

MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION ACCESS AND QUALITY PROBLEMS IN BANJAR CITY, WEST JAVA

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Abstract. Educational disparities in peripheral regions such as Banjar City, West Java, continue to pose significant challenges, particularly in student literacy and numeracy, early childhood education (PAUD) accreditation, school participation among adolescents, and inclusion for children with disabilities. This study aims to examine the multidimensional factors influencing these issues using a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing secondary data from the national education report, and complementing it with field observations and interviews with stakeholders. The study results indicate that less than 40% of junior high school students achieve minimum literacy competencies, primarily due to unqualified teachers, inadequate student-teacher ratios, and contemporary teaching practices at the elementary level. Only 34% of early childhood education institutions meet the minimum accreditation standard of class B, caused by inadequate infrastructure, low teacher qualifications, and limited technical assistance. Adolescents aged 16–18 years have a relatively low school participation rate, influenced by factors such as economic hardship, social issues such as family instability, and declining motivation. Children with disabilities experience limited access to education due to the uneven distribution of special education schools, lack of transportation, and prevailing social stigma. The study concluded that improving educational outcomes in Banjar City requires systemic interventions, including enhanced teacher training, support for the accreditation process, targeted economic and social policies, and inclusive education strategies tailored to marginalized groups.

Keywords: Non-Formal Education, Early Childhood Education (PAUD), Literacy, Numeracy, School Participation, Education Policy.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental aspect of national development. From a sustainable development perspective, education serves not only as a means to increase individual knowledge but also as a strategic instrument in creating productive, adaptive, and competitive human resources. In this context, sustainable regional development depends heavily on the quality of education within its communities, as regions are the root of overall national development. Disparities in access and quality of education between regions can widen social and economic disparities, ultimately hampering national development. This is due to various factors, including poverty, gender inequality, lack of infrastructure, family background, and suboptimal educational equality policies (Rojak & Khayru, 2022). Therefore, instilling values and improving the quality of education from an early age is a strategic and fundamental step in building a solid foundation for the nation's progress as a whole. Equitable education quality is a crucial step in efforts to improve public welfare and economic growth, which will face significant obstacles (Koech *et al.*, 2025). In the context of education, the definition of quality encompasses educational input, process, and output (Siswopranoto, 2022). Educational input is considered high quality if it demonstrates readiness to undergo the learning process.

Furthermore, educational output is considered high quality if students demonstrate high achievement in both academic and non-academic fields. Educational quality has become a primary focus in the development of the national education system, particularly at the early childhood education and elementary education levels. At these levels, education aims not only to transfer knowledge but also to form the foundation for children's cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development. One widely used approach is quality theory, which distinguishes between structural

quality (input: facilities, teachers, child-teacher ratio, curriculum) and process quality (teacher-child interactions, pedagogical approaches, learning climate). Structural quality can be a prerequisite, but process quality is believed to have a more direct impact on child development (Slot *et al.*, 2015). In addition, the ecological theory of quality emphasizes that educational quality must be seen as the result of the interaction of various components of the education system holistically, starting from policies, institutional practices, social interactions, to cultural contexts (Hunkin & Grieshaber, 2024). In Indonesia, the proportion of higher education completion is higher in urban areas than in rural areas, while the proportion of people who have never attended school or have only completed primary education is higher in rural areas (Wulandari *et al.*, 2024). The quality of education is influenced by geographic limitations, fiscal capacity, regional differences, and uneven distribution of resources, particularly in remote areas with minimal infrastructure and teaching staff (Farida *et al.*, 2021).

Regional development is an integral part of national development. When a region has good quality education, it will create productive, innovative human resources capable of responding to the challenges of the times. This not only strengthens regional competitiveness but also strengthens the overall national development structure. Conversely, educational disparities between regions have the potential to widen the development gap, trigger labor migration to urban centers, and exacerbate the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities (Madhoo & Nath, 2025). Educational inequality between regions, particularly between urban and rural areas in Indonesia, is a complex form of social inequality. Geographical, economic, social, and public policy factors play a role in creating disparities in access, resource quality, infrastructure, and learning outcomes. Rural areas generally experience limited facilities, teacher quality, and access to technology, while policies tend to prioritize students in urban areas (Fitriana *et al.*, 2025). The impact is seen in better participation, graduation, and learning competencies in cities compared to villages (Sari *et al.*, 2025).

