Research Based Article

Mothers' Views from Underprivileged Families in Preventing School Dropout Rates in Surabaya during Pandemic

[1]Arfiyan Ridwan, [2]Asrifia Ridwan

[1] *STKIP PGRI Bangkalan*

[2] *Universitas Merdeka Madiun*

ABSTRACT

During the covid-19 pandemic, mothers have essential roles in the children's education process. The online learning system makes mothers, as teachers and parents, provide learning assistance so that children do not drop out of school. A long time before the pandemic, the Local Government of Surabaya had a mentoring program to reduce the dropout rate. However, the program was suspended indefinitely during the covid-19 pandemic. This research aimed to identify mothers' views from underprivileged families in providing learning assistance during the covid-19 pandemic, which was usually carried out by mentoring volunteers before. This research design was descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques conducted in the form of interviews and documentation. Then, the collected data were analyzed using Creswell's hierarchical linear model. The results showed that mothers experienced various difficulties assisting children without a mentoring program from the Local Government of Surabaya. Busyness as career women and the lack of education from the mothers have the potential for children to be vulnerable to dropping out of school. Heretofore, mothers' involvement in alleviating the problem of dropping out of school has received little attention from the Government. Therefore, hopefully, this research contribution can provide the required information in family-based education services improvement during an emergency due to the outbreak.

KEYWORDS: Mother, school dropout, pandemic, mentoring

INTRODUCTION

The covid-19 pandemic has caused health problems and many casualties. Almost every country experienced the same case with a fairly high number of deaths. Thus, it has an impact on two crucial sectors comprising world's economy leading to

[1] *Corresponding author's address*: Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris STKIP PGRI Bangkalan; Jl. Soekarno Hatta no. 52 Bangkalan, Jawa Timur, Indonesia. Email: arfiyan.ridwan@stkippgri-bkl.ac.id

sustainability and growth (Xiang et al., 2021) and education with the rise of distance learning (Xiang et al., 2021). In the education sector, during the covid-19 pandemic, the school is closed and turned into an online learning system. It allows something less expected to happen, such as a decline in efforts to build productive human resources in the future (Khan & Ahmed, 2021). Research from the Save the Children organization stated that cases of dropouts during the pandemic are expected to increase due to the declining number of parents' income. For the underprivileged, economic needs are the primary needs that must be met so that they may have to put aside their educational needs to meet their daily needs.

Dropout rates in Indonesia marked high during the pandemic (Mashabi, 2021). The data was derived from the Commission of Indonesian Children Protection up to the year 2021. Nowadays, school dropout problems do not only occur in rural areas but also occur in urban areas. Surabaya is one of the metropolitan cities in Indonesia as well as being the capital of East Java Province which cannot be separated from the problem of dropping out of school.
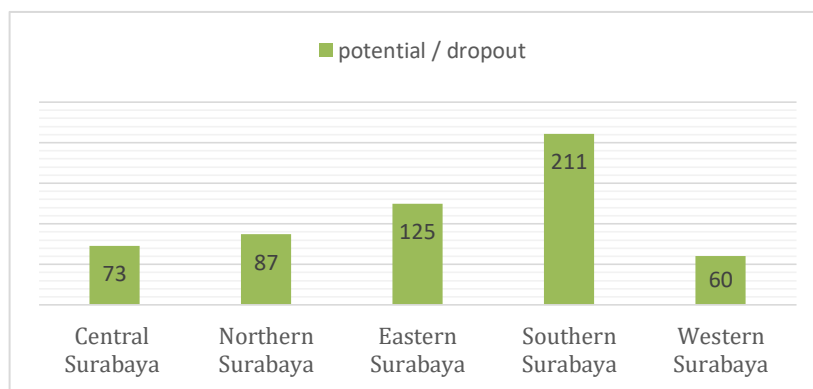

Figure 1. The Students Dropout Potential Rates in Five Regions of Surabaya 2020
Source: Department of Social Services of Surabaya (data was compiled by the researcher)

In 2020, cases of children potentially dropping out of school occurred in five regions of Surabaya. The high number became the basis from the city government's program to prevent school dropouts which then experienced obstacles during the covid-19 pandemic, so that the social services provided are less than optimal. Overall, it can be seen that Southern Surabaya received the highest rate of dropouts with 211 cases, followed with Eastern Surabaya. Northern, Central, and Western parts of Surabaya got relatively insignificant numbers with 87, 73, and 60 cases respectively.

