

The Socioeconomic Resilience of Laid-Off Mothers and Its Impact on the Academic Performance of Junior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the socioeconomic conditions of Indonesian society, including a massive wave of layoffs affecting more than 1.5 million workers, the majority of whom were women and housewives. This study aims to examine the socioeconomic resilience of parents, particularly mothers affected by layoffs, and its impact on the academic achievement of junior high school students during distance learning. The research was conducted in the Pulogadung industrial area, East Jakarta, using a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation from a number of purposively selected informants. The findings indicate that the socioeconomic resilience of mothers plays a crucial role in maintaining family psychosocial stability, including the ability to support children's learning and provide for basic educational needs. This resilience serves as a buffer against economic pressures and helps sustain the continuity of children's learning during a crisis. The study underscores the importance of policy support that empowers women affected by layoffs to minimize the negative impact on children's education.

Keywords: Resilience; Social; Economic; Layoffs; Academic Achievement

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, which struck Indonesia in early 2020, has caused profound multidimensional impacts, especially in the economic and educational sectors. In response to this crisis, the government established the COVID-19 Handling and National Economic Recovery Committee based on the mandate of Law No. 2 of 2020. This regulation ratified Government Regulation in Lieu of Law No. 1 of 2020 as the legal basis for managing the pandemic and maintaining the stability of the financial system and national economic resilience.

However, these mitigation efforts were not fully effective in curbing the extensive impacts on society, particularly in industrial areas and among vulnerable communities. Data from the Ministry of Finance, cited by CNN Indonesia, showed that Indonesia's economic growth experienced a sharp contraction, with the first quarter of 2020 dropping to 2.97% from 4.9% in the previous quarter. Moreover, the implementation of Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) in various regions during the second quarter of 2020 led to an even deeper economic decline. In the employment sector, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a massive wave of layoffs. Hanoatubun (2020) reported that more than 1.5 million workers were laid off, with 90% furloughed and 10% permanently losing their jobs. Among them, 1.24 million

were formal workers and 265,000 were informal workers, many of whom were women and housewives. According to data from the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower, as of January 2021, at least 623,407 female workers had been directly affected by layoffs due to the pandemic (Puspitorini et al., 2020).

The high number of layoffs among housewives has had widespread social implications, particularly concerning children's education. With distance learning implemented from 2020 through most of 2022, parents faced significantly increased responsibilities (Yuniti, 2020). They were expected not only to provide technological devices and internet access but also to actively support their children's learning at home. Under strained economic conditions due to job loss, fulfilling children's educational needs became a considerable challenge, especially for families in labor-intensive industries and the informal sector (Anugrahana, 2020).

Atsani (2020) noted that in online learning situations, not all parents could afford gadgets, internet data, or stable network access. This issue occurred not only in remote areas but also in major cities like Jakarta, including the Pulogadung industrial area. In this area, many laid-off mothers had to struggle to maintain household economic stability while continuing to assist their children's home-based learning. This situation was worsened by the fact that, as of mid-2022, most industries were still operating at reduced capacity. The textile and textile product sector, for instance, saw a utilization drop of up to 90%, with 2.1 million workers furloughed (Irawan & Ministry of Industry, 2020). Meanwhile, the national unemployment rate rose sharply. According to Statistics Indonesia (BPS), the open unemployment rate in February 2022 increased to 5.83%, with more than 8.4 million unemployed individuals. The number of people living in poverty also rose, reaching 26.5 million as of March 2022.

