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Community Perceptions of the Importance of Education in Kampung Ciburial: Between Necessity and Reality

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Abstract
Education plays a pivotal role in enhancing community quality of life and serves as a long-term investment in an individual's future. However, public awareness regarding the significance of education remains unevenly distributed, including in Kampung Ciburial, where perceptions are shaped by various social and economic determinants. This study aims to analyze the perspectives of Kampung Ciburial residents on the importance of education and identify the factors influencing educational sustainability. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), direct observation, and documentation involving mothers residing in Kampung Ciburial. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the majority of residents perceive education as a vital mechanism for improving living standards and unlocking better future opportunities. Nevertheless, household economic constraints, immediate social environments, and limited educational accessibility substantially influence educational continuity, leading many youths to prioritize immediate employment over pursuing higher education. Furthermore, familial support and collective community awareness emerge as critical drivers in fostering educational attainment. This study offers an empirical overview of rural community perspectives on education grounded in local social experiences and living conditions in Kampung Ciburial, serving as a strategic reference for stakeholders seeking to broaden educational access and awareness in rural areas.

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Introduction

Education represents a fundamental human need due to its profound impact on elevating the quality of community life. Through formal and informal educational processes, individuals not only acquire cognitive knowledge and technical competencies, but also cultivate critical thinking skills, shape moral character, and strengthen their adaptability to contemporary societal shifts. Pedagogical approaches that foster critical thinking, such as Socratic-based classroom experimentation (Gultom, 2025a) and collaborative cultural mapping (Indawati et al., 2025), further demonstrate how structured learning cultivates analytical resilience. Within the framework of national development, education functions as the primary instrument for generating competitive, high-caliber human resources. Consequently, the degree of public awareness regarding the value of education directly correlates with the socioeconomic advancement of a region. Despite this consensus, empirical realities reveal considerable disparity in how different social groups perceive higher education. In rural communities, tertiary education is frequently interpreted through varying lenses dictated by local social, cultural, and economic conditions. While a segment of the rural population views higher education as a gateway to superior employment prospects and upward social mobility, others perceive it as financially prohibitive and misaligned with immediate livelihood demands. These divergent viewpoints are shaped by household economic status, parental educational attainment, peer and neighborhood influences, and restricted access to information and tertiary infrastructure.

In the Indonesian educational system, higher education constitutes the highest tier of formal schooling. Pursuant to Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education (Article 1, Paragraph 6), a higher education institution is an educational unit that administers tertiary programs. Indonesia hosts a vast network of tertiary institutions, comprising state universities, private universities, and polytechnics, totaling 4,593 institutions, which include 122 public universities (PTN-BH, PTN-BLU, and PTN-Satker), 3,044 private institutions, and various specialized religious or ministry-affiliated academies (Ministry of Education and Culture [Kemendikbud], 2020). Conceptually, Ihsan (2005) defines education as a deliberate human endeavor to nurture and develop innate physical and spiritual potentials in accordance with prevailing societal and cultural values. This process involves instilling foundational norms and transmitting them across generations to sustain human civilization. Similarly, Dewey (2003) characterizes education as the formation of fundamental intellectual and emotional dispositions toward nature and fellow human beings, whereas Rousseau (2003) conceptualizes it as the provision of essential life preparation lacking in childhood yet indispensable in adulthood. In practice, embedding these values requires responsive pedagogical strategies, such as differentiated instruction (Manobi et al., 2024), contextual teaching and learning models to stimulate literacy (Putri et al., 2024), and culturally empathetic multicultural pedagogy at the university level (Gultom, 2025b).

These theoretical ideals encounter complex realities across rural Indonesia, including in Kampung Ciburial. Residents of Kampung Ciburial generally recognize that education yields long-term benefits for their children's futures. In practice, however, structural barriers prevent education from becoming a primary household priority. Financial limitations, the expectation for children to supplement household income, and low intrinsic motivation to pursue tertiary

degrees remain pervasive challenges. This dynamic underscores a persistent tension between normative educational awareness and lived socioeconomic realities.