According to administration, Banjar City divides borders with Ciamis and Cilacap Regencies. In addition to its closeness to Central Java Province, Banjar City is a transitory area that facilitates cultural acculturation and creates social cohesion defined by educational, economic, and social backgrounds (Michel, 2024). Characteristics such as its small size, its status as a peripheral area, and limited educational facilities make Banjar City a suitable context for examining the influence of geography, regional fiscal capacity, and resource distribution on educational quality. Furthermore, although data from the Banjar City Education Office indicates that educational facilities and infrastructure in the city are relatively adequate (such as classroom renovations and the construction of early childhood education centers (PAUD) spread throughout the hamlets), significant challenges remain regarding equitable distribution of educational quality and accessibility, particularly in more remote areas or those with poor transportation access. These conditions reflect a peripheral situation, allowing this research to capture a variety of educational challenges often overlooked in studies that focus solely on large cities or central areas.

Thus, Banjar City not only meets the criteria for a small city, but also has geographic and administrative conditions that allow for concrete observations of how geographic location, fiscal capacity, and resource distribution influence educational quality and address specific challenges in the education sector. Therefore, this study aims to examine the multidimensional factors influencing these issues using a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing secondary data from the national Education Report Card system, and complementing it with field observations and interviews with stakeholders. This study allows for generalization of the findings to small cities in West Java and Indonesia that share similar contexts, as well as providing more specific and applicable policy recommendations for peripheral areas.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach, with the aim of providing an in-depth description of the educational issues occurring in Banjar City. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to contextually understand the social dynamics that influence the quality and access to education in Banjar City. In practice, this approach is multidimensional, as it focuses not only on the quality aspect of education but also encompasses the dimensions of accessibility, social conditions, and local policies that interact to influence the implementation of education in the region.

This study utilizes both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from the field through semi-structured interviews with key informants, including teachers, principals, parents, and officials from the local Education Office. These interviews were designed to explore the perspectives and experiences of education stakeholders regarding the quality of learning, educational accessibility, and the implementation of education policies at the regional level. In addition to the interviews, field observations were also conducted at various educational units that were the objects of study, including early childhood education institutions (PAUD), elementary schools (SD), junior high school-equivalent educational units (such as SMP Setara), and special schools (SLB). These observations aimed to directly observe the physical condition of facilities and infrastructure, the learning process, and interactions between educational stakeholders within the school environment. Meanwhile, secondary data was collected from various relevant and reliable official sources. These include the Education Report published by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Kemendikdasmen), which contains education quality indicators based on the results of the National Assessment. Additionally, statistical data from Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), institutional information from the basic education data (Dapodik), accreditation documents of early childhood education institutions, and various regional policy documents related to education management and financing were used.

The data analysis technique in this study uses a thematic analysis approach, which is in accordance with the characteristics of qualitative research. This approach is used to identify, group, and interpret thematic patterns that emerge from the collected data, whether from interviews, field observations, documents, or statistical data obtained. The analysis process is carried out in stages through several stages. The first stage is data reduction, which is the process of filtering, summarizing, and selecting data relevant to the research focus. Information unrelated to the main issue is set aside, while data containing significant meaning is systematically recorded. The second stage is categorization, which is the process of grouping data into major themes such as literacy, numeracy, participation, and educational inclusion, according to the dimensions studied in the context of quality and access to education in Banjar City. After the data is grouped, the next stage is interpretation, in which the researcher gives meaning to the relationships between themes, explores their social implications, and explores the factors underlying the problems identified. This process relies not only on the narratives conveyed by informants but also takes into account the local social, cultural, and policy contexts that influence educational dynamics. The final stage is the conclusion, which systematically formulates key findings as a basis for drawing conclusions and providing policy recommendations. To ensure the validity of the analysis, this study employed source triangulation techniques. This technique is carried out by comparing information obtained from various data sources. With triangulation, researchers can ensure that the findings are not one-sided, but rather the result of mutually reinforcing cross-source verification.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

1. General Problems of Education in Banjar City

Educational disparities in outlying areas such as Banjar City, West Java, continue to pose significant challenges, particularly in student literacy and numeracy, early childhood education (PAUD) accreditation, school participation among adolescents, and inclusion for children with disabilities. Based on the 2024 Banjar City Education Report, there are 14 priority indicators that can provide a comprehensive overview of the quality of education services at each level.

