

Addressing Economic Barriers of Farmer Families' Education

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Abstract

Education is crucial for the development of children, especially those living in rural farming communities in developing nations. However, these children encounter various obstacles that impede their access to quality education. This abstract delves into the challenges posed by inadequate educational infrastructure, economic limitations within farming families, and a lack of parental understanding regarding the value of education for rural farming children in Indonesia. These hurdles result in less-than-optimal educational outcomes and decreased participation in schooling among this vulnerable demographic. To tackle these issues, it is imperative to engage in collaborative endeavors involving governmental bodies, educational establishments, and the local populace. By investing in educational infrastructure, ensuring an equitable distribution of teachers, offering financial aid to farming families, and enhancing awareness about the importance of education, a more inclusive and fair educational atmosphere can be established. Through the joint implementation of these suggestions, rural farming children can be empowered with equal opportunities to access high-quality education and secure a more promising future.

Keywords: *Education; poverty; education infrastructure*



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INTRODUCTION

The education of farmer children in rural Indonesia faces complex and profound challenges that significantly hinder their access to and quality of education. Limited education infrastructure in rural areas is one of the main obstacles. Many schools lack basic facilities, such as proper classrooms, libraries, laboratories and teaching aids. In addition, the uneven distribution of teaching staff means that many rural schools lack qualified teachers. As a result, the learning process is not optimised and farmers' children do not get the same education as children in urban areas.

The generally low economic condition of farming families also contributes to the low education participation rate of children in rural areas. Children are often expected to help their parents in the fields or paddy fields, especially during planting and harvesting seasons, which causes them to miss school or even drop out. In addition, additional costs for education, such as uniforms, books and transport, are often too much of a burden for farming families. These economic constraints also limit the family's ability to provide learning support at home, such as buying additional books or providing a conducive learning environment.

Many people who are farmers in rural Indonesia still have only primary and secondary school education. This is due to several factors, both social and economic. The lack of awareness and understanding of the importance of education among farmer parents is also a factor that exacerbates this problem. Education is not fully understood as a long-term investment that can improve the quality of life and family welfare. Many parents still see education as something that is not urgent compared to their daily needs and work in the fields. In addition, the phenomenon of urbanisation, which attracts young people to look for work in the city, also causes many children to be reluctant to continue their education. They prefer to work to help the family's economy rather than continuing their studies, in the hope of earning a better income. According to Grouder (in Nurhuda, 2022), achieving a higher level of education of the head of the household will improve household welfare, so education is an effective way to reduce poverty.

To overcome this challenge, comprehensive efforts from various parties are needed. The government needs to improve the accessibility and quality of education in rural areas, including providing education programmes that are relevant to local needs and providing incentives for farmers' children to stay in school. In addition, there needs to be intensive socialisation to parents and communities about the benefits of education in improving family welfare and children's future. Collaboration between the government, educational institutions and local communities is also important to create a favourable

environment for rural farm children's education. With these measures, it is hoped that the participation rate and quality of education of farmer children in rural Indonesia can improve, giving them a better chance of a brighter future (Heffernan and Heffernan, 1986).

Sesean Matallo Village, located 14 kilometres from Rantepao, the capital city of North Toraja, has a climate that consists of rainy, dry and transition seasons. The rainy season usually occurs between January and April, the dry season between July and November, and the transition season between May and June. Communities whose livelihoods depend on farming often experience difficulties due to the dry season, which causes drought, and the rainy season, which submerges crops. As a result, crop yields are often low and income, which depends on crop yields, is often uncertain due to weather disturbances. This causes farmers' incomes to be unstable and often insufficient to pay for their children's education.

The remote geography of Sesean Matallo Village from the town centre makes access to education difficult for its residents. Within the village, there are only kindergartens and primary schools, while the nearest junior high school is in Lembang Lempo, several kilometres away, and senior high schools are only available in the town. These long distances require some children to use public transport or private vehicles, which adds to the economic burden on families. Additional costs such as transport, uniforms and school books become a heavy burden for farming families. As a result, some parents tend to pay less attention to their children's education because they are focused on fulfilling their daily needs.

The government has attempted to address this challenge by providing assistance through the Indonesia Smart Card (KIP). KIP is an education allowance programme in the form of cash transfers for children, but it is often insufficient to meet all educational needs. Based on data collected from preliminary observations, many farming families feel that the income from farming activities is insufficient to pay for children's education up to higher education levels such as high school and college. Despite this, the assistance provided by the government is still insufficient to cover all children's educational needs, including the cost of expensive school uniforms, study materials and other educational expenses.