Accordingly, investigating community perceptions of the importance of education in Kampung Ciburial is essential to understanding how rural populations navigate educational aspirations amid socioeconomic constraints. This study seeks to elucidate local perspectives on education and identify the key determinants affecting educational continuity, thereby offering actionable insights for policymakers and educators aiming to strengthen rural educational participation.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to examine the perspectives of Kampung Ciburial residents regarding the significance of education within their social milieu. A qualitative approach was selected to facilitate an in-depth exploration of community viewpoints, lived experiences, and social realities derived directly from empirical field data. The research was conducted in Kampung Ciburial, targeting local mothers as key informants. Mothers were purposively selected because they frequently gather and interact within daily community networks, positioning them as knowledgeable observers of local educational dynamics and household decision-making. Primary data were collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to capture collective perceptions of education, determinants of educational sustainability, and the socioeconomic factors prompting youths to enter the workforce rather than pursue tertiary studies. Direct field observations and archival documentation were utilized as supplementary data sources to contextualize physical and social conditions. The research procedure progressed systematically through four stages: preparation, FGD execution, field observation and documentation, and data processing. Collected data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive techniques comprising data reduction (filtering and focusing on salient themes), data display (organizing findings into structured narratives and matrices), and conclusion drawing to generate valid interpretations aligned with the research objectives.

Results and Discussion

Results

Data obtained from interviews and FGDs with Kampung Ciburial residents indicate a predominantly positive attitude toward the value of education. Residents broadly perceive education as a viable pathway to securing a better standard of living, recognizing its role in expanding knowledge, technical skills, and employability. As one participant noted, *"Education is important so that children can secure better jobs and build a better life in the future."* Nevertheless, in everyday reality, household financial constraints remain the decisive determinant governing transitions to higher education. The findings reveal that the majority of youths in Kampung Ciburial opt to enter the workforce immediately after graduating from senior high school (SMA) or vocational high school (SMK) rather than enrolling in universities. Informants highlighted that substantial tuition fees and ancillary academic expenses pose severe financial burdens for local families. Competing daily subsistence needs compel households to prioritize immediate income generation over long-term academic investments. Participants explained that *"children prefer to work so they can help support the family economy and earn their own income."*

Beyond economic constraints, the immediate social environment heavily shapes educational aspirations. Because very few individuals within the neighborhood have attained tertiary degrees, entering the labor market immediately after secondary schooling has become normalized as the most pragmatic and socially expected trajectory. Informants specifically observed that *"vocational high school (SMK) students tend to be far more interested in working immediately after completing their industrial fieldwork placements (PKL)."* Furthermore, occupational structures in Kampung Ciburial reinforce this pragmatic mindset. The majority of residents are employed as construction laborers, farmers, and informal sector workers whose earnings are irregular. Consequently, families perceive immediate employment as a tangible relief to household finances compared to higher education, which demands sustained capital outlay.

Despite these obstacles, parents harbor strong aspirations for their children's upward mobility. Informants emphasized that parents remain wholly supportive of higher education whenever financial circumstances permit. To reconcile financial limitations with educational aspirations, several families encourage hybrid alternatives, such as working part-time while pursuing university degrees, enabling youths to self-finance their studies without overburdening household budgets. Additionally, participants noted noticeable environmental transformations in Kampung Ciburial. Residents reported rising ambient temperatures compared to previous years, attributing this microclimatic shift to rapid infrastructure development and expanding tourism activities in surrounding areas, factors that subtly reshape local livelihoods and community priorities.

Field documentation illustrates the socio-geographical context of Kampung Ciburial. Figure 1 depicts the residential environment of Kampung Ciburial, reflecting the close-knit social setting in which community perceptions are formed. Figure 2 showcases the surrounding agricultural and hilly topography, highlighting the rural agrarian characteristics that underpin the local economy.

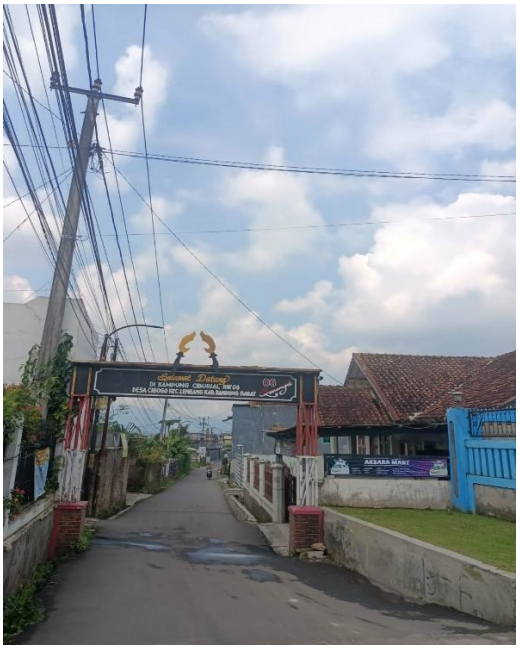

***Figure 1**: Residential environment of Kampung Ciburial*



***Figure 2.** Geographical landscape of Kampung Ciburial*

Table 1. *Summary of Interview Findings on Community Perceptions of Education in Kampung Ciburial*

