

Policy Strategy for Alleviating Out-of-School Children in Magelang Regency

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of out-of-school children (ATS) in Magelang Regency is a serious problem that has an impact on individual and socio-economic development in the region. Although the national education participation rate is increasing, there are still gaps that cause thousands of children to drop out of school, mainly due to economic, socio-cultural, and geographical factors. This study aims to analyze local government policy strategies in alleviating ATS and identify the obstacles faced. The research method used is qualitative descriptive with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study show that the "Magelang Gumregah Bungah" program was able to reduce the number of ATS from 2,280 children in 2023 to 1,500 children in 2024. The program emphasizes holistic interventions that include educational assistance, community empowerment, and economic support for ATS families. In conclusion, the Magelang Regency government's strategy has shown a positive trend in alleviating ATS, although improvements are still needed in aspects of funding, public awareness, and improvement of education infrastructure.

Keywords: *Children Out of School, Policy Strategy, Education, Magelang, Gumregah Bungah*

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INTRODUCTION

One of the development priorities in the education sector as stated in Presidential Regulation No. 18 of 2020 concerning the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) is to increase the equitable distribution of education services at all levels and accelerate the 12-year compulsory education. One of the government's efforts in realizing these education services is by handling out-of-school children (ATS) so that they are willing to return to school. This starts with appropriate, affordable data collection and effective mentoring, revitalizing the movement to return to school, and with the right learning strategies for Children with Special Needs (ABK), child laborers, children facing legal problems, abandoned children, street children, and children in disaster areas (Leny Noviani et al, 2023).

The phenomenon of out-of-school children (ATS) is an important issue that needs serious attention from all parties. National Planning and Development Agency (2020), ATS refers to children of elementary/MI/equivalent, junior high school/MTs/equivalent, and high school/MA/equivalent (aged between 7-18 years) who have never gone to school, have dropped out of school without completing their education, or children who drop out of school without continuing to a higher level (Leny Noviani et al, 2023). The phenomenon of out-of-school children (ATS) has a significant long-term impact, both for individuals and society at large. Children who do not have access to education will face challenges in developing their potential, improving their skills, and gaining the knowledge they need to achieve a better life.

It is known that the level of education of the community is improving, but in reality the equal distribution of education has not succeeded in reaching all circles of society. This

triggers many children who do not and or drop out of school. One of the factors that causes children to miss and/or drop out of school is influenced by economic factors. This condition is exacerbated by the increasing cost of education which can pose a risk of dropping out of school. When the family economy is hampered, the need for education is no longer a priority. Moreover, when the cost of daily necessities increases, families with low economies will find it increasingly difficult to meet the education costs of their family members (Lanawaang & Mesra, 2023)

According to UNICEF Indonesia, the factors that cause ATS in Indonesia include the condition of the area of residence, especially in remote areas, development gaps between regions, poverty, and inadequate educational services, especially for children with disabilities (Leny Noviani et al, 2023). Furthermore, there are several factors behind the problem, for example, internal factors come from within the child himself who does not want an education. Then external factors are factors from the environment, such as families who lack attention or disharmony in the family, as well as the lack of facilities and infrastructure that support learning (Setiani, 2013 in Herlinawati and Arie Budi Susanto, 2019).

Out-of-School Children (ATS) in Magelang Regency is an important issue that needs to be handled holistically, integratively, and regionally. In Magelang Regency itself, the rate of out-of-school children is relatively high. The results of the National Socio-Economic Survey (Susenas) conducted by BPS in 2021 show that there are 21,440 ATS in Magelang Regency, an increase compared to 20,225 ATS in 2020. This number determines that Magelang Regency is ranked in the top 10 as the district with the highest number of ATS in Central Java Province (Ririn Hidayanti, 2023). Meanwhile, referring to the report document on the implementation of the P-ATS (Magelang Gumregah Bungah) regional action plan for Magelang Regency in 2024, through SIPBM data collection, 2,282 ATS were found, in accordance with national criteria or technical instructions of the National Strategy (STRANAS). The high number of out-of-school children (ATS) in Magelang Regency is a serious problem that requires deep attention. This phenomenon not only hinders individual development but also negatively impacts the social and economic development of the region.