Indeed, to reduce the dropout rate, especially during the pandemic, social services for children who are vulnerable to dropping out in the form of mentoring are needed. Thus, children can still carry out their duties in the community according to their roles (Tamba et al., 2014). The social service carried out by the Surabaya city government is the Campus Social Responsibility (CSR) program. Campus Social Responsibility is a program aimed at assisting vulnerable children dropping out of school as well as implementing the Surabaya City Regional Regulation Number 6 of 2011 regarding the implementation of child protection. The program established in 2014 is under the

auspices of the Surabaya Social Service and cooperates with State and Private Universities in combating dropout problems experienced by children from underprivileged families. Although seen as an unsuccessful implementation program (Ridwan et al., 2022), CSR still brought benefits especially if the program was run with all stakeholders' support.

Mentoring students during the full online teaching, especially in Surabaya was needed. It was suggested by Faishol et al. (2021) that after mentoring is implemented, the students become more active, creative, and have high confidence. The mentoring process was carried out by students whose role was as a volunteer. However, during the pandemic period, the program cannot be carried out until an undetermined time limit. The absence of a mentoring program has resulted in parents playing a significant role in the online learning process. Commonly, the father is mainly role as the employee in the family while the mother is identical with taking care of the household. The mother's role in assisting children's learning is very dominant because the mother's emotional closeness is greater than the father's. in line with what studied by Petts et al. (2021) that the role of mother with school aged children the dominant participation for homeschooling is more seen from mothers instead of fathers.

The parenting pattern closer to the mother causes the mother to have additional tasks while the child is studying at home (Citra & Arthani, 2020). The mother is forced to become a housekeeper as well as a teacher to assist learning. However, so far, the condition of children in the field states that they receive little learning assistance because of the mother's limitations in terms of knowledge, understanding of using gadgets, or being busy as career women to help with family finances. These opportunities often affect the potential for dropouts in Surabaya, which will increase during the covid-19 pandemic.

The obstacles experienced by mothers in assisting children's learning are not far from the problem in the past that women are considered not to need to take educations to a higher level. This wrong perspective has fatal consequences for children's growth and development. It can also trigger the responsive nature of the child to imitate the mothers' behavior, such as being reluctant to continue their educations to a higher level. This negative stigma must be prevented as Bhardwaj mentioned that Education gives importance to human life as a vehicle for knowledge and provides a platform for success through social behavior, character, and identity (Bhardwaj, 2016).

The educational emergency period due to the outbreak requires mothers, can prevent dropping out of school for their children. It is an alternative because the mentoring program from the Surabaya City government is no longer implemented. Social changes that continue to develop increasingly realize that education is very important for mothers with the hope that it can be transformed into children. This paper further identifies mothers' views in providing learning assistance during the covid-19 pandemic, which so far has had a less visible role in helping prevent children from dropping out of school.

METHOD

This research was descriptive qualitative. Quoting Ellie Fossey's statement, qualitative research was concerned with developing an understanding of the meaning and human experience of life and the social world (Fossey et al., 2002). In addition, qualitative research allowed providing space for researchers to observe, record, and capture a phenomenon related to the chosen subject (Orel & Mayerhoffer, 2021). Thus,

qualitative research referred to a social understanding that could not be fully measured by quantitative research.

The focus of this research referred to the role of contemporary mothers in preventing dropout rates due to the absence of a mentoring program from the Surabaya City government. Data collection techniques were carried out by interview and documentation. Interviews were conducted face to face with several sources included the Surabaya Social Service as the organization that handled school dropouts, mothers of school-age children, and school-age children. Meanwhile, data collection with documentation techniques was carried out by examining physical evidence from various documents that were not obtained in the field.