From the results of the study, the dropout rate in the North Toraja community is high. The percentage of children who did not complete primary school reached 19.97%, primary school 17.48%, junior high school 20.08%, and senior high school and above 42.47%. These figures show an increase from the previous year, indicating the low accessibility and quality of education in the area. This research was conducted in Sesean Matallo village, Sesean Suloara sub-district, North Toraja district. The village has a farming population of 321 people, with 265 children. The results showed that there were 15 children who did not complete primary school and 80 children who could not continue their education. Although 68 children received scholarships in the village, only 5% of them passed the National School Examination. None of the children managed to enter a top school at the primary, junior secondary or senior secondary level, reflecting the low quality of education in the village (Central Bureau of Statistics of North Toraja Regency, 2022)

The education of farmer children in Sesean Village is faced with a range of complex challenges that significantly hinder access to and the quality of education they receive. One of the main obstacles is the limited education infrastructure in rural areas. Many schools lack basic facilities such as proper classrooms, libraries, laboratories and teaching aids. In addition, the unequal distribution of teachers leads to a shortage of qualified teaching staff in rural schools. As a result, the learning process is not optimised and farmers' children do not receive the same education as their urban counterparts.

In addition to the generally low economic situation in farming families, this factor also plays a role in lowering the education participation rate of children in rural areas. Children are often required to help their parents in the fields or paddy fields, especially during planting and harvesting seasons, so they are forced to miss school or even drop out. Economic constraints also limit families' ability to provide learning support at home, such as buying extra books or creating a supportive learning environment.

Farmers' parents' lack of awareness and understanding of the importance of education also exacerbates this situation. Education is not yet fully considered a long-term investment that can improve the quality of life and family welfare. Many parents still see education as less urgent than their daily needs and work in the fields. In addition, the phenomenon of urbanization that attracts young people to look for work in the city also discourages many children from continuing their education. They prefer to work to help the family's economy rather than continuing their studies, in the hope of earning a better income.

This phenomenon creates a cycle of poverty and underdevelopment that is difficult to break. Farmers' children who do not receive adequate education will have difficulties in obtaining decent jobs in the future, so they will tend to repeat the lifestyle of their parents. Therefore, to overcome the problem of farmer children's education in rural Indonesia, cooperation from various parties is needed. The

government needs to increase investment in rural education infrastructure, ensure equitable distribution of teachers and provide financial assistance to farming families. In addition, programs aimed at raising parents' awareness of the importance of education and creating economic opportunities in rural areas are also needed so that children do not have to choose between school and work. Only with a comprehensive and sustainable approach can the problem of rural farm children's education be addressed, and a brighter future for the younger generation in rural Indonesia be realized.

The purpose of this research is to identify and analyze the various factors that influence the low level of education of farmer children in Sesean Village. In addition, this research aims to formulate policy recommendations and strategies that can be implemented by the government, educational institutions and communities to improve access and quality of education in rural areas. Thus, it is hoped that the results of this research can make a real contribution to overcoming the problem of education in Sesean village.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. This approach was chosen because it is considered the most appropriate to explore and interpret the issue of farmer children's education in Sesean Matallo Village. With this method, researchers can more deeply understand the social and economic context that affects children's education in the area. In the research process, the determination of informants was done using purposive sampling technique. Researchers selected informants based on criteria relevant to the research objectives. The initial informant determination was used as a benchmark to determine the criteria for further informants. In the initial observation, researchers conducted interviews with farmer parents to understand their views on education. After finding informants who met the criteria, researchers continued the research process according to the predetermined criteria. The data collection techniques used included observation, interviews and documentation. The data collected was then analyzed descriptively qualitatively, which included three main stages: data reduction, data presentation and data verification. Through these stages, researchers were able to compile a comprehensive picture of the problems of farmer children's education in Sesean Matallo Village.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Poverty

Based on field findings, farming communities in Sesean Matallo Village face challenges in terms of uncertain income and employment. This situation has an impact on access to education, because when people are trapped in a cycle of poverty without efforts to change, the risk of the farming profession or poverty being passed on to the next generation will continue. This finding supports Darmawan's (2020) view that education plays a crucial role in improving one's quality of life. Although the community in Sesean Matallo Village realizes the importance of education for their children, the main obstacle faced is related to the cost of education which is the main obstacle in efforts to improve access and quality of education in the community.

People view the cost of education as a major factor affecting the accessibility of education. Low economic constraints are often an obstacle in the quest for proper education. Despite the government's assistance efforts, the decision to continue education still depends on the awareness and motivation of the individual, especially the child. Although parents' level of education can affect children's education, the role of parents in supporting children's access to education should not be ignored (Feder, Murgai, and Quizon, 2004). When parents understand and perform their role well in providing educational support, many barriers related to cost and accessibility can be overcome. However, awareness and motivation from the child also play an important role. The field findings show that despite parents' efforts to send their children to school, the success of children's education ultimately depends on their own awareness and behavior. In this context, collaboration between parents, government and individual awareness is key in ensuring equitable access to quality education for all children.