The Indicator of Literacy Skills of Junior High School Students (SMP Setara), Numeracy Skills of Religious Elementary School Students (SD Agama/SD Kemenag) and Junior High School Students (SMP Setara), School Participation Rate (Ages 16–18, 17–18 equivalent, 4–18 disabilities), and the Percentage of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) accredited B are the four indicators of success reflected in the results of the 2024 Banjar City Education Report with the category of less and low achievement result. Banjar City falls into the less category in the Indicator of Literacy Skills of Junior High School Students (SMP Setara), Numeracy Skills of Religious Elementary School Students (SD Agama/SD Kemenag) and Junior High School Students (SMP Setara), and School Participation Rate (Ages 16-18, 17-18 equivalent, 4-18 disabilities). The Indicator of percentage of

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Early Childhood Education (PAUD) accredited at least B falls into the low achievement results with low category.

Summary of Achievement Results	Regency/City Authority										Provincial Authority					
	PAUD	SD Umum	SD Agama	SD Setara	SMP Umum	SMP Agama	SMP Setara	SMA Umum	SMA Agama	SMA Umum	SMK Umum	SDLB	SMPLB	SMALB		
Student literacy skills																
Student numeracy skills																
Student character																
Quality of learning																
Percentage of PAUD accredited at least B																
Appropriate learning process for early childhood																
Learning that builds foundational skills																
School safety climate																
School diversity climate																
School climate of inclusivity																
Climate of inclusivity and diversity in PAUD																
Absorption of vocational high school graduates																
Partnership and alignment of vocational high schools with the world of work																
		Age 5 - 6		Age 7 - 15			Age 16 - 18		Age 7-18 Kesetaraan			Age 4 - 18 Disabilitas				
School participation rate																
Indonesian Education Report 2024, Banjar City	Note	Good	Medium	Less	Not available	Indicator does not apply										

Figure 1. Indicators and Summary of Achievements Result, Banjar City Education Report 2024
Source: Banjar City Education Report, 2024

There are several issues concerning Banjar City's educational system at the moment, including those related to inclusion, quality, and accessibility. The results of literacy and numerical achievement in terms of educational quality were concerning. At the junior high school (SMP Setara) level, only less than 40% of students have achieved basic literacy skills, while numeracy achievement at the elementary school (SD Agama/SD Kemenag) and junior high school (SMP Kesetaraan) levels is also in the less category, with the same percentage. This reflects the low quality of learning received by students, especially in non-formal and religious education pathways. In terms of access, the school participation rate indicator for the 16-18 age group, students in the 17-18 age group, and children with disabilities aged 4-18 shows that the proportion of children attending school in these groups remains low. This low school participation rate indicates the still limited accessibility of educational services for certain age groups. Meanwhile, in terms of inclusion and quality assurance of early childhood education (PAUD) services, Banjar City also faces serious challenges. The percentage of early childhood education (PAUD) accredited with at least a B is still relatively low, reflecting the uneven distribution of early childhood education (PAUD) services and the suboptimal quality assurance system at the basic education level.

2. Low Literacy Skills of Junior High School Students (SMP Setara)

Based on the 2024 Indonesian Education Report for Banjar City, the literacy skills of students in Banjar City at the Junior High School (SMP Setara) level have "less" achievement results. The data shows that less than 40% of students achieve the minimum literacy competency, which places this achievement in the low category. This finding is reinforced by the results of interviews and observations with one of the formal education units in Banjar City, namely SMP Negeri 5 Banjar, which revealed that there are still students who are not able to read fluently even though they are at the junior high school level. The low literacy achievement of students at the junior high school level in Banjar City is a problem that cannot be separated from a number of interconnected structural and cultural factors.

Based on field observations and literature studies, several primary causes are at the root of the low basic literacy skills among students in Banjar City. First, some teachers still lack the minimum academic qualification of a bachelor's degree or have educational backgrounds that are not aligned with their teaching fields, resulting in low pedagogical capacity and substance in the literacy learning process. Second, the learning approaches implemented in the classroom tend to be conventional and oriented toward memorization, rather than toward developing critical thinking skills and reading comprehension. The third factor is low family support and a literacy environment outside of school. The limited availability of appropriate reading materials at home, the lack of

reading habits within families, and limited access to community libraries or reading parks result in literacy not developing sustainably outside the classroom.

Looking more closely indicates that elementary school, especially early childhood education (PAUD), often serves as the main cause of the junior high school literacy issue. The study "Early Childhood Literacy Stimulation by Parents" concluded that parental involvement through shared reading, object naming, and word play (modeling, mentoring, organizing, and teaching) positively impacts early childhood literacy skills, which then contributes to literacy achievement in elementary school and beyond (Wahidah *et al.*, 2025). Another study, "The Effect of Home Literacy on Reading Skills in Early Childhood in Cirebon," showed that home literacy practices significantly correlated with reading skills in children aged 3-4 years (Erik *et al.*, 2021). These findings indicate that literacy interventions in junior high school are too late if the roots of difficulties have already emerged during early childhood education (PAUD) or elementary school. In other words, low literacy in junior high schools is not solely the result of weaknesses in learning at the secondary level, but rather the accumulation of systemic failures in providing adequate literacy stimulation from an early age and continuity of literacy between levels of education.

