weiner (1985) is guided by children's expectations about their

future and raising children's expectations is the task of parents.

CONCLUSION

From the findings and discussion above it can be concluded that the dominant factors that cause children drop out of school are the factors included in the locus of external control. Whereas the factors that included locus of internal control caused limited dropouts because they only occurred in children who were abandoned by their parents. According to Heider (1958:165), the locus of external control has a dominant influence because everyone does not have absolute autonomy. The attitude and behavior of each person are determined by the environment. Even according to Heider (1958:165), individual desires can be stopped because of outside influences called the power field. Especially at school-age children are very easily influenced, even they are very dependent on the environment/closest people so that they will behave as expected by others.

Based on the research findings, it is suggested to the government especially the West Nusa Tenggara Provincial government use a socio-cultural approach in dealing with drop out of school. The community/parents of students must be educated about the importance of education and the importance of gender equality between boys and girls, not only in the education sector but also in other sectors. The education process should be carried out by involving local socio-cultural institutions and must be carried out in a planned, programmed, intensive and sustainable manner. In this way dropping out of school can be maximally suppressed. This research is indeed still limited because it is a case, although at least the findings of this study can be used as a basis for taking strategic steps to overcome dropouts that correspond to real life.

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