According to local people's views, income is not always a determining factor in access to education because ultimately the decision to continue education still depends on the motivation and awareness of individuals, especially children. Although the government has provided assistance, for parents, it may not be sufficient to meet all their children's educational needs. The impact of low income levels on parents can have an impact on the future of their children's education. This view is in line with Dueramae's (2017) opinion that poverty is often caused by low economic factors. Low income levels can be an obstacle in financing quality education, so every child may have difficulty in achieving higher education. In this context, it is important for the government and the community to work together to

create solutions that can improve access to education for all levels of society, regardless of income levels.

Long distances and insufficient economic conditions are often obstacles for people to access education. When a child has to adapt to a new environment that is different from the previous environment, this can cause shock and difficulty in controlling themselves. Adequate and good living conditions can have a positive impact on children's development because a safe and comfortable environment can create conditions that support children's growth and learning. Conversely, poor and unsupportive living conditions can also have a negative impact on children's development, such as discomfort, instability and insecurity that can hinder children's learning and growth. Therefore, it is important for the government and the community to pay attention to the availability of infrastructure and a supportive environment for children, so that they can grow and develop optimally without being constrained by inadequate environmental conditions.

Looking at the relevance between the concept of farmer family structure discussed in this study and Robert K. Merton's micro-functional structural concept, as mentioned by Zahara (2017), family conditions in the socio-economic aspect have a significant influence on various aspects of life, such as education level, income, living conditions, and social status. In the context of farming families, cooperation and division of tasks in earning a living are very important. Although in many cases this division of labor works well, in situations where farming families experience economic limitations or poor conditions, research shows that there are changes in family work patterns.

It was found that in some economically deprived farming families, children participate in earning a living by going overseas or helping to earn additional income for the family. In some cases, mothers in farming families also participate in agricultural activities to generate additional income, such as growing vegetables which are then sold. Although traditionally the task of earning a living is considered the responsibility of the father in the family, in this situation, the involvement of mothers and children in earning a living becomes a necessity to maintain the family's limited economic balance. This shows the flexibility and adaptability of farming families in dealing with difficult economic conditions, where all family members play a role in creating sources of income for the survival of the family.

Education Disparity

Education holds immense importance for every individual, yet not all have the privilege to avail it. In Sesean Matallo Village, the government's focus on educational conditions remains inadequate, particularly in remote regions. This disregard has resulted in notable disparities in educational access and standards. Such discrepancies are keenly felt by agricultural communities, where meager and inconsistent earnings fall short of covering the steep educational expenses. For economically disadvantaged families, the cost of schooling poses a significant barrier to pursuing education beyond the elementary level. Consequently, numerous children in these societies are compelled to abandon their studies in favor of employment to support their households, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and limited educational attainment.

To address this issue, it is crucial to enhance the quality of education in rural areas. This can be achieved by improving the caliber and quantity of teachers, ensuring that educators are well-trained and adequately compensated. Furthermore, constructing more schools in remote areas will facilitate easier access to education, alleviating the physical and financial burdens that currently hinder many students. The unequal distribution of resources and educational opportunities in Sesean Matallo Village poses a significant obstacle and is the responsibility of the government. Findings from various studies underscore this issue, highlighting that the lack of educational equity stems from the government's insufficient attention and investment in educating children in remote villages. Without targeted efforts to address these disparities, the cycle of educational inequality and economic hardship will persist, limiting the potential of future generations.

Based on the findings, the community in Sesena Matallo Village perceives that the educational conditions in their village are inadequate and require more attention from the government. For instance, the village only has a kindergarten and elementary school, highlighting a significant gap in educational infrastructure. The community hopes for improvements in this area, including the construction of higher-level educational facilities. Additionally, the housing provided for teachers is currently insufficient, emphasizing the need for better support from the local government to ensure that teachers have suitable living conditions. Unequal educational challenges primarily occur in remote areas. Residents often face difficult road access, making it challenging for children to reach school. The available facilities are often inadequate and do not align with the cost of education, compounded by various other needs that families

must meet. This educational gap, largely due to government neglect, serves as a significant barrier to enhancing overall education quality in this region.

There is a widespread fear among the community that many children are unable to continue their education. Despite various forms of government assistance, these measures do not guarantee that all children will benefit. This aligns with Amalia's findings (2007), which reveal that people feel they only receive average educational opportunities at the elementary school level. This limitation hinders children from reaching higher levels of education, perpetuating the cycle of limited opportunities and socio-economic challenges. In short, despite efforts to provide assistance, the lack of comprehensive government intervention and support leads to significant educational disparities, especially in rural and remote areas. To address this issue, collective efforts are needed to enhance infrastructure, provide adequate resources for teachers, and ensure fair access to education for all children, regardless of their socio-economic background or geographical location.