So far, there have been many studies that discuss children out of school. In line with that, at least 3 perspectives were found about children not in school. **The first** study on Acceleration of Handling Out-of-School Children (OOSC) in Pandeglang District, this study argues that the factors that cause children to stay out of school are the mindset of the child's parents, the economic limitations of the child's family, the child's access to distant or difficult schools, early marriage of children, bullying at school (Ombi Romli, 2023). **The second** is a study on the Factors Causing Children to Drop Out of School in Tuutu Village, Analysis of Article 31 Paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 of the 1945 Constitution. This study explains that, in Tuutu Village, West Minahasa Tondano Regency, there are still many who do not continue school due to several factors such as pregnancy out of wedlock, promiscuity, lack of parental attention, and lack of self-awareness (Janeman Jehezkiel Lanawaang and Romi Mesra, 2023). **The third** study is on Preventing ARPS (Children Vulnerable to Dropping Out of School): A Comprehensive Approach to Keep Children in School. In contrast to the previous two studies, this study offers strategies to prevent school dropouts. This study explains that the ATS recovery strategy and ARPS prevention must be carried out in accordance with the environmental conditions of each child. By providing adequate and easily accessible learning facilities both formally and non-formally, then providing motivation and support for children's conditions with an interesting and fun learning system (Heri Jatmiko and Nuraini Asriati, 2023).

Based on the description above, this study aims to find out how the government's policy strategy is in alleviating the problem of out-of-school children and what are the obstacles faced in handling out-of-school children. These two things will be the main basis for the formulation of problems that will be more solvable for the problem of out-of-school children in Magelang Regency. Practically, this research is useful for local governments in providing concrete recommendations to design more effective policies in reducing the number

of out-of-school children. Theoretically, this research can be used as a reference for future researchers who study similar topics.

METHOD

The type of research taken by the researcher in this study is a type of descriptive research using a qualitative method approach. Denzin & Lincoln (1994) stated that qualitative research is research using a natural setting with the intention of interpreting a phenomenon that occurs and is carried out by involving various existing methods. Qualitative research is needed to discover and describe narratively the activities carried out and the impact of the actions taken on their lives. So this method is very suitable to (Rijal Fadli, 2021a) describe and describe how the Magelang Regency Regional Government Strategy in dealing with school dropouts.

Respondents

The informant or respondent in this study is the Magelang Regency government. Which in this study focuses on one of the government agencies, namely BAPPEDA which in this case is considered able to explain, especially about out-of-school children (ATS). Whether it's from the factors that cause children to stay in school to strategies to alleviate children who are not in school.

Instruments

In order to obtain valid and accurate data so that it can answer research problems, there are three instruments used in this study, namely, Observation, Interview and Documentation. Observation is carried out by directly observing geographical, economic, and socio-cultural conditions. The interview process is carried out together with representatives of the institution who are willing and willing to be interviewed, the interview is in the form of questions related to the title of the research. The documentation in this study can be in the form of pictures/photographs, as well as documents related to the strategic design of the Education Office and the Regional Government of Magelang Regency in overcoming the number of out-of-school children.

Procedures

In the process, this research went through several stages to obtain data relevant to the policy strategy for alleviating out-of-school children in Magelang Regency. First, the researcher takes care of the research permit by contacting the faculty and filling out the google form. Then the researcher conducted an obsession and field survey as well as continued the research permit to BAPPEDA by conveying the purpose and objectives. After BAPPEDA receives the research permit, then continue to schedule the interview process. The interview process is carried out according to a pre-approved schedule, the interviews that take place are recorded to facilitate data analysis. The interview ended with a group photo session as documentation. In addition, BAPPEDA provided researchers with the necessary documents to complete the data shortages during the interview process.

Data analysis

The data analysis process aims to obtain accurate and objective data, quoted from the research of Hasanah et al., (2021) Miles and Huberman expressed their opinions on data analysis, They stated that activities in data analysis consist of three stages, namely data reduction, data display (data presentation), and data verification (conclusion). At the data reduction stage, the researcher sorted and focused on the data obtained in documents related to out-of-school children. Then the researcher identified the factors that cause children to stay out of school, such as poverty, social, cultural, geographical, and others. At the data presentation stage, the findings are compiled and collected in one document that can make it easier for researchers to understand and draw conclusions. Finally, drawing conclusions, based on previously obtained data, at this stage the researcher describes the phenomenon being studied, namely the alleviation of out-of-school children, which may not have been clear before.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Identify Factors Causing Children to Miss School