3. Low Numeracy Skills in Religious Elementary Schools (SD Agama/Kemenag) and Junior High School (SMP Setara)

Based on the 2024 Banjar City Education Report, student achievement in numeracy skills indicators at several educational units still shows unsatisfactory results, particularly at the Religious Elementary School level (SD Agama/ SD Kemenag) and the Junior High School (SMP Setara). At both levels, the numeracy skills indicator is recorded in the "less" category, with the percentage of students achieving minimum numeracy competency still below 40%. This position places Banjar City in the group of regions with relatively low numeracy achievements and indicates fundamental challenges in mastering logical thinking and mathematical problem-solving skills among students. The low numeracy achievement at the Religious Elementary School (SD Agama/ SD Kemenag) and Junior High School Equivalency (SMP Setara) levels in Banjar City is the result of a number of interrelated and systemic factors, indicating that the problem occurs not only at the classroom level but also concerns institutional, pedagogical, and socio-economic dimensions.

First, from an institutional perspective, religious and equivalent education units generally have limited resources, both in terms of the qualifications and competencies of mathematics teachers, access to contextual numeracy teaching materials, and technological support and numeracy learning tools. Many teachers in equivalent units are part-time or have educational backgrounds that are not aligned with the subjects they teach. This impacts the low effectiveness of numeracy learning, as teachers are not always able to apply pedagogical approaches appropriate to the characteristics of adult learners or dropouts returning to school. Second, from a pedagogical perspective, numeracy learning in many alternative education units is still one-way instruction and focuses on memorizing formulas or procedures, without providing sufficient space for the development of critical thinking skills, mathematical reasoning, and contextual problem-solving. The lack of integration between numeracy content and everyday life makes it difficult for students to see the relevance of the material being studied, resulting in low interest and engagement in learning. Third, there are external factors that exacerbate the low numeracy skills of students in Banjar City, namely the lack of support from the home and social environment for strengthening numeracy skills.

Furthermore, one significant cause of the low numeracy achievement in Banjar City is that the focus of learning in many educational units is insufficiently focused on the application of basic logic and conceptual understanding. Many teachers still prioritize memorizing mathematical procedures and formulas over developing the logical thinking, analysis, and mathematical reasoning skills needed to solve contextual numeracy problems. Furthermore, teacher training related to contextual numeracy approaches remains inadequate, resulting in teachers being under-trained in developing numeracy materials that are relevant to students' real-life experiences and utilize local contexts as learning media. Based on the above analysis, an educational policy is needed that encourages cross-curricular numeracy integration. This means that numeracy skills should not be taught solely in mathematics but should be integrated into various other subjects such as science, social studies, art, and even religious education, so that students become accustomed to thinking

numerically in various contexts. This integration will expand opportunities for students to develop numeracy logic in everyday situations and strengthen conceptual understanding. Teacher professional training should also focus on contextual numeracy approaches and learning strategies that promote problem-solving and critical thinking. Additional relevant policies include the development of locally context-based numeracy learning resources, the provision of remedial numeracy lessons for students who have not yet achieved minimum competency, and regular monitoring and evaluation of numeracy achievement across all schools, including religious and equivalency education units.

4.The Low Percentage of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) Accredited with a Minimum B Grade

Based on the 2024 Banjar City Education Report, the achievement of the Percentage of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) Accredited with a Minimum B rating in several educational units still shows unsatisfactory results. The results of the 2024 Education Report achievement in the Percentage Indicator of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) Accredited with a Minimum B were recorded as having "Low" achievement, with the category of achievement results being less (the minimum number of PAUD units that have been accredited and received good accreditation of at least B). Based on the findings, only $\pm 34\%$ of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) institutions in Banjar City are accredited with a minimum B.

