



Barriers Faced by Adolescents in Pursuing Higher Education in Komba Village, Luwu Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the factors that hinder adolescents from pursuing higher education in Komba Village, Luwu Regency. Employing a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method, the research delves into the subjective experiences of adolescents, parents, and local community leaders through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings reveal that the barriers faced by adolescents stem from both internal and external factors. Internal factors include low motivation and interest in continuing education, the desire for economic independence, and cultural influences such as early marriage. External factors involve the limited role of parents, an unsupportive social environment, and constrained family economic conditions. Moreover, prevailing societal views that higher education does not guarantee a better future further reinforce these barriers. This study recommends the adoption of a holistic and community-based approach through education, strengthening the roles of families and community leaders, and providing scholarship programs to encourage adolescents to pursue higher education.

Keywords: Higher Education, Adolescents, Barriers, Motivation, Komba Village

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INTRODUCTION

Pursuing higher education plays a highly significant role in society, particularly for the younger generation. Higher education institutions serve not only as centers for acquiring knowledge and broadening intellectual horizons but also as platforms for preparing individuals to face a brighter future. Through higher education, individuals can enhance their personal qualities, including character, morality, religiosity, and national awareness. Moreover, higher education provides opportunities for individuals to develop specialized skills and opens broader and more competitive employment prospects (Suprayitno, A., & Wahyudi, W., 2020).

Education is one of the key aspects in the development of high-quality human resources. Through education, individuals not only gain knowledge and skills but also shape attitudes and values essential for social life (Alivia, T., & Sudadi, S., 2023). As an advanced stage of education following secondary education, higher education holds a strategic role in preparing the younger generation to face global challenges and in improving the standard of living of society (Irfani, S., Riyanti, D., & Muharam, R. S., 2021).

Nevertheless, the reality shows that not all adolescents have equal

opportunities to pursue higher education (Jamaluddin, J., Quthny, Y. A., & Bahrudin, B., 2022). This phenomenon is widely observed in various regions, particularly in rural areas such as Komba Village, Luwu Regency. Several factors hinder adolescents from continuing to higher education, including economic, social, cultural, and geographical aspects.

The experiences of adolescents in Komba Village reflect this reality, where many of them aspire to pursue higher education but are constrained by various obstacles. Some adolescents come from families living in remote areas with limited economic capacity, resulting in parents providing little motivation or support to pursue further education. On the other hand, although the central area of Komba Village is relatively densely populated and has fairly accessible educational facilities, many adolescents choose to enter the workforce directly rather than continuing to higher education, driven by the need to support their families' limited economic conditions. In fact, higher education plays a crucial role in equipping individuals to improve their quality of life and open up better future opportunities.

The central area of Komba Village is predominantly inhabited by families with relatively stable and adequate economic conditions. However, this condition does not necessarily encourage adolescents in the area to pursue higher education. The prevailing phenomenon shows that many adolescents prefer to work immediately after completing secondary education. This tendency is driven by the prevailing mindset in the community, where success is measured by how quickly an individual can earn money and contribute to the family's economy. Despite the availability of accessible education and adequate facilities in the area, these resources are not fully utilized to improve educational attainment, but rather are oriented toward economic activities such as trading, working in the informal sector, or engaging in family businesses. The lack of internal motivation among adolescents and the minimal encouragement from parents regarding higher education further reinforce this trend. Consequently, despite having the potential and opportunities, many adolescents in the central area of Komba Village choose to forgo the opportunity to pursue higher education.

Family economic limitations remain one of the primary factors compelling some adolescents to enter the workforce at an early age to meet family needs rather than continue their education. Additionally, low learning motivation, limited access to information regarding higher education, and the lack of parental and community support further reinforce the tendency of adolescents to stop at the secondary education level.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research aims to understand social phenomena in-depth by collecting descriptive data in the form of written words, spoken language, or observable behavior (Safarudin, R., Zulfamanna, Z., Kustati, M., & Sepriyanti, N., 2023). This research focuses on uncovering the barriers faced by adolescents in pursuing higher education in Komba Village, Luwu Regency. Through a phenomenological approach, this study seeks to explore the subjective experiences of adolescents and related parties, in order to gain a deep understanding of the various factors that serve as obstacles.