Data on out-of-school children (ATS) in Magelang Regency is obtained from two main sources, namely the Community-Based Development Information System (SIPBM) and the Basic Education Data (Dapodik). Based on data from SIPBM, there are 2,186 out-of-school children spread across 97 villages. This data is used in the context of the Magelang Gumregah Bungah regional innovation program, which aims to return children who are not in school so that they can continue their education. Meanwhile, data from Dapodik recorded the number of ATS as many as 5,727 children spread across 367 villages and 5 sub-districts in Magelang Regency. The data from Dapodik is used by the Magelang Regency Education Office for educational planning and intervention in the region. These two data sources provide a comprehensive overview of the number of ATS in Magelang Regency, allowing local governments to design the right strategy to overcome education problems in their area.

Table 1. Magelang Regency ATS 2023-2024

Yes	Data Source	Number of ATS	Information
1.	SIPBM	2,186 children	97 Villages
2.	DAPODIK	5,727 children	367 Villages and 5 Villages

In Magelang Regency, the high number of out-of-school children (ATS) is a serious problem that requires deep attention. This phenomenon not only hinders individual development but also negatively impacts the social and economic development of the region. Referring to the final draft of the 2024 Gumregah Bungah document that, in general, there are three main factors that contribute to the high rate of ATS in Magelang Regency, including economic factors, socio-cultural factors, and geographical factors.

Economic Factors

Economic factors are one of the main causes of children not attending school in Magelang Regency. The poverty that afflicts many families in this area makes the cost of education an unaffordable burden. Many parents have to choose between financing basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter, or sending their children to school. Education is often a priority that is left behind because the needs of daily life are more urgent. In addition, many families depend on their children's labor to help with household chores or work in the fields to supplement their family income. These children are often forced to leave school in order to work, either full-time or part-time, to help ease the economic burden on their families. In this situation, education becomes a luxury item that is not accessible to everyone.

Table 2. number and percentage of poor people in Magelang Regency, 2021-2024

Yes	Year	Number of poor people	Percentage of poor population
1	2021	154.91 thousand people	11.91 percent
2	2022	145.33 thousand people	11.09 percent
3	2023	144.49 thousand people	10.96 percent
4	2024	143.80 thousand people	10.83 percent

Source : BPS Magelang Regency

From the data above, it shows a decrease in the poverty rate every year. The number of poor people in Magelang Regency in 2024 will reach 143.80 thousand people. This figure decreased compared to 2023, which amounted to 144.49 thousand people. Thus the number of poor people will decrease by around 690 people in 2024. This means that the percentage of poor people in 2024 will be recorded at 10.83 percent, a decrease of 0.13 percentage points from 2023, which is 10.96 percent. Although the percentage of poor people in Magelang Regency seems to be decreasing in 2024, this percentage figure is still higher when compared to the percentage of poor people in Central Java Province, which is 10.47 percent or a difference of 0.36 percentage points in 2024.

One of the main problems of education in Indonesia is economic problems. This is also supported by statements from Aditomo and Felicia (2018) who say that the economic conditions faced by students will have an impact on the quality of education (Muhammad Saiful Anwar, 2022). Economic factors, such as the family's financial condition, tuition fees, and availability of funds, can impact students' motivation to pursue their studies. Students from established financial families tend to have greater opportunities to pursue higher

education, while students from less established financial families may experience barriers in this regard (Wilson Simanjuntak.et.all, 2024).

Socio-Cultural Factors

Socio-cultural factors also play an important role in the high number of out-of-school children in Magelang Regency. There are many cultural values and norms that indirectly hinder children's educational participation. For example, in some communities, girls' education is not considered important because they are expected to marry and take care of the household. This traditional view limits girls' access to a decent education, and they are often left to stay at home while boys are encouraged to continue school. In addition, there is a belief that formal education is not very important for daily life. Some parents may value hands-on work experience and practical skills more than formal education, so they don't encourage their children to continue their education. These social norms can hinder children's intellectual development and limit their future opportunities. In addition, the practice of early marriage still occurs in some communities, which causes girls, especially, to drop out of school early. This perspective or social view can change as rationality increases through the improvement of the level of education.

Socio-cultural can have a negative impact on children to continue their education. According to Ririn Hidayanti (2023), culture can influence children's mindsets in responding to education, this is because there is a certain group culture or environment that does not give much importance to education. Meanwhile, according to Janeman, Jehezkiel Lanawaang and Romi Mesra (2023), the social environment has a great influence on children's education, a positive environment will be better, but if negative conditions affect the child's education, many drop out of school because the social conditions of their living environment tend to be poor.

