

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF CHILDREN IN FISHING COMMUNITIES: A Case Study of Pasar Baru, Sei Tualang Raso, Tanjung Balai City

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Abstract: This study aims to describe the level of education, identify obstacles, and analyze the strategies of fishermen's families in supporting children's education in Pasar Baru Village, Sei Tualang Raso District, Tanjung Balai City. The findings show an increase in parental awareness and participation in the importance of education, although they are still faced with structural obstacles such as economic limitations, difficult access to transportation, minimal educational facilities, and lack of social environmental support. The strategies implemented include financial management, emotional motivation, learning assistance, communication with schools, and utilization of government assistance. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with observation, interview, and documentation techniques. The main issue raised is the strong influence of socio-economic conditions on the sustainability of fishermen's children's education, so that a more inclusive and adaptive education policy is needed to meet the needs of coastal communities.

Keywords: Fishermen's Education, Obstacles, Family Strategy

Introduction

Education is one of the important aspects in national development that aims to educate the nation's life and form an advanced and prosperous society. In the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003 Chapter VI Article 6 concerning the National Education System, it is explained that every citizen aged seven to fifteen years is required to attend basic education in the journal (Manna, 2021) . The nine-year compulsory education program is expected to equip the younger generation with basic knowledge and skills to be able to compete in the era of globalization (Puspa, 2017) .

However, the implementation of education obligations cannot be separated from the socio-economic conditions of the community, as is the case with the fishing community in Tanjung Balai City. This city is located in the coastal area of eastern North Sumatra Province, which is demographically inhabited by multicultural communities with the main livelihood as fishermen (Rizaldi et al., 2022) . The fishing profession has its own challenges, such as long working hours of up to weeks or even months at sea, as well as dependence on weather conditions that cause income to be unstable (Rini et al., 2023) . This has an impact on the involvement of parents, especially fathers, in educating children at home.

Children of fishermen in Tanjung Balai City are often forced to help their parents in earning a living from an early age, even though this age should be used for formal education. Children's involvement in their parents' work is due to the family's economic conditions, which depend on marine products for income (Nani et al., 2004) . As a result, children have to sacrifice learning time, experience decreased motivation to learn, have difficulty following lessons, and are even threatened with dropping out of school. This is certainly a big challenge in ensuring that fisher children get the right to a decent and quality education (Amiruddin, 2017) .

Based on data from BPS Tanjung Balai City, although the Pure Participation Rate (APM) at the primary education level (SD/MI) showed a high figure of 98.50 percent in 2020, the APM for the SMP/MTs level was only 81.49 percent

and the SMA/MA level was 71.22 percent. Meanwhile, the APM for higher education is still very low, reaching only 9.50 percent (Bps.go.id, 2015) . The data shows that although awareness of sending children to school at the basic education level is relatively good, the continuation of education to secondary and higher levels still faces various obstacles. The dropout rate (APS) has also shown a decline in the last five years. At the SD/MI level, the APS decreased from 1.53 percent (2016) to 0.20 percent (2020). For the SMP/MTs level, this figure decreased from 4.19 percent to 2.79 percent. However, at the SMA/SMK/MA level, the dropout rate had reached 27.89 percent in 2019, the highest compared to other levels (Bps.go, 2021) .

This condition confirms that children from fishing families face structural challenges in accessing education. They need an educational approach that is different from the usual formal system. Research (Puspa, 2017) emphasizes the need for a learning system tailored to the conditions of coastal communities, such as flexible schedules, contextual methods, and life skills education content. This kind of alternative education is important to improve the quality of learning and the welfare of fishing families. In addition, the role of the family in children's education is also an important factor. According to (La et al., 2021) , fishing families perform the functions of caregivers, educators, and supervisors. However, the implementation of these functions still experiences various obstacles, such as a lack of understanding of the importance of education, lack of supervision, and limited learning facilities at home. Children's character education is not sufficient to be obtained only at school, but requires the active involvement of parents, especially fathers, who in many cases cannot be present due to work at sea.

In this study, the researcher used Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory approach in (Mujahidah, 2015) , which views child development within a complex environmental framework, ranging from microsystems (family and school), mesosystems (interactions between environments), to macrosystems (culture and policy). This theory allows for a comprehensive analysis of how each layer of the environment influences the education of fisher children.

In light of these issues, this study aims to understand the education levels of children in fishing families in Tanjung Balai City and explore the role of parents, especially fishermen fathers, in supporting their children's education. It also aims to identify the challenges faced and find relevant solutions to improve family engagement and the quality of education in coastal environments.