Core Theme	Empirical Findings
Perceived Importance of Education	Residents view education as essential for enabling children to secure stable employment and achieve a higher quality of life.
Economic Constraints	Tertiary tuition fees and living costs represent major financial barriers that deter families from supporting higher education.
Preference for Employment	Most SMA/SMK graduates choose immediate employment to supplement household income and achieve financial independence.
Social Environment Influence	Prevailing community norms and limited local role models in higher education encourage youths to prioritize work over university study.
Community Livelihoods	Residents predominantly work as construction laborers, farmers, and informal workers, resulting in fluctuating household incomes.
Parental Aspirations	Despite economic hardships, parents strongly hope their children can attain higher education to secure a more prosperous future.

Discussion

The empirical findings demonstrate that Kampung Ciburial residents hold favorable normative attitudes toward education, viewing it as an instrument for socioeconomic advancement. This mindset aligns with Abraham Maslow's (1954) humanistic theory of motivation, which posits that individuals possess an innate drive toward self-actualization and personal growth. Within this theoretical framework, education serves as a vital mechanism for fulfilling esteem and self-actualization needs by expanding cognitive capacities and socioeconomic opportunities. However, Maslow's hierarchy also contextualizes why physiological and safety needs. It manifested here as daily household subsistence, take precedence when families face acute economic precarity. Moreover, educational perceptions in Kampung Ciburial are deeply embedded in local social experiences. While education is idealized as a pathway out of poverty, material constraints frequently prevent families from covering schooling expenses, compelling youths to contribute to household labor. These findings corroborate Dere et al. (2026), who established that household economic limitations directly restrict educational access and continuity in rural communities, often relegating higher education to a secondary priority.

At the same time, subtle shifts in community consciousness are emerging. Residents no longer view early workforce entry as the sole viable life path; rather, there is growing recognition that higher academic credentials yield superior long-term career prospects. This evolving outlook reflects the broader influence of modernization and expanding social awareness. These dynamics parallel the findings of Harahap and Gautama (2025), who demonstrated that education plays a catalytic role in fostering economic self-reliance and enhancing human capital in rural communities. Ultimately, fostering sustainable educational participation requires holistic support systems extending from early schooling through higher education. Prior research underscores that foundational character formation, social care, and student discipline cultivated at the primary and secondary levels—through teacher guidance, parental involvement, local wisdom, and structured civic education, establish the behavioral bedrock for lifelong learning (Janah et al., 2024; Lessnusa et al., 2024; Lestari et al., 2025; Rafifah et al., 2024; Tasane et al., 2024). Furthermore, equipping rural students with contemporary competencies such as digital literacy (Sholeha et al., 2024) and embedding education within shared civic and

cultural values (Gultom & Mari, 2025) are essential to bridging the rural-urban educational divide. As Nurrahman and Kharunisa (2024) emphasize, robust social support from families and communities significantly enhances students' achievement motivation. Therefore, while Kampung Ciburial residents exhibit strong latent aspirations for education, realizing these goals necessitates concerted structural support from families, community networks, and government institutions.

Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the urgent need for coordinated interventions to strengthen community awareness and educational sustainability in Kampung Ciburial through synergistic collaboration among families, local communities, educational institutions, and government bodies. Household economic constraints remain the primary barrier impeding educational continuity, prompting many youths to enter the labor market prematurely rather than pursue tertiary education. Addressing this challenge requires targeted policy measures, including community outreach programs emphasizing the long-term returns of higher education, academic motivation initiatives, and expanded financial aid mechanisms such as scholarships and tuition subsidies for low-income families. Concurrently, cultivating a supportive local culture is indispensable for encouraging youths to persist in their academic pursuits. These conclusions align with Nurrahman and Kharunisa (2024) and Tasane et al. (2024), who highlight that sustained social and parental support is pivotal in nurturing student discipline and achievement motivation. Furthermore, as Dere et al. (2026) and Harahap and Gautama (2025) affirm, alleviating socioeconomic barriers while strengthening community-level educational engagement is critical to fostering rural economic independence. Through sustained multi-stakeholder collaboration, rural communities like Kampung Ciburial can overcome structural obstacles, elevate educational attainment, and empower future generations with broader socioeconomic opportunities.

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Authors' Note

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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