Table 1. Number of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) Institutions in Banjar City

No	District	Accreditation				Total
		A	B	C	Not accredited	
1	Kecamatan Banjar	0	26	27	5	58
2	Kecamatan Langensari	0	11	38	4	53
3	Kecamatan Pataruman	2	22	36	1	61
4	Kecamatan Purwaharja	0	9	15	2	26
Total		2	68	116	12	198

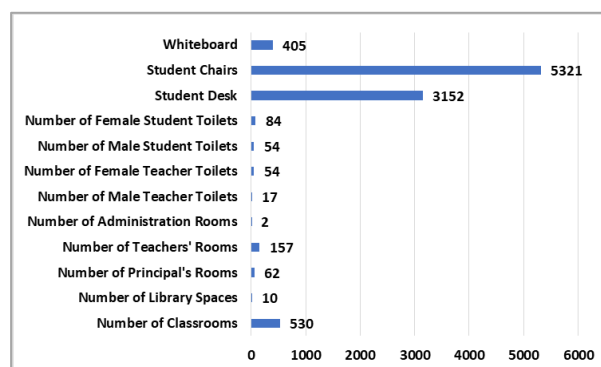
Source: Data Processing Results, 2025

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that the number of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) institutions in Banjar City is 198 institutions spread across 4 districts. In Banjar District there are 58 Early Childhood Education (PAUD) institutions (26 institutions accredited B, 27 institutions accredited C and 5 not yet/not accredited), Langensari District there are 53 Early Childhood Education (PAUD) institutions (11 institutions accredited B, 38 institutions accredited C and 54 not yet/not accredited), Pataruman District there are 61 Early Childhood Education (PAUD) institutions (2 institutions accredited A, 22 institutions accredited B, 36 institutions accredited C and 1 not yet/not accredited), and Purwaharja District there are 26 Early Childhood Education (PAUD) institutions (9 institutions accredited B, 15 institutions accredited C and 2 not yet/not accredited).

The majority of early childhood education (PAUD) (116 institutions) are accredited at level C, while 68 have achieved level B accreditation, and only two have achieved level A accreditation. 12 institutions have not yet been accredited or have not yet registered their accreditation status. This composition shows that most institutions are still at a medium to low accreditation level, so institutional quality needs to be improved significantly.

The main factors causing the low percentage of accredited early childhood education (PAUD) institutions in Banjar City include inadequate infrastructure (including inadequate building conditions, children's toilets that do not meet standards, and limited availability of clean water), this is in line with the results of interviews conducted with the Chairperson of Himpaudi Banjar City and the Head of PAUD Kober Melati, a lack of infrastructure, such as laptops, and unequal ownership of learning buildings in other PAUDs.

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Graphic 1. Number of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) Facilities and Infrastructure
Source: Data Processing Results, 2025

Based on graphic 1, most early childhood education (PAUD) in Banjar City have classrooms as their primary learning resource, although many are not yet categorized as adequate and are not even located in dedicated school buildings. Furthermore, very few have libraries (only 10 out of 198 PAUDs), and adequate sanitation facilities for both teachers and students are still limited. Learning and administrative support tools, such as laptops, are also still very limited, reflecting limitations in the use of technology and professional institutional management. These facility and infrastructure issues require immediate action to support improved service quality and accelerate early childhood education (PAUD) accreditation. The qualifications of early childhood education (PAUD) teachers, some of whom lack professional certification or whose educational backgrounds are still below the required minimum academic standards.

Table 2. Qualifications of Early Childhood Education Teachers (PAUD) in Banjar City

No	Educational Qualifications	Total of Male+Female
1	<= SLTA	502
2	D1	4
3	D2	10
4	D3	16
5	D4/S1	272
6	S2 and more	5
Total		809

Source: Data Processing Results, 2025

Based on Table 2, the total number of early childhood education (PAUD) teachers in Banjar City is 809. A total of 62% (502 educators) still have a high school education or lower. Only about 33% (272 educators) have attained a Diploma 4/S1, and only 0.61% (5 educators) have a Master's degree or higher. This data indicates the low qualifications of early childhood education teachers in Banjar City. Based on the results of interviews conducted with the Chairperson of Himpaudi Banjar City and one of the heads of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) in Banjar City, namely the Head of PAUD Kober Melati, several reasons were explained for the low qualifications of educators in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) in Banjar City, namely that many teachers still do not have an educational background that is linear with Early Childhood Education (PAUD), many teachers do not have a bachelor's degree, teacher certification is still low. Nevertheless, there are efforts to improve the quality of educators through the planned implementation of Orpin (Leadership Orientation) in 2025 with the Provincial Himpaudi. However, they said that Himpaudi has so far been running on a self-funded system, and hope that basic, advanced, and intermediate training for PAUD educators can be facilitated by the relevant Education Office.