Geographical Factors

Geographical factors also have a significant impact on educational participation in Magelang Regency. The region has many remote areas that are difficult to reach, with inadequate transportation infrastructure. The long distance and difficult access to school make many children reluctant or unable to travel every day. Difficult geographical conditions are also often exacerbated by the lack of educational facilities in rural areas. Existing schools often lack qualified teachers, educational equipment, and other basic facilities. The inability to provide an adequate learning environment in these remote areas leaves many children unable to enjoy the same education as their peers in urban areas. In addition, weather factors can also affect student attendance at school, especially in areas that are vulnerable to natural disasters such as floods or landslides.

Table 3, Height and Distance to the Regency Capital by Sub-district in Magelang Regency, 2023

Yes	District	Altitude (masl)	Distance to the Regency Capital (KM)
1.	Kajoran	578	31
2.	Grabag	680	33
3.	Kaliangkrik	823	34
4.	Fern	841	29
5.	Squirt	1.378	37

Source : *Magelang Regency in numbers*

Part of Magelang Regency is located on the slopes/mountain peaks. This can be seen from the location of the village in Magelang Regency. As many as 36.56% of villages in Magelang Regency are located in slopes/peaks (Magelang Regency in figures, 2024). From the data above, it can be seen that there are several sub-districts that have a considerable distance from the district capital (Mungkid City). there are even some sub-districts that are more than 30KM away from the district capital, for example Ngablak District which is 37KM away.

The geographical condition of an area can affect the interest and quality of education in the surrounding area, especially in rural areas. According to Suryana (2020), as quoted from Muhammad Saiful Anwar (2022), said that there are still many regions in Indonesia that have received less government attention in the field of education. This is an education gap, areas that are in the city or close to the center of government have good quality of education. As for

the suburban areas, the quality of educators is very lacking and the number is limited. In addition, the facilities owned by a school seem modest.

5P Strategy

To answer the above problems, the researcher uses the 5P strategy. John Voyer defines strategy as the 5P, namely: strategy as Perspective, strategy as Position, strategy as Planning, strategy as activity pattern, and strategy as Ploy (strategy) (Siti Aminah Chaniago, 2014 in Andi Hidayat et.al, 2021)

Perspective: according to the Draft Regulation of the Regent of Magelang concerning the Handling of Out-of-School Children, hereinafter abbreviated as ATS, children of elementary school, junior high school, and high school age (7-18 years) who have never attended school either at the level of elementary / middle school equivalent, junior high school / MTs equivalent, or high school / MA equivalent; dropping out of school without completing their education level (dropping out of school in the middle of elementary, junior high, or high school level); and dropping out of school without continuing to a higher level of education (transition from elementary to junior high school level or from junior high school to high school level).

Position: this is to determine the position of each party involved in handling ATS, for example educational institutions as service providers, local governments as policy and funding regulators, parents as direct responsible for children, children as the main impact recipients.

Planning: planning is used to design programs in dealing with out-of-school children, the design includes the implementation of ATS handling, cooperation with other parties in order to support the implementation and sustainability of ATS handling, then forming a technical team for coordinating ATS handling, monitoring and evaluation, and finally funding to support the implementation of ATS handling

Activity Pattern: Activity pattern refers to the stages before the implementation of a program. In handling ATS, it consists of 4 stages, namely the preparation stage, the implementation stage, the stage of mentoring and monitoring children returning to school, and finally the evaluation and follow-up stage.

Ploy: this is a tactical move that is strategic in nature to overcome specific obstacles or attract participation. For example, the technical team for coordinating the handling of ATS collaborates and coordinates with the Community of Education Care (KMPP) in carrying out the handling of ATS.

Magelang Regency Government's Strategy in Handling ATS

Magelang Regency has developed a series of programs that aim to address the problem of ATS with a holistic and integrated approach. One of the main programs is the Magelang Gumregah Bungah Program which is specifically dedicated to supporting children who are not in school. Magelang Gumregah Bungah offers an inclusive approach with a variety of alternative learning activities, both formal and non-formal, that are tailored to the needs of each child. This program focuses on the reintegration of ATS children into the education system, both in formal schools and through non-formal education programs such as Community Learning Activity Centers (PKBM).