Then, the collected data was analyzed. Data analysis in research played a role in organizing data by finding or making meaning about the findings in the field (Leavy, 2019). Linear analysis hierarchical Creswell's in its practice described the stages that were interconnected with each other where the validation of the accuracy of the information included several important stages as follows:
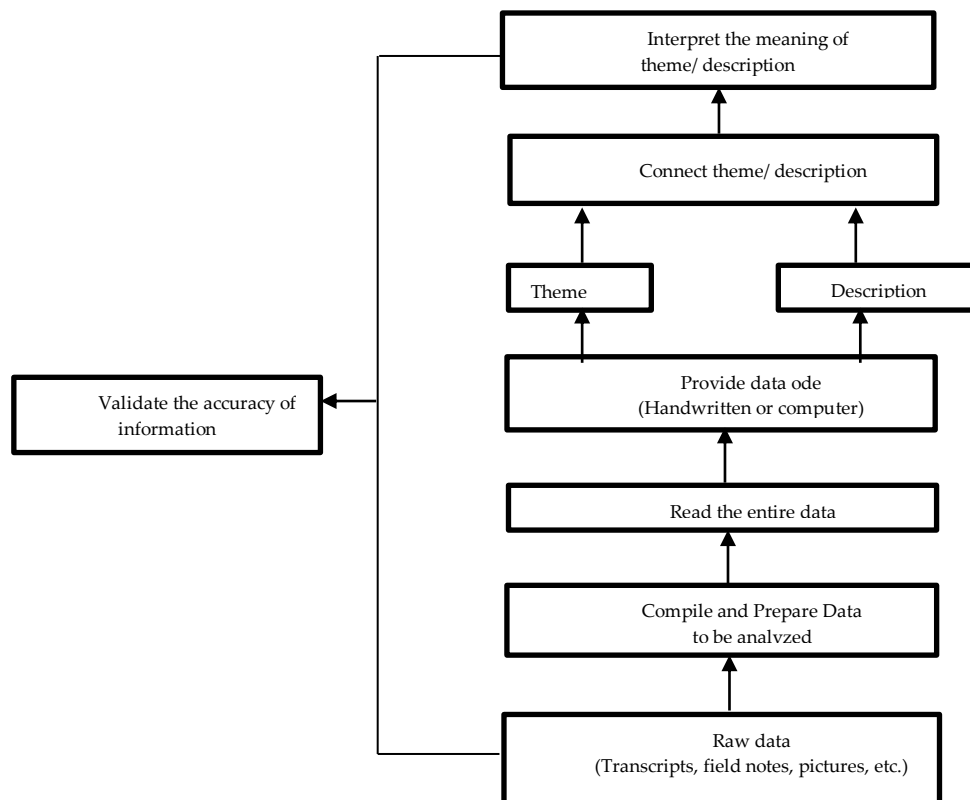

Figure 2. Linear data analysis of hierarchical model
Source: Creswell (2018)

1. Processing and preparing data

This stage began with selecting the acquisition of raw data, both primary data and secondary data from interviews and documentation. The results of the processed data were then packaged in the form of tables or pictures as well as

narratives about the mother's views in assisting children so as not to drop out of school.

2. Reading the entire data

Various interview and documentation results were reflected in their meaning by exploring general ideas about the data obtained. This stage was significant to observe the impression of the depth of information conveyed by the informant.

3. Coding Data

It began by organizing the data obtained and writing the categories within boundaries. Applying the coding process served to describe research topics related to mothers' views in assisting so that children do not drop out of school.

4. Revealing the description results and themes presented

At this stage, the delivery of data findings was described in theme and description selection. It meant that data findings were classified based on findings that were relevant to the research problem.

5. Data Interpretation

Interpreting data or words in this research, the researcher revealed the essence of data research. The research focused on mothers' views in assisting so that children did not drop out of school, and it would provide conclusions regarding the meaning of research with the same or different results from previous research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Dropout Problem Eradication Program

Surabaya City had a unique program in overcoming the dropout problem. Involving youth from all universities in Surabaya was hoped that there would be a good transfer of knowledge between students and children who were vulnerable to dropping out of school. This program was called CSR that aimed to overcome school dropout problems by assisting children's homes twice a week. Interventions of the program were carried out with different efforts according to what problems occurred in each child. Thus, it was not only related to learning assistance efforts but also to be a service in helping the inhibiting factors for children to go to school.

