

The Inequality In Access To Education Especially In Elementary Schools

Diana Cahyani

Dianacahyani273@gmail.com

Elementary School Teacher Education Program

Universitas Terbuka

Abstract: *Educational access disparities in Indonesia, especially in primary schools in remote and underprivileged areas, pose significant challenges that impact both social and economic development. These disparities are characterized by limited educational facilities, a shortage of qualified teachers, and insufficient supporting resources, which impact student performance, social mobility, and long-term career opportunities. This study aims to analyze the factors contributing to educational inequities and their effects on students and communities. The research employs a literature review method, analyzing various scholarly articles, official reports, reference books, and relevant statistical data. The procedure includes identifying recent literature related to education and socio-economic disparities, followed by thematic analysis of the collected data. The findings reveal that unequal access to education not only deepens socio-economic disparities but also limits students' potential to develop skills necessary to compete in the workforce. Addressing these disparities is crucial for national development, as equitable access to quality education forms the foundation for improving productivity and social stability. Recommendations from this study aim to assist the government and stakeholders in promoting educational equity as a critical step toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly Goal 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education.*

Keywords: *educational disparities, remote areas, education quality, sustainable development, socio-economic inequality.*

Abstrak: Ketimpangan akses pendidikan di Indonesia, khususnya di sekolah dasar di wilayah terpencil dan kurang mampu, menghadirkan tantangan besar yang memengaruhi perkembangan sosial dan ekonomi. Ketimpangan ini ditandai oleh keterbatasan fasilitas pendidikan, kurangnya tenaga pengajar berkualitas, dan minimnya sumber daya pendukung, yang berdampak pada prestasi siswa, mobilitas sosial, dan peluang karir jangka panjang. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis faktor-faktor penyebab ketidakmerataan pendidikan serta dampaknya terhadap siswa dan masyarakat. Penelitian dilakukan menggunakan metode studi pustaka dengan menganalisis berbagai artikel ilmiah, laporan resmi, buku referensi, dan data statistik yang relevan. Prosedur penelitian mencakup identifikasi literatur terkini yang berkaitan dengan tema pendidikan dan kesenjangan sosial-ekonomi, diikuti dengan analisis tematik terhadap data yang terkumpul. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa ketimpangan akses pendidikan tidak hanya memperdalam kesenjangan sosial-ekonomi, tetapi juga membatasi potensi siswa dalam mengembangkan keterampilan yang diperlukan untuk bersaing di dunia kerja. Mengatasi ketimpangan ini sangat penting bagi pembangunan nasional, karena akses pendidikan yang

merata dan berkualitas merupakan landasan utama untuk meningkatkan produktivitas dan stabilitas sosial. Rekomendasi dari penelitian ini diharapkan dapat membantu pemerintah dan pemangku kepentingan dalam mendukung pemerataan pendidikan sebagai langkah penting untuk mencapai Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (SDG), khususnya Tujuan 4 tentang pendidikan berkualitas yang inklusif dan merata.

Kata kunci: ketimpangan pendidikan, wilayah terpencil, kualitas pendidikan, pembangunan berkelanjutan, kesenjangan sosial-ekonomi.

Introduction

Educational inequality is a profound and complex issue within Indonesia's education system, particularly at the elementary education level in remote and underprivileged areas. Quality education is a fundamental right for every individual, as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and regulated by Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System in Indonesia, which emphasizes the importance of equitable and inclusive education for all citizens, regardless of their social, economic, or geographical background. However, the reality on the ground reveals a significant disparity between urban and remote areas in terms of the availability of educational facilities, the quality of teaching staff, and access to adequate educational resources (Mulyasa, 2018: 23). This inequality has negative consequences for both individuals and the socio-economic development of the nation as a whole.

In urban areas, schools generally have better access to modern facilities, adequate infrastructure, and highly qualified teaching staff. In contrast, in remote areas, the limitations in terms of educational facilities, learning materials, and the number and quality of teachers become the primary obstacles in providing adequate education for children in these areas. According to data from the Ministry of Education and Culture, approximately 60% of schools in remote areas face shortages of qualified teachers and adequate facilities to support the learning process (Kemendikbud, 2021: 32). This results in students in remote areas struggling to achieve the same academic performance as students in urban areas, who have greater access to technology and adequate educational resources (Suryadarma & Jones, 2020: 15).