The research was conducted in Komba Village, Larompong Subdistrict, Luwu Regency, considering that this area has a diverse socio-economic profile,

ranging from remote areas with limited access to education to more developed areas in the village center. The informants in this study included adolescents who graduated from high school/vocational school but did not pursue higher education, their parents, as well as community leaders such as the village head and religious figures. The selection of informants was purposive to gather data relevant to the issues being studied.

Data collection was conducted through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were made directly in the field, both participatory and non-participatory, to observe the social, economic conditions, and activities of adolescents in the village. Interviews were conducted openly using semi-structured interview guidelines to obtain richer and deeper information. Additionally, documentation was used to supplement the data through notes, documents, and other relevant supporting data. Data analysis was carried out through stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, with data validation using source, technique, and time triangulation to ensure the credibility of the collected data (Sarosa, S., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Internal Factors Hindering Adolescents in Pursuing Higher Education in Komba Village

Based on the research conducted in Komba Village, Luwu Regency, various obstacles have been identified as contributing to the low participation of adolescents in pursuing higher education. These barriers stem from both internal and external factors that affect the motivation, life choices, and mindset of adolescents and their families. This situation presents a serious challenge in efforts to increase higher education participation rates in the village.

One of the primary obstacles identified is the low interest and motivation of adolescents to continue their education to higher education institutions. Many adolescents in Komba Village prefer to start working after graduating from high school, especially to assist their parents in the agricultural sector, which is the main livelihood of the community. This is reinforced by the belief that higher education does not necessarily guarantee a better future, given that many university graduates are unemployed or working outside their field of study (Harahap, M., 2020).

In addition to interest, the desire for early economic independence also serves as a strong reason for adolescents not to pursue higher education. In some cases, the responsibility of being the eldest child or the only child in the family requires them to take over their parents' work, especially in managing agricultural land, which is the family's primary source of livelihood. This reflects the strong familial values and responsibilities embedded in the culture of Komba Village.

The desire for early financial independence drives adolescents to choose work over continuing their education. They view working as a quick way to help the family and meet personal needs. Research by Helma Yulida reveals that many adolescents prefer to work after high school graduation because they feel that higher education does not provide immediate financial benefits (Yulida, H., 2021).

Furthermore, the phenomenon of early marriage also presents a significant barrier. Some adolescent girls in Komba Village prefer to marry at a young age due to cultural pressures and societal norms that view marriage as a form of social achievement. This tradition often disregards the importance of education as a foundation for the future, causing adolescents to focus more on preparing for family

life than continuing their education to a higher level.

The community in Komba Village also exhibits a pragmatic mindset when it comes to higher education. Many parents are reluctant to send their children to university due to the experiences of others who, despite having higher education, end up returning to farming or becoming unemployed. This view further strengthens the reluctance of families to invest in higher education, which is seen as not offering immediate benefits.

A pessimistic attitude towards the benefits of higher education also acts as a significant barrier. Some adolescents believe that attending university is merely a waste of time and money, without any guarantee of employment upon graduation. A study by Abdullah, I., & Gani, M. I. A. (2022) found that pessimistic attitudes and low awareness of the importance of higher education have caused adolescents to hesitate in continuing their studies.

Moreover, the cultural and social factors in Komba Village significantly influence adolescents' decisions to continue their education. The local community perceives working in the agricultural sector as more promising because it provides immediate returns, compared to higher education, which is viewed as not ensuring employment. This perception is reinforced by the reality in their surroundings, where many university graduates end up returning to farming or facing unemployment. This situation strengthens the stigma that higher education does not always correlate with improved living standards.

One of the key internal factors hindering adolescents from pursuing higher education is the lack of personal motivation and interest. This is often caused by a lack of awareness of the importance of higher education and the perception that university education does not provide direct benefits. Adolescents tend to choose to work or help their parents rather than continue their education. A study by Shalihah, B., & Wahyuni, F. A. (2023) stated that internal factors such as a lack of interest and motivation are the primary causes of low higher education participation among adolescents.

To address these obstacles, a comprehensive and collaborative approach is needed involving the government, educational institutions, community leaders, and families. Providing awareness about the importance of higher education, developing scholarship programs, and offering training relevant to local needs could be strategies to broaden the horizons of adolescents and provide stronger motivation, helping them see higher education as a valuable long-term investment.