The interdependence between government attention to education in remote areas and the improvement of education quality is clearly evident. When remote areas receive more government support for education, the overall quality of education will increase. This statement is in line with the findings of Zulkarnain and Handoyo (2019), who highlight the inadequacies of the current education system in Indonesia. Merton's theory, which states that society functions as an interconnected system with balanced parts, further underscores this relationship. Within this framework, enhancing education in remote areas is a crucial component that contributes to the balance and progress of society as a whole.

This perspective aligns with the research conducted by Hamzah (2022) in Pinrang Regency. His study indicates that facilities and infrastructure play a vital role in advancing education. Specifically, the lack of attention from local governments to the welfare of teachers emerges as a significant barrier hindering educational progress. These findings emphasize the complex relationship between government support, educational infrastructure, and teacher welfare in driving educational development and societal progress.

High Expenses for Education

The exorbitant cost of education poses a significant barrier for many individuals from low-income backgrounds to pursue higher levels of education. Some perceive education as unnecessary to follow in their parents' footsteps as farmers. While there is government assistance that only covers school fees, additional expenses like uniforms and other necessities weigh heavily on them. Moreover, their unstable economic conditions exacerbate the impact of high education costs. As highlighted by Saefuddin (2019), the family's financial situation can significantly influence children's educational attainment, creating challenges in accessing education and meeting their educational requirements.

Financial difficulties are not the sole obstacles hindering the education of children of farmers. Challenges such as limited educational infrastructure and difficult access to schools also loom large. These factors cultivate an unsupportive learning environment, further exacerbated by additional costs like pocket money and transportation, as emphasized by Yustika (2019). These additional financial burdens worsen the disappointment of small-scale farmer children, who perceive education costs as exorbitant. Echoing previous research by Siregar (2021), economic constraints emerge as a crucial factor in determining the continuity of children's education.

Ensuring equal access to education across all segments of society is a government obligation. Therefore, effective management of education financing is crucial to optimize the functioning of all educational components, both at the micro and macro levels. This assertion aligns with Imansyah's research (2018), which underscores the significant challenge of education costs for the lower-middle-class. Hence, a comprehensive understanding of the intricate interaction between economic factors, educational access, and policy frameworks is essential to address the educational difficulties faced by rural farmer children.

Policy Recommendations and Strategies to Address the Educational Issues of Farmer Children in Sesean Matallo Village

The government needs to enhance investment in rural education infrastructure, including the construction of new schools, facility improvements, and provision of school transportation. Additionally, another crucial step is to ensure the equitable distribution of teachers across rural areas to enhance the quality of learning. The implementation of a more extensive and structured financial assistance program is also necessary to aid farmer families in financing their children's education. Equally important, the government should provide training programs and support for farmer parents to increase their awareness of the importance of education and how to support their children academically.

Educational institutions also play a crucial role in developing a curriculum that is relevant to the needs of rural farmer children, including agricultural skills and entrepreneurship that can enhance their abilities to face economic challenges. Moreover, educational institutions should provide scholarships or other financial assistance programs for high-achieving and promising farmer children to ensure that the cost of education does not hinder them. Collaboration with the government and non-governmental organizations is also necessary to organize enrichment programs and academic guidance for farmer children, enabling them to compete more effectively in the educational realm.

Furthermore, the community can also play an active role by raising awareness of the importance of education as a long-term investment that can enhance the quality of life and well-being of families. Financial, moral support, and motivation from parents are crucial to support their children's education. The community can also establish community groups or discussion forums to share experiences and solutions in overcoming the challenges faced in the education of rural farmer children. By collectively implementing these recommendations, it is hoped that a more inclusive and equitable educational environment can be created for rural farmer children. This will provide them with equal opportunities to access quality education and achieve a better future.

CONCLUSIONS

The complex challenges in educating rural farmer children in Indonesia include limitations in educational infrastructure, low family economic conditions, and a lack of parental awareness of the importance of education. Constraints in educational infrastructure, such as inadequate school facilities and uneven teacher distribution, lead to suboptimal learning processes. Additionally, the low economic conditions of farmer families affect children's educational participation, while the lack of parental awareness exacerbates this issue. To address these problems, collaborative efforts from the government, educational institutions, and the community are needed by enhancing investment in educational infrastructure, ensuring equitable teacher distribution, providing financial assistance to farmer families, and raising community awareness of the importance of education. By collectively implementing these recommendations, it is hoped that a more inclusive and equitable educational environment can be created for rural farmer children in Indonesia, providing them with equal opportunities to access quality education and achieve a better future.

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