The Head of PAUD Kober Melati also stated that the factor causing the Banjar City Education Report Card to remain "red" in the PAUD indicator is the continued dominance of institutions with C accreditation. PAUD Kober Melati itself has been accredited B since 2015 and currently has 62 students. In addition, in terms of participation, there are no obstacles to the transition from early childhood education (PAUD) to kindergarten or elementary school because the institution

has provided guidance and suggested the preparation of educational savings. PAUD Kober Melati also does not experience obstacles in recruiting students because it has good service quality and is integrated with community health post (Posyandu) activities in the surrounding area.

The implications of the low quality of early childhood education (PAUD) institutions (including the lack of accreditation of many early childhood education (PAUD) institutions) in Banjar City will directly impact children's basic literacy readiness when entering elementary school. Children who receive insufficient literacy stimulation from an early age (PAUD) will tend to experience difficulties in reading, understanding texts, and building vocabulary, resulting in delays in basic literacy skills. The study "Study of Elementary School Teachers' Understanding and Readiness for the Transition from early childhood education (PAUD) to Elementary School" states that children's readiness from early childhood education (PAUD) to elementary school is often inadequate in terms of literacy and that the transition regulations need to be supported by good early childhood education (PAUD) quality (Zahra *et al.*, 2025). Therefore, improving early childhood education (PAUD) accreditation through improving infrastructure, increasing teacher certification and professionalism, and systematic technical guidance from the local government is very urgent.

5. Low Educational Participation Among 16–18 Year Old

Based on the 2024 Banjar City Education Report, student achievement in the 16–18 Age Education Participation indicator is classified as low and falls into the less category (a low proportion of children attending school compared to all children of the same age in a region). Based on data from Pudatin Kemendikdasmen as of December 2024, the total number Out Of School Children in Banjar City reached 1.824 children. This number is spread across four districts, with the following details:

Table 3. Number of Out Of School Children in Banjar City

No	District	Number of children who never attended school	Number of drop outs	Number of passed not continued	Total
1	Kecamatan Banjar	110	175	165	450
2	Kecamatan Purwaharja	33	70	71	174
3	Kecamatan Pataruman	150	207	220	577
4	Kecamatan Langensari	136	192	295	623
Total		429	644	751	1.824

Source: Pusdatin Kemendikdasmen, December 2024

Based on Table 3, the total number out of school children in Banjar City reached 1.824 children. Of this total, there are 644 children who have Drop Out (DO) status and 751 children who are classified as passed not continued, and while 429 children have never attended school. Langensari districts are the areas with the highest number of Out Of School Children.

Table 4. Verification Results of Reasons Why Out Of School Children

No	District	Verified	Not Verified	Total
1	Kecamatan Banjar	17	431	448
2	Kecamatan Purwaharja	3	166	169
3	Kecamatan Pataruman	13	557	570
4	Kecamatan Langensari	3	616	619
Total		36	1.770	1.806

Source: Pusdatin Kemendikdasmen, December 2024

Table 4 explains that the verification results for 1.806 children registered as not attending school indicate that only 36 children (1,99%) had their reasons verified. The limited data on reasons validated by Pusdatin does not fully represent the actual conditions on the ground. This indicates the need for comprehensive field verification by the Dinas Pendidikan as a basis for appropriate policy interventions. The main reasons cited by the children who have been verified are as follows:

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Table 5. Verification Results of Reasons for Out Of School Children that have been verified

Code	Reason	Number of children
A1	Don't want to go to school	3
A2	It is enough with the level of education that you have	12
A3	Married/taking care of the household	2
A4	Work	11
A5	Health issue/people with disabilities	4
A6	Other	4

Source: Pusdatin Kemendikdasmen, December 2024

The small number of verified children indicates the importance of conducting more extensive field verification so that non-formal education policies can be truly targeted and based on actual data. The majority have not been verified. The main reasons for children who have been verified include working (11 children), feeling satisfied with their education (12 children), getting married/taking care of a household (2 children), other issues such as environmental influences, trauma, or not having a birth certificate (1-3 children each). The lack of validated data on reasons indicates the importance of conducting comprehensive field verification as a basis for appropriate policy interventions.

Low school participation among adolescents in Banjar City can be influenced by economic barriers, social issues, and low motivation to learn. Economic barriers include relatively high transportation costs and the need to work to support the family economy, especially for adolescents from low-income families. These conditions often lead adolescents to choose not to attend school or drop out of school to work, as the costs and benefits of education feel disproportionate compared to pressing economic needs. Social issues such as broken homes, teenage pregnancy, or family responsibilities also pose significant obstacles. This is in line with research conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Ngantru, Tulungagung, which found that broken homes have a significant negative influence on students' motivation to learn (Nuranisa Ikhsani & Putranto, 2024).