Method

This research is a qualitative study with a descriptive approach that aims to deeply understand the influence of socioeconomic conditions of coastal communities on children's education in fishing families in Pasar Baru Village, Sei Tualang Raso Sub-district, Tanjung Balai City. Data sources consisted of primary data, namely parents (main informants), community leaders (key informants) and fishermen's children (supporting informants), as well as secondary data in the form of government documents, school data and scientific literature. Data collection techniques were conducted through non-participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis followed the qualitative stages according to Moleong, namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity testing was carried out through credibility techniques with extended observation and persistence of observation, as well as triangulation of sources, techniques, and time to ensure the validity and consistency of information (Meleong, 2021) .

Results and Discussion

Children's Education Level in Fishermen Families

Pasar Baru Village is one of the areas in Sei Tualang Raso Sub-district, Tanjung Balai City, North Sumatra, with a population of 9,688 out of a total sub-district population of 27,243. The male population is 4,948 people and the female population is 4,740 people (BPS Kota Tanjung Balai, 2023) . The majority of people in this area make a living as fishermen, who are still economically classified as low-income groups. These socioeconomic conditions greatly affect the level of education of children from fishing families.

1. Fishermen Parents' Awareness of the Importance of Children's Education

The majority of people in Pasar Baru Village, Sei Tualang Raso Sub-district, Tanjung Balai City, work as traditional fishermen with unstable income. This socioeconomic condition has a big influence on the continuity of their children's education. In the past, education was not a priority in fishermen's families, as children were often directed to help with their parents' work such as fishing or selling fish to the market.

However, interviews with some parents and community leaders show that there has been a significant increase in education awareness. Parents are beginning to realize that education is the main key to changing the fate of their children so that they are not trapped in the cycle of poverty that has been passed down for generations. Education is no longer seen as a supplement, but as an investment in the family's future.

This change in outlook has encouraged parents to take their children's education more seriously. Now, children from fishermen families have been educated up to junior high school level on average, and some have even gone to high school and college. This awareness is a positive signal that education is increasingly being prioritized in fishing communities, even though it is still faced with a number of structural barriers.

2. Structural and Economic Barriers to Education

Despite the increasing awareness of the importance of education, fishing families are still faced with complex obstacles. Economic factors are the most dominant obstacle. When the fishing season is bad or the price of fish decreases, the family's income drops dramatically. Under these conditions, educational needs such as transportation, uniforms and school supplies are difficult to meet, so some children are forced to drop out of school or delay it.

Other barriers come from geography and educational facilities. In Kelurahan Pasar Baru, educational institutions are only available up to junior high school level. To continue to senior high school or equivalent, children have to go to schools further away in the city, which requires additional transportation costs and longer travel times. This is a major obstacle especially for families who do not own a private vehicle.

In addition, the existing school facilities are still inadequate. Some schools do not have proper laboratories, libraries or computer rooms. This condition hampers children's learning process, especially for junior high school level and above. These obstacles require fisher families to think more creatively and fight harder to maintain their children's education.

3. Parents' Support and Role in Children's Education

Despite their limited economic condition, fisher parents' enthusiasm in supporting their children's education remains high. They are directly involved in monitoring their children's education, from checking report cards, reminding their children to do their assignments, to attending school meetings. For children studying outside the city, parents maintain communication, either through phone calls or visits during holidays.

The choice of school also shows careful planning. Generally, fishermen's children are sent to public schools, which are more affordable. If this is not available, private or faith-based schools are alternatives. This shows flexibility in educational decision-making based on family conditions. Encouragement for higher education is given, even if children have to study away from home.

In terms of gender roles, there is no notable difference between boys and girls in terms of access to education. All children are given equal opportunities to attend school. However, there is a tendency for boys to be encouraged to help with their parents' work sooner, while girls are more often encouraged to continue their studies. This shows the internal dynamics within fisher families in prioritizing education based on practical needs and social conditions.

4. Government Assistance, Social Challenges, and Future Expectations

Some fishing families have received assistance from the government, such as the Indonesia Smart Card (KIP) and the Family Hope Program (PKH), which help ease the burden of education costs. However, these programs have not reached all fishing families equally and have not touched on aspects of overall needs, such as learning support facilities or educational transportation. This suggests the need for policies that more specifically target fishermen groups.

Another challenge faced is the lack of inspirational figures from among fishermen who have successfully pursued higher education. Children of fishermen often do not have role models from their surroundings who show them that success through education is possible. As a result, motivation to learn is sometimes hampered due to the lack of role models close to their daily lives.

Nevertheless, there are signs of change. The younger generation from fishing families are starting to show a high spirit of learning. Parents are also increasingly open to their children's education options outside of their traditional profession as fishermen. This hope is the basis for improving the quality of human resources in coastal areas, if accompanied by the support of inclusive, equitable and sustainable education programs from various parties.