In this context, the present study aims to assess the impact of the socioeconomic resilience of mothers affected by layoffs on the academic outcomes of junior high school students during distance learning. The research, conducted in the Pulogadung industrial area of East Jakarta, focuses on mothers who lost their jobs and have children enrolled in junior high school. This study is crucial to provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges faced by families affected by the pandemic, particularly regarding the fulfillment of children's educational needs and the influence of mothers' psychosocial conditions on their children's academic success.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study method, aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics and meaning behind the observed social phenomena. The case study method was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore real-life contexts comprehensively and holistically. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents, considering specific criteria and characteristics relevant to the research objectives. Data collection was carried out through three primary techniques:

1. In-depth interviews to explore the respondents' experiences, perceptions, and emotional responses to their circumstances.
2. Participant observation to understand the social context and interactions within the respondents' environment.
3. Questionnaires composed of both closed- and open-ended questions to measure the intensity of psychological pressure, forms of social support received, and changes in life patterns before and after being laid off. The questionnaires also served to collect quantitative data to support qualitative findings.

This case study approach follows the perspective of Yona (2006), who states that case studies are an effective research

method for addressing complex issues and understanding evolving social phenomena in society. This approach enables the researcher to uncover in detail the social dynamics, adaptation processes, and resilience strategies—particularly in the context of women who have been laid off and the impact on their roles in the family and their children's education.

Research Respondents

The respondents in this study were mothers who experienced termination of employment (layoffs) during the COVID-19 pandemic and were previously employed in the Pulogadung industrial area, Jakarta, Indonesia. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling, based on several criteria:

1. Had worked in the formal industrial sector and were laid off due to the pandemic,
2. Reside in the DKI Jakarta area or surrounding regions, particularly with continued access to the Pulogadung industrial zone, and
3. Have children enrolled in junior secondary school at the time of the study.

These criteria were established to allow a deeper exploration of the social and economic impacts of layoffs on family resilience, with a specific focus on parental support for children's education and its influence on academic achievement. The study also considered variations in respondents' socioeconomic backgrounds, such as marital status, number of dependents, and current employment status, to provide a more comprehensive picture.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study follows the Miles and Huberman (1994) model, consisting of three main stages:

1. Data reduction – the process of filtering, selecting, and simplifying raw data obtained from interviews, observations, and questionnaires;

2. Data display – organizing data into narrative forms, tables, or matrices to facilitate understanding of patterns and relationships between information;
3. Conclusion drawing and verification – interpreting the meaning of data and testing the accuracy and validity of the findings.

To ensure data validity, the study employs source triangulation techniques by comparing and cross-checking data from multiple information sources, such as interview results from various informants (mothers, teachers, and community leaders), supporting documents, and field observations. This triangulation strengthens the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings and helps avoid bias from relying on a single source.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mothers' Efforts After Layoffs to Support Their Children's Learning Needs

Based on in-depth interviews with 25 mothers who were laid off due to employment termination, it was found that they faced significant challenges in meeting their children's online learning needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the main obstacles was limited access to technological devices and internet connectivity, both of which are essential for digital-based learning systems.

Under such circumstances, access to computers/laptops, Android-based mobile phones, and stable internet or Wi-Fi connections became crucial but difficult to obtain. In an interview conducted on December 25, 2022, one informant, KM, shared that her child struggled to participate in online learning because they had to take turns using a phone and laptop with a sibling. Although the school provided a Chromebook device on loan, this did not fully solve the problem, as their household lacked sufficient Wi-Fi access, rendering the use of the device limited. To overcome these barriers, students and their families adopted various adaptive strategies, such as:

1. Utilizing the free internet data quota provided by the government,
2. Purchasing weekly internet data packages independently, despite having a very limited budget,
3. Visiting friends' or neighbors' houses with Wi-Fi access,
4. Even going to fast food restaurants solely to access free Wi-Fi networks.

These measures were seen as somewhat helpful in enabling children to complete school assignments, especially project-based tasks that required continuous internet access. However, limited devices meant that students had to share phones or laptops with other family members, including parents and siblings, which made the learning process less effective.

On the other hand, students also experienced psychological pressure. In an interview on December 29, 2022, another respondent, JN, explained that her child often felt bored, stressed, and emotionally overwhelmed from having to study at home for extended periods without direct interaction with peers. This situation even led the child to insist on visiting friends' homes, either to study together or simply to find entertainment and relief. However, not all such wishes could be fulfilled due to social restrictions and the closure of residential areas during the implementation of Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB). Overall, these findings indicate that the impact of layoffs on mothers was not only economic but also affected their ability to support their children's education during the crisis. The modest and constrained strategies they employed reflect both family resilience and the stark inequality in access to digital education in society.