The higher education system that switched online also applied to all levels of education, causing students as volunteers to be unable to assist. During this pandemic, the government's instructions caused the CSR program not to be carried out until an undetermined time limit. It was done to stop the spread of covid-19. The termination of the mentoring program from the government is tantamount to giving full authority to parents to educate their children and prevent dropping out of school. However, the school enrollment rate showed different results at each level.

Table 1. School Enrollment Rate in Surabaya

Age	Percentage
7-12 Years old	99.9%
13-15 Years old	99.33%
16-18 Years old	67.33%

Source: Surabaya Central Statistics Organization 2020

During the pandemic, dropout cases in children aged 16 to 18 years old or equivalent to senior high school level dominated compared to elementary and junior high school levels. It was a fact that as long as there was no Campus Social Responsibility program, parents had less of a role in preventing dropout problems. A child's decision to drop out of school was very dependent on the parents' attitudes, especially a mother figure who was less trusted to encourage children to stay in school.

In the family, the child's decision to continue his education to a higher level usually depended on the father's decision, while the mother was less trusted in encouraging children to continue their education to a higher level. It was due to gender discrimination in different roles, such as the difference between a father's job that earned money while a mother's type of work, for example, taking care of the household was not assessed economically. However, both of these activities provided energy. For this reason, there was a wrong view about the sustainability of education because financial factors always depended on the father's decision.

Table 2. Impact of Covid-19 on the Working Age Population in Surabaya City

Components	Total
Reduction in working hours due to Covid-19	451,231 people
Unemployed due to Covid-19	49,892 people
Not in the Workforce (BAK) due to Covid-19	7,302 people
Temporarily not working due to Covid-19	26,902 people

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics Surabaya City in 2020

During the pandemic, the economic crisis also worsened the future of children's education. The income reduction due to reduced working hours and even unemployment because of the impact of the pandemic had led to wider opportunities for children school dropout. For lower-middle families who only depended on their father's income while their mother did not work, dropping out of school could occur because all families needed only came from their father's income. Based on the research conducted by (Zuilkowski et al., 2019) it was found that the high expense of education in the level of secondary schools is the main cause of dropouts in Indonesia. However, for both parents who worked, dropping out of school was also possible because the child did not get supervision from parents that affected the external conditions, namely being entangled in promiscuity.

Gender-based dropout eradication programs during the pandemic were less of a target for the government. The closeness of a mother figure in assisting amid a pandemic was not the direction of government policy. The mother's parenting style was considered closer to the child because the mother was more flexible than the father who tended to be rigid. In addition, he dismissed the belief that the sustainability of education was not only a matter of financial needs but also the need for assistance and encouragement to foster children's enthusiasm through the role of mothers that had been largely forgotten. So, even though the Campus Social Responsibility program could not be implemented, mothers as volunteers to assist children in the family could be involved in preventing school dropouts. Mother as a part of family should take part in assisting children in

education. Roles of parents in preventing their children from dropouts can be in terms of giving affection and creating harmonious family (Rokhmaniyah, 2021).

Mother's Experience in Assisting Learning During Pandemic

The online learning process made the mother's workload increased, either for the working mother or non-working mother. For those who were working, it was found much more hardships and more inequities in their lives (Heifetz, 2021). Her role as a companion for distance learning activities encountered many different obstacles from one another. This difference could be influenced by literacy and illiteracy rates.