The level of children's education in fishermen families in Pasar Baru Village shows an increasing trend, marked by the increasing number of children who receive education up to junior high school, high school, and even college levels. Parents' awareness of the importance of education is growing, although it is still overshadowed by economic barriers, limited facilities, and difficult access to education. Parental support in the form of learning assistance, selection of affordable schools, and involvement in school activities are reinforcing factors. On the other hand, government assistance programs and the enthusiasm of the younger generation provide hope for improving the quality of education of fisher children in the future.

Constraints of Fisher Children in Pursuing Education

Economic Limitations and Their Impact on Access to Education

Economic conditions are the main obstacle experienced by fisher families in supporting their children's education. Income as a fisherman is very uncertain and depends on the sea catch which is influenced by the season, weather and natural conditions. When the catch decreases or when the weather makes it impossible to go to sea, the family's income also decreases drastically. As a result, fulfilling educational needs such as paying school fees, purchasing books, uniforms and learning supplies becomes a heavy burden.

Some parents try to overcome this economic constraint by finding additional jobs such as selling cakes, working odd jobs, or borrowing money to pay for their children's education. They also apply a system of saving and installments in advance for school expenses. However, not all families have the ability or access to these strategies consistently. In poor economic conditions, children's education often has to be sacrificed and is not a top priority in the household.

This situation is in line with Abraham Maslow's basic needs theory in the book (Isrofah et al., 2024) , which states that physiological and security needs including economic security must be met before a person can achieve self-actualization, including in terms of learning. If basic needs are not met, the education process becomes less optimal. Children from fishing families often face a dilemma between surviving economically or continuing their education, which requires money and emotional support.

Limited Social Environment, Transportation Access and Learning Facilities

The environment where fisher children live often has a negative influence on their enthusiasm and motivation to learn. In the interviews, it was found that many children live in an environment that is not conducive, tends to be permissive of juvenile delinquency, and lacks supervision when parents go to sea. This leads to children being more easily influenced by peers who have no interest in learning, so their enthusiasm for school decreases. This condition is exacerbated by the parents' low educational background, which makes it difficult for them to assist their children in learning optimally.

Apart from environmental factors, access to transportation is also a major obstacle, especially for children who live at the end of the village or in remote areas. They have to travel long distances to reach school, some even using boats or walking long distances. When the weather is bad such as rain or flooding, children are forced to miss school. While access to primary and junior high schools is relatively available, access to senior high schools or equivalent is very limited because they are located far from the city center. This geographical condition poses a serious challenge in ensuring the sustainability of fisher children's education.

Limited learning facilities are also a factor that weakens children's motivation to continue attending school. Many of them use makeshift learning equipment, such as used books and uniforms. This creates a sense of inferiority when compared to other friends who are more capable. This inequality in the fulfillment of learning facilities also weakens their confidence at school and has an impact on the quality of their learning outcomes.

Lack of Psychological Support and Limited Role of Community

The psychological aspect is also a challenge faced by children from fishing families. Some children feel inferior or ashamed of their parents' profession as fishermen, especially when they are in a social environment that undervalues the occupation. Although there are efforts from schools to instill the value of equality, the social stigma is still quite strong and can affect children's confidence in participating in education.

Children's learning motivation is also not always stable. Most children show a lack of enthusiasm in attending lessons, especially in subjects that are considered difficult such as Math or Science. The social environment is an external factor that reinforces this attitude as children are easily influenced by peers who lack enthusiasm for learning. Parents are aware of this and try to advise their children to choose a good social environment, but the results are not always effective without support from the environment and the school.

In terms of community support, it was found that the community's role in supporting fisher children's education is uneven. Although there are some practices of mutual cooperation such as sharing used books or uniform assistance, in general, the community still views education as a private family affair. This lack of community involvement indicates a weak collective role in creating a supportive education ecosystem. According to Bronfenbrenner's developmental ecology theory (J, 2019) , the involvement of family, school and community is an important ecosystem that influences children's educational success.

Children from fishing families in Pasar Baru Village face various obstacles in pursuing education, ranging from economic limitations that make it difficult to meet education costs, a less supportive social environment, limited access to

transportation, to the lack of learning facilities and psychological support. The instability of parents' income as fishermen means that children's education is often sacrificed, while the surrounding environment and the lack of active community roles also weaken children's motivation to learn. This condition shows the importance of fulfilling basic needs (Maslow) and cross-environmental support (Bronfenbrenner) to create an inclusive and sustainable education ecosystem for fisher children.

Fishermen's Family Strategies in Pasar Baru to Support Children's Education

Fishing families in Pasar Baru Village demonstrate various strategies in supporting their children's education despite economic, time and facility constraints. These strategies reflect the high awareness, enthusiasm and commitment of the parents to continue providing proper educational opportunities for their children's better future. Based on the interviews with the main and supporting informants, these strategies can be categorized into several sub-strategies as follows:

Family Economic Management Strategy

Economic limitation is the main challenge for fishermen families. To overcome this, parents manage their finances in a frugal and planned manner. A small portion of their income from fishing, petty trading, and other additional jobs is set aside to finance their children's education needs such as paying tuition fees, buying books, uniforms, and other school supplies. In some cases, parents send their children to public schools that do not charge fees or buy used uniforms to save money. Some families also take advantage of government assistance programs such as the Indonesia Smart Card (KIP) or school supplies assistance from schools. Others choose to borrow money from family or save gradually for education. This strategy shows the high priority given to education despite the limited conditions.