In educational participation, the decision to attend school is influenced by the perceived costs and benefits of students and their families. If the direct and indirect costs (transportation, informal costs, loss of income if forced to work) are too high, and the perceived benefits (job opportunities, quality of life) are low, participation will be low. Furthermore, the School Operational Assistance (BOS) regulation, which eliminates some school fees at the elementary and junior high school levels, has been shown to increase school attendance (Aniza, 2023). Based on the above analysis, several policy and program implications can be implemented to increase adolescent school participation in Banjar City, including family-based interventions, providing further education scholarships, and developing learning motivation.

6. Low Access to Education for Children with Disabilities

In Banjar City, there are indications that many children with disabilities between the ages of 4-18 have not yet received access to formal education. This condition reflects significant structural and social barriers to fulfilling the right to education for children with special needs. Based on interviews with the Vice Principal of the curriculum division at the Banjar State Special Needs School (SLB Negeri Banjar), it was explained that this school accommodates students with various types of disabilities, namely deaf, physically disabled, blind, mentally disabled, and autism. Only a small number, especially those with hearing and physical disabilities, are able to participate in the Minimum Competency Assessment for the Education Report assessment. The current number of students is 134 students at elementary, junior high, and high school levels, and is assisted by 40 teachers. The majority of students continue their education from level to level, but the biggest obstacles remain:

- Social stigma: those who still consider special schools to be places for "crazy kids."
 - Parents' lack of confidence that education can bring change to their children.
 - Economic hardship: including transportation costs (partially covered through partnerships)
- Undang-Undang Nomor 8 Tahun 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities stipulates that persons with disabilities have the right to obtain quality education in all types, pathways, and levels of education, inclusively or specifically. Based on the conditions and results of the analysis, the

following policy implications need to be seriously considered to improve access to education for children with disabilities in Banjar City, including the Expansion and Strengthening of Inclusive Education, the Active Role of the Regional Government in ensuring the distribution of SLB facilities and special education services evenly across all districts, Provision of Accessible Transportation, Supervision of Implementation and Accountability related to monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Disability Law and regulations related to inclusive education.

7. Dimensional Interrelationship

The series of educational problems in Indonesia, starting from the low quality of Early Childhood Education (PAUD), then low literacy at the Elementary School (SD) level, failure in learning outcomes in Junior High School (SMP), and finally dropping out of school at the Senior High School (SMA) level, forms a systemic link. The low quality of Early Childhood Education (PAUD), both in terms of teacher quality, learning environment, and literacy support, results in children entering elementary school lacking a strong literacy foundation. Studies such as "The Effect of Home Literacy on Preschoolers' Early Reading Skills" show that early literacy at home significantly impacts early reading and writing skills at the PAUD level, which then further impacts academic performance in elementary school (Kusumawardhani *et al.*, 2025). Furthermore, low literacy in elementary school triggers difficulties in junior high school. Without sufficient reading, writing, and arithmetic competencies, elementary school students tend to experience low academic achievement in junior high school. The study, "Machine Learning Predicts Upper Secondary Education Drop out as Early as the End of Primary School" showed that academic and literacy variables at the end of elementary school are significant predictors of the risk of dropping out in high school (Psyridou *et al.*, 2024). Furthermore, when achievement in junior high school is low, whether in terms of subject grades, learning completion, motivation, or learning resilience, the risk of dropping out in high school increases.

Beyond academic contexts and formal pathways, education is inextricably linked to local socio economic factors. Household conditions, family economic background, literacy habits at home, and the surrounding social environment (peers, parental support, geographic conditions) significantly influence the quality of educational access and outcomes. Education, by its very nature, is a process that does not stand alone; it is strongly influenced by the social, economic, and local dynamics of the communities in which it takes place. Therefore, improving the quality of education cannot be achieved solely through institutional or curriculum approaches but must involve interventions into local socioeconomic factors. The government and stakeholders need to develop place-based education policies that take into account local social and economic characteristics to make education more inclusive, equitable, and relevant.