In addition to infrastructure and teaching staff, socio-economic factors also contribute to the inequality in access to education. Families from low-income backgrounds often struggle to provide adequate educational support for their children. The inability of families to provide additional learning resources or cover other educational expenses further exacerbates this inequality. A study shows that children from poor families in remote areas have much lower chances of continuing their education to higher levels compared to children from wealthier families in urban areas (Tilaar, 2019: 45). This situation not only affects individual educational achievement but also widens the socio-economic gap in society, where children from disadvantaged groups have fewer opportunities to

improve their standard of living through education (Sugiyono, 2021: 38).

The urgency of this research lies in the significant impact of educational inequality on the socio-economic development of the country. Quality education is a crucial factor in improving living standards, career opportunities, and individual competitiveness in the global job market. Inequality in access to education not only limits the potential of students from remote areas to develop the skills needed in the workforce but also results in the loss of opportunities for them to contribute productively to society. Previous studies have indicated that educational inequality can exacerbate poverty levels and worsen economic disparities in the long term (Tilaar, 2019: 50). Addressing this inequality is not only important for individual well-being but also for sustainable national development. Countries with high levels of educational inequality will struggle to compete internationally and face obstacles in achieving inclusive and just development.

This study aims to identify the factors causing educational inequality in Indonesia, particularly at the elementary school level in remote and underprivileged areas. These factors include structural, economic, and geographical aspects that contribute to educational disparity across various regions. Furthermore, this study also examines the impact of this inequality in access to education on students' academic performance, social mobility, and future career opportunities. For instance, students who do not receive adequate education from an early age often face difficulties in developing basic skills, which affects their academic and professional success in the future (Suryadarma & Jones, 2020: 20).

Solutions to address educational inequality have been widely proposed, such as increasing the quantity and quality of teachers in remote areas, as well as utilizing educational technology to bridge the gap in access to learning resources (Sugiyono, 2021: 41). However, this study adopts a more comprehensive approach by considering various factors involving social, economic, and policy aspects. The recommendations generated are expected to assist the government and stakeholders in formulating more inclusive education policies, particularly those focused on educational equity across Indonesia. As part of efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), specifically Goal 4, which emphasizes the importance of inclusive and equitable quality education, this research provides an in-depth perspective on the role of government policies in reducing educational inequality.

This research is expected to make a significant contribution to raising awareness of the importance of equitable access to education across all regions of Indonesia. With the data and analysis produced, the government and stakeholders are anticipated to gain a better understanding of the educational conditions in remote areas and identify appropriate strategies to address these disparities. This is crucial for Indonesia to enhance the quality of its human resources, which in turn will drive more inclusive and sustainable economic growth and improve the nation's competitiveness on a global scale.

Operationally, this research employs a qualitative approach involving in-depth interview techniques and participatory observations in various remote areas of Indonesia. This approach enables researchers to gather comprehensive information about the real conditions of education in the field, as well as the challenges faced by students, teachers, and communities in accessing proper education.

Research Method

This study employs a literature review method aimed at analyzing and understanding educational inequality in Indonesia, particularly at the elementary school level in remote areas. The literature review was conducted by collecting and examining various scholarly articles, official reports, reference books, and relevant statistical data.

The data used in this research is qualitative, consisting of descriptive information that is analyzed in depth to identify the factors causing educational inequality, its impacts on students and society, and recommendations to address the issue.

The data collection procedure involves the following steps :

1. Identifying and selecting relevant literature from journals, books, and reports published in the last five years, particularly those related to education and socio-economic disparities.
2. Conducting a critical review of the literature to identify patterns, trends, and significant findings regarding access to education in remote areas.

The data analysis procedure is carried out through a thematic analysis approach, where the collected data is categorized into main themes, such as : Factors causing educational inequality, The impact of inequality on students, society, and national development, Strategies and recommendations to address educational disparities

The results of the literature analysis are then compared with relevant theories and the context of educational policies in Indonesia to provide a comprehensive understanding.

Result and Discussion

Research Findings

This study clearly reveals that educational inequality at the elementary level in Indonesia, particularly in remote areas, is a complex issue with various interrelated dimensions. This inequality is characterized by several key factors that hinder the achievement of equitable access to quality education across all regions of Indonesia.

Firstly, the limited educational facilities in remote areas remain a significant obstacle that is difficult to overcome. Many schools in these areas lack basic infrastructure such as proper classrooms, adequate sanitation facilities, and supporting learning resources. Most schools do not even have libraries or laboratories that students can use to support their learning. Learning tools such as textbooks, teaching aids, and educational technology are also minimal. This situation is in stark contrast to schools in urban areas, where educational facilities are often complete, modern, and supported by the latest technology. In urban areas, students have access to computer labs, multimedia devices, and comfortable learning environments. This disparity in facilities not only creates differences in the quality of education but also impacts students' motivation and learning experiences. As a result, students in remote areas do not have the same opportunities to develop their potential to the fullest.