Motivation and Emotional Support Strategies

In addition to material support, emotional motivation from parents is

an important key in maintaining children's enthusiasm for learning. Parents often give advice directly or in a casual setting at home, such as "*study hard so that your life will be better than your parents*" or "*lift up the tarandam rod*", which means that children are expected to rise up and improve their family's situation in the future. These pieces of advice serve as a reminder that the struggles of parents in the past are not to be passed on to their children.

Some parents also emphasize that the children's fate must be different and better than their own. Phrases like "*if we were difficult, we don't want our children to be difficult*" are often uttered as a form of hope and encouragement. In some cases, parents give small rewards to children who achieve achievements, such as favorite food, bicycles, or invitations to travel. These simple gifts are a form of appreciation and motivation for children to continue to be enthusiastic in learning. Although many parents have low educational backgrounds, they still try to be emotionally involved in their children's education. Moral encouragement, attention and a strong desire for children to have a better life are the main energy in building enthusiasm for learning. This strategy strengthens the emotional connection within the family and raises children's awareness of the importance of education as a way out of the difficulties their parents face.

Time-sharing and learning assistance strategies

The time-sharing and learning assistance strategies used by fisher families in Pasar Baru Village show a strong commitment to their children's education despite the time constraints imposed by fishing and household activities. Fishing activities that take almost the whole day make it difficult for parents, especially fathers, to accompany their children to study regularly. Therefore, most families choose to utilize the remaining time, especially at night or on holidays, as a moment to pay attention to their children's learning activities. This time is used to establish communication, provide motivation and ensure that children continue to follow school activities properly.

In the context of mentoring, the mother's role tends to be more dominant because she is mostly at home. Mothers are often the ones who check textbooks, ask what children are learning at school and help with homework. In addition,

in some families, the involvement of other family members such as older siblings, grandmothers or uncles is also an important form of support. Although this form of assistance is simple and not done in a structured pattern, its existence means a lot to children, especially in fostering enthusiasm and confidence in learning. Some families also have a habit of gathering at night to discuss lessons or recite prayers together before bed. Although these activities seem simple, they have high emotional value because they show parents' attention and concern for their children's educational development.

Communication Strategy with School

Fisher parents in Pasar Baru also try to maintain good communication with the school. When they are unable to attend in person due to their busy schedules, they use communication media such as telephone or WhatsApp application to connect with homeroom teachers. Attendance at school activities such as student guardian meetings, school recitations and gotong royong is evidence of their active involvement. Informal communication, such as asking teachers when picking up their children or exchanging messages via gadgets, is also common. Although not all families have a habit of active communication with the school, most realize the importance of building a good relationship with teachers to support children's development.

Community and Non-Formal Education Support Strategies

Support from the community is limited, but some groups such as women's recitations sometimes organize literacy or Quran learning activities that are also beneficial for children. On some occasions, the community collaborates with outside parties such as universities or NGOs to organize tutoring or skills training such as sewing, handicrafts and computers. Although these activities are not routine, their presence shows the potential of strengthening non-formal education at the community level that can support children from fishing families in developing skills outside formal education.

Based on the field findings, the strategies implemented by fishing families in Pasar Baru Village are simple but reflect a high concern for education. These

strategies include economic management, motivation, learning assistance, communication with schools, and community support. Although there are still many limitations, the enthusiasm and commitment of fisher parents are a strong foundation in building the future of their children's education. Education is considered a way out of poverty and the main hope to raise the family's status towards a more prosperous direction.

Conclusion

The education of children from fishermen families in Pasar Baru Village has improved in terms of awareness and participation, although it is still overshadowed by various structural barriers. Parents' awareness of the importance of education has grown rapidly, followed by various forms of support such as family financial management for education costs, learning assistance, and communication with schools. However, challenges such as economic limitations, access to transportation, inadequate education facilities, and lack of support from the social environment and community remain the main obstacles affecting the continuity of fisher children's education.

The strategies implemented by fisher families in the form of emotional motivation, time management, and utilization of government assistance show a high spirit and commitment to break the chain of poverty through education. Therefore, a greater role is needed from the government and the community in providing inclusive access to education, expanding the reach of educational assistance, and creating a social ecosystem that encourages fisher children to continue learning. All of these findings confirm that education is not only the responsibility of the family, but also the result of synergy between schools, communities and public policies that favor vulnerable groups such as fishing communities.

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