



Examining gendered patterns of school dropout in Indonesia

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Introduction

Primary enrollment is nearly universal in Indonesia, but secondary gross enrollment is just 81% (UNESCO, 2013). At the provincial level, gross enrollments are as low as 36% (UNESCO, 2010).

In some provinces, girls are more likely to enroll in secondary school than boys; in others the opposite is true (UNESCO, 2010). The high female dropout rate in some areas is perplexing, as girls have performed well on primary school examinations (Suryadarma et al., 2006).

Methods

Qualitative research

28 interviews with 13- to 18-year-old school dropouts in Banten and Aceh provinces

- 57% male, 43% female

Participant observation and focus groups with youth in nonformal education programs

Findings

Research Question 1: How and why do youth decide to leave school?

- Parents were the decision makers in most cases (60%)
“My parents said that they couldn’t help anymore, so I just did what they said. I just felt pity for my parents.”
- 33% of youth said they were the decision maker
“Father said to me that I should continue my study, we can find the tuition in some way, but I said, ‘Pa, it’s enough for me.’”
- Cost was the primary factor
- School quality was not an issue; teachers were described as being supportive
“My teacher actually came to me asked reasons why I dropped out at that time. But she... could not solve my problem about fee I had to pay to the school.”

Research Question 2: What factors are particularly relevant to girls’ and boys’ decisions to leave school?

- The overriding reason was the cost of secondary education, for both boys and girls.
- Behavior problems contributed to dropout for several boys
- Generational changes in values are occurring regarding girls’ education; just one youth said that education was less necessary for women
“It’s different [now]; in the past people said that a women finally will work at the kitchen... my parents are ‘past’ people.”

Conclusions

- Dropout is a larger problem than the official statistics suggest, and high costs are the major cause
- Reasons given for dropout are not gendered, but dropouts’ subsequent choices are highly gendered
 - Boys worked for pay, sometimes allowing them to save enough to re-enroll
 - Girls stayed at home and considered marriage
- There is a great need for pathways back into the formal education system
- Established nonformal education programs offer flexibility, but do not result in a completion certificate
- Dropouts who want to return to school end up trapped in the middle—with some education but no recognition or job skills

Literature Cited

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