Secondly, the shortage of qualified teachers is a significant challenge. According to data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud, 2021), approximately 60% of schools in remote areas do not have highly qualified teachers. The available teachers often do not receive special training to face the challenges in these remote areas, such as limited facilities, diverse student needs, and access difficulties. In some regions, teachers even have to teach multiple subjects simultaneously or work in more than one school, which adds to their workload. The lack of motivation, incentives, and professional support makes many teachers reluctant to be placed in remote areas. This situation directly impacts the quality of the learning process, where students do not receive adequate guidance to achieve optimal learning outcomes.

Thirdly, socio-economic factors further exacerbate the inequality in access to education. Most families in remote areas come from low-income groups that face significant challenges in meeting the educational needs of their children. Education costs, although subsidized by the government, remain a heavy burden for low-income families. The lack of adequate transportation is also a common additional barrier for students to attend school, as they often have to travel long distances on foot. Furthermore, children from poor families are frequently required to help their parents work to meet the family's livelihood, limiting their study time. These barriers not only lower students' academic performance but also narrow their opportunities to pursue higher education.

Relation to Concepts and Theories

This educational inequality can be explained through the theory of socio-economic development, which states that education is a key element in reducing poverty and improving the living standards of society. In this context, the research findings show that educational inequality worsens the cycle of poverty, where children from disadvantaged families struggle to access quality education. This further widens the socio-economic gap between communities living in urban areas and those in remote regions. Research by Suryadarma & Jones (2020) also emphasizes that educational disparities hinder social mobility and create ongoing inequalities between different social groups.

This inequality is also relevant to the efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Education is not only important for enhancing individual capabilities but also as a key driver of economic growth, innovation, and social stability. Countries that fail to provide equitable access to education will struggle to develop a skilled and globally competitive human resource base.

Implications of the Findings

Educational inequality has far-reaching impacts at the individual, societal, and national levels. At the individual level, this inequality limits the ability of students in remote areas to develop basic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. These skills are essential for advancing to higher levels of education or competing in the job market. The lack of proficiency in these basic skills makes students from remote areas often struggle to compete with students from urban areas, who have better access to quality education.

At the societal level, educational inequality widens the socio-economic gap between urban and rural areas. This disparity creates inequalities that are difficult to overcome, where communities in remote areas have much fewer opportunities to improve their standard of living through education. This can trigger various social problems, such as rising unemployment rates, income inequality, and even social conflicts that disrupt societal harmony.

At the national level, educational inequality is a major obstacle to sustainable development. Countries that have high levels of educational inequality will find it difficult to compete at the international level because of the low quality of their human resources. Unequal education also reduces the country's capacity to create innovation and increase economic productivity.

Conclusion

This study reveals that educational inequality in Indonesia, particularly at the elementary school level in remote areas, remains a major challenge that requires serious attention. This inequality is caused by various factors, including limited educational facilities, a shortage of qualified teachers, and socio-economic barriers faced by students' families. These factors not only limit students' potential to access quality education but also widen the socio-economic gap between urban and rural areas, contributing to the slow social and economic growth of the nation.

The impact of this inequality includes a decline in students' academic achievement, low social mobility, and limited career opportunities in the future for students from remote areas. At the societal level, this inequality hampers the development of a balanced human resource base and contributes to ongoing social inequality. At the national level, unequal education becomes a major barrier to improving global competitiveness and achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which focuses on inclusive and equitable quality education.

As part of the solution, this research provides concrete suggestions and recommendations for stakeholders, particularly the government, policymakers, and society :

1. **Improving Teacher Quality and Distribution** : The government should provide special incentives for teachers to serve in remote areas and ensure adequate training to enhance their competencies. Teacher placement should be supported by fair policies based on local needs.
2. **Utilizing Educational Technology** : Expanding access to educational technology, such as online learning, educational television, or mobile devices, can be an effective solution to reach students in remote areas who lack adequate physical facilities.
3. **Increasing Education Budget** : Education funding should be prioritized for disadvantaged areas, particularly to build school infrastructure, provide learning materials, and support innovative educational programs.
4. **Socio-Economic Support for Families** : Interventions in the form of social assistance or scholarship programs need to be strengthened to help low-income families support their children's education.

By implementing the above measures, it is hoped that educational inequality can be minimized, so that every child in Indonesia, regardless of geographical location or economic background, has equal opportunities to access quality education. Ensuring equitable access to education is not only a moral obligation but also a key to creating a more just, prosperous, and sustainable society in Indonesia.

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