CONCLUSION

A. Conclusion

Low educational participation in Banjar City is caused by low motivation to learn, economic constraints, and negative public perceptions of education. Based on interviews and findings, four indicators are listed as negative in Banjar City's education report:

- 1) The literacy skills of junior high school (SMP Setara) students are low (less than 40% of students achieve minimum competency):** This indicates the need for community-based literacy programs facilitated by non-formal educational institutions.
- 2) The numeracy skills of students in religious elementary schools (schools under the Ministry of Religious Affairs/Islamic elementary schools) and junior high schools (Package B) are also low:** The low interest and learning ability of students at the junior high and senior high school levels suggests that strengthening practical numeracy in non-formal education could complement students who have fallen behind in formal education.
- 3) The percentage of early childhood education institutions (PAUD) accredited with at least a B grade remains low (only 34% of all PAUDs in Banjar City):** This reinforces the need for quality improvement programs and accreditation assistance for PAUD institutions, as previously formulated in the recommendations.

- 4) School Participation Rates for 16-18 year olds, 7-18 Equivalency, and 4-18 Disability are still relatively low:** This is reflected in Out Of School Children data and interviews with relevant agencies, which reveal that many students do not continue their education due to economic, social, and low motivational reasons. This highlights the need to increase the coverage of non-formal education (Package C, vocational training, or life skills literacy)..

Thus, based on the findings and analysis that have been carried out, it shows that the strategy for strengthening non-formal education in Banjar City is not only important but also urgent to address the educational challenges as depicted in the 2024 Education Report.

B. Recommendation

1. Policy Recommendations for the Banjar City Government

1.1. Recommendations for Improving the Literacy Skills of Junior High School Students (SMP Setara)

- a. Providing a community-based literacy program, as proven effective in improving reading comprehension at SDN 3 Neglasari
- b. Collaborative programs with literacy communities.
- c. Building and strengthening learning communities among teachers to share best practices in literacy development.
- d. Encouraging digital-based innovation and engagement (collaboration) with parents and the community, such as neighborhood unit/village/sub-district-based family literacy movements.
- e. Teacher competency improvement programs (scholarships, training/certification).
- f. Providing rewards or incentives for teachers willing to teach in non-formal educational institutions.
- g. Periodic evaluation of literacy skills using diagnostic assessments.
- h. Licensing for the establishment of equivalency educational institutions requires meeting minimum teacher needs (in terms of quantity, qualifications, and competency).

1.2. Recommendations for Improving the Numeracy Skills of Students in Religious Elementary Schools (SD Agama/SD Kemenag) and Junior High Schools (SMP Setara)

- a. Teacher training based on contextual approaches and applied numeracy.
- b. Development of local numeracy modules based on student needs.
- c. Integrating learning communities as a platform for mentoring teachers in numeracy learning strategies.
- d. Encouraging teachers to innovate in numeracy teaching (such as the "Si Zaky" Digital Mathematics Educational Game from SDN 3 Neglasari).

2. Collaborative Policy Recommendations with the West Java Provincial Government

2.1. Recommendations for Increasing School Participation Rates in Collaboration with the West Java Provincial Government

- a. Strengthening Socio-Economic Interventions: Optimizing the Family Welfare Program through synergy with the Social Services, Women's Empowerment, and Child Protection.
- b. Implementing the Berdaya Program to empower poor and vulnerable families.
- c. Optimizing the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) Program as a solution for students who lack pocket money.
- d. Transportation assistance program for students from low-income families.

2.2. Psychosocial Assistance and Child Protection in Collaboration with the West Java Provincial Government:

- a. Psychological support programs for troubled children (school dropouts, family conflicts, trauma) by guidance counselors, relevant agencies, and institutions.
- b. Educational programs for prospective brides and grooms and parents on the importance of early childhood education.

2.3. Recommendations for Increasing School Participation Rates for People with Disabilities in Collaboration with the West Java Provincial Government

- a. Optimizing the active involvement of neighborhood associations (RT/RW), integrated health post (Posyandu) cadres, and community leaders to recruit children with disabilities who are not yet enrolled in school.
- b. Rebranding Special Education Schools (SLB) through positive campaigns and literacy

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- about inclusive education to eliminate negative stigma.
- c. Engaging mass media, influencers, and content creators to support positive campaigns about Special Education Schools (SLB) to eliminate negative stigma and raise public awareness about the importance of education for children with disabilities.
- d. Strengthening Inclusive Education in Formal Schools.
- e. Providing financial assistance and special transportation through the Educate and Assistance programs for students with disabilities.
- f. Establishing special education units in areas that do not yet have schools for children with special needs or are located far from the nearest special education school.
- g. Bringing teachers to a specific location and gathering students with disabilities from the surrounding area to study together in a prepared space. This method can be a temporary solution in areas that do not yet have special education schools or inclusive schools.

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