The strategic steps of the Magelang Regency Government in following up (P-ATS) in preparing the Regional Action Plan for the Handling of Out-of-School Children (RAD P-ATS) through the Gumregah Bungah Program aims to first; strive for every child in Magelang Regency to receive quality education and/or training services that are relevant to their lives; second, to be a reference for the Magelang Regency Government in efforts to handle ATS; third, to be adopted into the planning and budgeting system of the Magelang Regency Government. The program also includes efforts to restore children's motivation and interest in learning through intensive teaching and mentoring. Close collaboration between governments, educational institutions, communities, and NGOs is essential to create a supportive environment and facilitate the return of children to school. The preparation of the

Regional Action Plan for the Handling of Out-of-School Children (RAD P-ATS) Magelang Regency took place from October to December 2022.

Handling out-of-school children through the Gumbergah Bungah programme involves a series of crucial initial steps and interventions to ensure children return to proper education. The initial steps include: the formation of the ATS team, the preparation of the Regent's Regulation, the capacity building of the team, the provision of data on the handling of ATS, and finally analysis. Meanwhile, the intervention stage includes: coordination meetings, formation of P-ATS teams, formation of KPPM, preparation of Regent Regulations, village coordination meetings, ATS socialization, SIPBM data collection training, data collection in villages with SIPBM, return of ATS, advocacy of SIPBM data collection results, ATS assistance/advocacy, and finally monitoring and evaluation.

The Magelang Gumregah Bungah program involves various intervention strategies that cover educational, social, and economic aspects. In the aspect of education, Magelang Gumregah Bungah focuses on providing access to formal and non-formal education. The program works with schools to facilitate the reintegration of ATS children into the regular education system, by providing scholarships, tuition subsidies, and school supplies such as books and uniforms. For children who cannot immediately return to formal school, Magelang Gumregah Bungah provides non-formal education through the Center for Community Learning Activities (PKBM). The program is designed to be flexible to suit the needs and conditions of children, including those who work or have family responsibilities.

The social aspect in Magelang Gumregah Bungah involves community empowerment and increasing public awareness about the importance of education. This program organizes public campaigns and educational activities to invite the public, especially parents, to support their children's education. This includes providing information about the benefits of education, children's rights, and the negative impact of dropping out of school. Magelang Gumregah Bungah also mobilizes the community to actively participate in supporting this program, such as through the formation of a community working group tasked with monitoring and supporting ATS children in their environment.

From the economic side, Magelang Gumregah Bungah provides direct assistance to families in need. This assistance includes the provision of cash assistance, labor-intensive programs, and skills training for parents or guardians of children. The purpose of this assistance is to reduce the economic burden on families so that their children can stay in school. In addition, this program also establishes partnerships with the business world and local industry to open internship or job opportunities for adolescents who have completed non-formal education.

The existence of the Gumregah Bungah Program has helped increase access to education for children in Magelang Regency. This can be seen based on data from Bappeda and R&D of Magelang Regency shows that the number of ATS in Magelang Regency has decreased from 2,280 children in 2023 to 1,500 children in 2024. This program has increased public awareness about the importance of education for children. This can be seen from the increasing number of parents who support their children to go to school. In addition, the Gumregah Bungah Program has created collaboration between various parties, such as the government, non-governmental organizations, and the community, in an effort to return ATS to education.

CONCLUSIONS

The problem of out-of-school children (ATS) in Magelang Regency is a complex challenge influenced by economic, socio-cultural, and geographical factors that are intertwined in creating a cycle that is difficult to solve. Poverty limits the ability of families to finance education, certain socio-cultural values weaken motivation to pursue education, while difficult geographical conditions further exacerbate children's barriers to obtaining a decent education. Nevertheless, the Magelang Regency Government through the Magelang Gumbergah Bunga program has managed to show a positive trend by reducing the number

of ATS from 2,280 children in 2023 to 1,500 children in 2024. To speed up the handling, comprehensive steps are needed in the form of financial assistance and scholarships for underprivileged families, increasing public awareness of the importance of education, and improving educational infrastructure and facilities in remote areas. Collaborative efforts between the government, the community, and non-governmental organizations must also be optimized to create an environment that is more supportive of children's education. Specific needs-based interventions from each factor causing ATS are the key to sustainability, so that all children in Magelang Regency can have equal access to quality education and the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the field of education can be realized.

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