From the census report administered by Central Bureau of Statistics of Surabaya in 2019 with 2.89 million people, it can be drawn some information as follows.
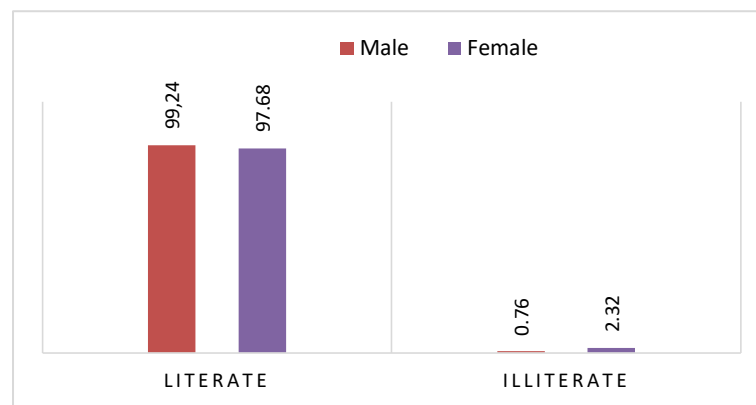
Figure 3. Percentage of population who are 15 years old and above according to reading and writing skills characteristics
Source: People's Welfare Statistics Surabaya City 2019

Based on the reading-and-writing-skills characteristics in Surabaya City, women had lower reading and writing abilities than men. Referring to these results, it was certain that the education taken by women was relatively lower than men. Also, women are more prone to psychological burden than men are (Megatsari et al., 2021). This underdevelopment was the helplessness of women who were still marginalized by education.

It was also a trigger for mothers' obstacles in assisting children during the pandemic. The findings in fieldwork interpreted that the identification of difficult assistance problems was divided into two, namely the experience of mothers who only took care of the household and the experience of housewives who were also working (career women). For a mother, who only took care of the household, they had more time to assist their children in learning at home. Meanwhile, working mothers had little time to assist their children. However, both had the same obstacles to assist, such as limited knowledge that caused mothers to be not optimal in helping their children's learning process at home. Mother does not only act as parents, but also as cultural preserver, teacher, study companion, facilitator, IT technician, reminder, observer, and photographer during the online learning (Widhiasih, 2020).

The education perspective for women in the past had a long-term impact, especially in education critical situations due to the pandemic where parenting needed to be involved in the child's learning process. The level of education that could not be completed made the mother lack in teaching material mastery. In addition, the distance

learning system that used a lot of information technology media such as the use of gadgets made it difficult for mothers because they did not understand how to use them.

The mother admitted that the process of mentoring was not carried out every day. Household tasks and earning money were more prioritized so that the mentoring process was carried out if the child got an assignment from school. However, it could be possibly done for children who were in elementary school. Meanwhile, most mothers no longer accompanied the learning process for students who were in secondary level since the higher the level of education, the more difficult it was to master the material. For this reason, mothers believed that their children used the internet a lot which helped their schoolwork. So, this finding meant that the mother's level of trust was quite high in children aged thirteen years and above who were considered independent in participating in the distance learning process.

Internet access in Surabaya city is not difficult and is spread very well with good speed. Students were not experiencing bad internet access as experienced by those in many areas in Indonesia such as studies by (Anwar & Wahid, 2021). The reality was that internet use in children did not fully have a positive impact. It caused children to get used to instant results without going through a long process. Finding answers to school assignments via the internet made it easier for children, but besides that, children would be too lazy to read and could cause children to become addicted to social media. It was where the mother's mentoring process should play the most role. Mothers could supervise their children and limit the use of gadgets in the learning process. It was important to support abilities and improve children's learning achievements during the pandemic.

Some challenges obtained from mothers' experiences during assisting; the majority required adaptation and time management between taking care of the household, working, and assisting children to study at home. Lack of confidence was the biggest problem for mothers who were considered not optimal in determining the continuity of children's education. This stereotype occurred due to the subordination of men who were still strong, taking precedence over women. If it was not abandoned, then the contribution of women to the world of education would be narrowed. There were equal opportunities, especially for girls, to follow in their mother's footsteps by not continuing their education to a higher level. Thus, the problem of dropping out of school was increasingly complex and difficult to handle.

The Role of Contemporary Mothers in Preventing School Dropouts

Referring gender issues in the children's mentoring process in Surabaya City, which had not been handled was very important for changes. During a pandemic, the prevention of potential dropouts could be done by a new contemporary mother style with the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) perspectives. GESI discussed the importance of mainstreaming gender equality and inclusion in vulnerable and marginalized groups, one of which was the underdevelopment of women's problems (Yumarni et al., 2021). GESI created an improvement process to include everyone without anyone being left out. The connection with the preventing school dropout problem was tantamount to trust the mothers to increase children's interest in learning.