External Factors Hindering Adolescents in Pursuing Higher Education in Komba Village

Based on the research conducted in Komba Village, Luwu Regency, it was found that the obstacles faced by adolescents in continuing their education to higher education institutions are greatly influenced by external factors, particularly the role of parents. Most parents in this village tend to have a limited understanding of the importance of higher education. Parents prioritize the contribution of their children in helping with work on the fields or gardens over supporting them in pursuing higher education. This attitude indirectly dampens the motivation and hopes of children to continue their studies, even when they have a strong desire to pursue higher education.

In addition to family factors, the prevailing social views in the community of Komba Village also pose a significant barrier. There is a deeply ingrained mindset

that continuing higher education does not always guarantee a better life. The local community tends to view direct employment, such as farming or trading, as a more realistic and immediately profitable option. Moreover, for female adolescents, there is a belief that higher education is unnecessary because, in the end, they will become housewives. Such mindsets have been passed down through generations and have become social norms within the community.

The lack of encouragement and support from parents also acts as an external factor influencing adolescents' decisions regarding higher education. Parents who do not understand the importance of higher education or who hold the view that education does not provide immediate benefits are less likely to encourage their children to continue their studies. This is supported by research showing that parental support has a significant impact on a child's motivation to learn (Assa, R., Kawung, E. J., & Tumiwa, J., 2022).

Another factor that reinforces the barrier to higher education is the high rate of early marriage among adolescents in Komba Village. Adolescents, particularly females, are often married off at a young age due to cultural pressures and the desire to maintain family honor. Many of them, who have not even completed their upper secondary education, are forced by their parents to marry. This phenomenon not only halts their formal education but also places them in a new social role filled with household responsibilities, greatly limiting the chances of returning to education.

The low level of education among parents and the community also perpetuates the cycle of early marriage. A lack of understanding regarding the negative impacts of early marriage on education and the future of children is a key factor that accelerates early marriages. Moreover, the cultural perception of marriage as a social achievement, coupled with environmental pressures, further limits adolescents' opportunities to develop through formal higher education.

These conditions indicate that the obstacles faced by adolescents in Komba Village are not merely economic but are also deeply rooted in social, cultural, and value-based factors upheld by the local community. Therefore, overcoming these barriers requires an approach that goes beyond economic considerations and includes education that addresses values, culture, and increased awareness of the importance of higher education as a long-term investment.

The social environment, including peer groups, plays a significant role in adolescents' decisions to continue their education. If the surrounding environment does not support or even downplays the importance of higher education, adolescents are likely to follow this pattern. Research by Makhrisa, R. A., & Pradikto, S. (2025) shows that the influence of peers and unsupportive social environments can reduce adolescents' interest in pursuing higher education.

The low economic status of families often serves as a primary barrier for adolescents to continue their education to higher education institutions (Vitria, D., & Kholilah, K., 2019). The high costs of education, including tuition fees, transportation, and living expenses in larger cities, make it difficult for many families to afford their children's education (Lestari, M., Zakso, A., & Al Hidayah, R., 2020).

Limited access to higher education institutions, such as the long distance to universities or a lack of transportation facilities, also presents an external barrier for adolescents in rural areas. This makes it difficult for adolescents to continue their education, especially if they need to move to larger cities for further studies

(Mawaddah, F. A., Al Anikmah, S., Rangkuti, R. K., & Nurhalizah, I., 2025). Research by Nurdin, E., & Reni, W. O. (2025) highlights that environmental factors, including accessibility to education, significantly affect adolescents' decisions to pursue higher education.

Holistic, community-based interventions are urgently needed, such as socialization programs about the importance of higher education, empowerment of women, provision of scholarships, and strengthening the role of community leaders and religious institutions in changing social perspectives that hinder education. With the involvement of various stakeholders, it is hoped that adolescents in Komba Village will have better access and support to continue their education to higher education institutions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted in Komba Village, Luwu Regency, it can be concluded that the low participation of adolescents in pursuing higher education is caused by a combination of internal and external factors. Internal factors include low personal motivation and interest, the desire to achieve economic independence at an early stage, as well as cultural influences that regard early marriage as a social achievement. Meanwhile, external factors involve the lack of parental understanding and support regarding the importance of higher education, the community's pragmatic mindset that prioritizes immediate employment over formal education, and an unsupportive social environment. The family's limited economic capacity also poses a significant barrier, exacerbated by limited access to information and the perception that the cost of education is burdensome. To overcome these various obstacles, collaborative and comprehensive efforts are needed involving the government, educational institutions, community leaders, and families to provide education, open scholarship opportunities, and shift societal paradigms towards viewing higher education as an investment in the future.

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