There were several things that could be done by mothers in the contemporary era, such as the important steps that should be supported and got the facility of government nowadays are as follow:

a. Changes in ideology or point of view

The first step how to eradicate the schools' dropout problem that could be done by the mothers was started from changing ideologies or points of view on education which was always judged as a form of consumption or financing. What needed to be invested was education as a future capital or investment that had economic value for survival and human reason. There had been much evidence that education provided support for human resources in several sectors of work. Mothers could also pass on ideological change to their children. From an early age, women needed to be given the freedom to get an education and left wrong views about education. With equal opportunities, equal rights between men and women would be balanced. The involvement of women in the field of education was related to the source of the first educator in the family, especially in times of emergency due to the epidemic. The role of the mother as a teacher was always needed to assist children that would benefit from generation to generation. It was undeniable that if education awareness was high enough for women, in the future women would be free from marginalization.

b. Involving women in government program activities

The involvement of women, especially mothers, in government program activities was a target for dropout prevention based on family education. During the pandemic, the regulations governing the involvement of mothers in supporting children's education were still less visible. The existence of regulations governing the involvement of mothers could also be an alternative to the absence of the Campus Social Responsibility program in Surabaya during the pandemic could not be implemented. The making of new regulations to invite the contribution of mothers to prevent dropping out of school could be applied in the long term. The procedure could be started from the small-scale administrative area at the urban village level as the first hand to carry out socialization or counseling on program implementation as well as to establish cooperation with regional apparatus organizations that acted as supervisors and facilitators.

c. Supporting children to develop continuously

After a change in ideology or mother's perspective, and programs involving women to overcome the problem of dropping out of school, the next step was to provide support for children to develop continuously. The mother's support process could be done by building interaction. Through interaction, children will be more open about all educational issues such as learning outcomes at school, what material had not been understood, or any problems that occurred in their learning environment. The form of interaction between mother and child would open the opportunity to create good communication in achieving the child's goals. In addition, the support process can be carried out by providing motivation, assistance, and supervision. All of these things could be done at home by training children with several abilities such as inviting children to garden, sewing, cooking, and other positive things that could strengthen the relationship between mother and child. Support for children to continue to grow could start with small things and a habit that was synonymous with good and right parenting. The issue of sustainability of children's education did not always come from economic factors but was also strongly influenced by parental support, especially the mother's support in the educational process.

Mother's involvement in preventing school dropouts was needed so that Surabaya deserved to be a gender-responsive city. The social gender inclusion that a mother instills in her child from an early age helped to reject rumors that higher education is identical with men. The reality is that in a pandemic, education needed to be protected. The mother figure used the educational crisis as a remedy for changes in the education system that are unexpectedly undergoing various adaptations.

CONCLUSION

The Surabaya City government's decision to abolish the Campus Social Responsibility program during the pandemic caused the mentoring process carried out by parents to be less than optimal. Prevention of dropping out of school in children aged 16-18 years or equivalent to high school level was difficult to control because of the lack of mother's role in the family to prevent dropouts. This gender discrimination was seen in terms of the level of mothers' trust, which was not yet believed to be capable provide educational encouragement to children.

Based on the mother's experience in providing learning assistance during the pandemic, many difficulties were encountered because the level of education taken by women was relatively lower than men. The difficulty mentoring problem identification was also triggered by time management between taking care of the household, working, and the mother's additional duties in assisting children's learning while at home by mastering technology.

The new style of contemporary mothers with a gender equality perspective could be an alternative in answering all the mothers' problems who had been marginalized. Changes in ideology or mother's perspective could be started from changes in educational thought patterns, which were always synonymous with forms of financing. Mothers also had the right to give their daughters the freedom to pursue higher education. In addition, it was not entirely possible to prevent school dropouts from always relying on the Campus Social Responsibility program. The Surabaya city government needs to support the contribution of women through government activities programs that contain the regulations. Supporting children develops to create good interactions continuously between mothers and children, and involving children in positive activities at home is a dropout prevention strategy that can be carried out in the family environment.

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