Efforts by Mothers Affected by Layoffs in Assisting and Strengthening Their Children's Learning

In the context of online learning implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of parents—particularly mothers—became critically important,

especially for junior high school students who are still in a transitional developmental stage and require intensive guidance. However, not all parents possess adequate understanding of their responsibilities in accompanying their children during the distance learning process. Many mothers affected by layoffs reported feeling emotionally and psychologically burdened by the online learning policy, which seemed to add pressure amidst the already strained economic conditions of their families. In an interview with one respondent, Mrs. U, it was revealed that online learning posed unique challenges in monitoring and ensuring the child's engagement with schoolwork. She stated, "As parents, we don't know whether school assignments are done by our children themselves, by their friends, or simply copied from Google. We cannot monitor them due to our limited knowledge of technology."

The pandemic required parents to assume a significant portion of teachers' roles at home. Mothers, who previously served as supporters, were now expected to act as the primary facilitators in their children's education. However, parents' ability to fulfill this role varied widely. Most mothers affected by layoffs in the Pulogadung industrial area admitted to lacking an adequate educational background or access to the necessary technology to effectively assist their children's learning. In addition, limitations in digital literacy, psychological exhaustion from job loss, and financial pressure made it increasingly difficult for them to be fully involved in the learning process. Nevertheless, these mothers still made efforts to provide moral and emotional support, such as reminding their children of assignment deadlines, helping with school materials as much as they could, and motivating them to remain enthusiastic about learning from home.

This situation demonstrates that the pandemic has transformed the traditional role of parents in education into one that is more active and technical, though not all parents are prepared to face such a shift.

Despite these many constraints, the mothers affected by layoffs strived to fulfill the role of secondary educators for their children, showcasing resilience in the face of crisis. Overall, the efforts made by these mothers reflect a strong commitment to their children's educational future, despite limited resources and life pressures. This situation serves as a crucial reflection point for policymakers to provide more concrete support to vulnerable families in tackling the challenges of education in the digital era.

Psychological Impact Experienced by Mothers Affected by Layoffs in the Workplace

Based on the questionnaire distributed in 2022, it was recorded that 55% of respondents experienced significant psychological shock upon learning that they were laid off. Most of them admitted to feeling extremely surprised, unprepared, and struggling to accept the reality that the COVID-19 pandemic had forced them to lose the jobs that had long been their families' main source of income. This finding was further supported by in-depth interviews, which revealed that the mental state of respondents was severely shaken, filled with confusion, anxiety, and uncertainty about the future.

Many respondents confessed that they did not know the initial steps to take after suddenly losing their jobs, particularly in the midst of a crisis that impacted nearly all aspects of life. Although all respondents stated they had received Direct Cash Assistance from the Indonesian government through the Ministry of Finance amounting to IDR 300,000 per month, this aid was deemed insufficient to meet the basic needs of their families, especially under conditions where all family members were forced to stay home without a steady income. Household needs—including children's education, daily logistics, and health—became an increasingly heavy burden for the mothers who had become the primary breadwinners after being laid off.

One respondent, Mrs. SR, who completed the online questionnaire via Google Form, expressed sentiments shared by many other laid-off mothers. She noted that the layoff decision impacted not only her economic stability but also severely affected her emotional and mental well-being. Upon receiving the layoff decision, the mothers could not immediately accept the situation calmly. It took at least four months for most of them to begin recovering and adapting to the new reality. During this period, they gradually started finding ways to meet household needs, especially their children's educational needs. The questionnaire data also indicated that 25% of respondents experienced psychological symptoms such as shortness of breath and loss of appetite during the first four months after being laid off. After passing through this period of hardship, the mothers began efforts to recover both their mental state and their family's economic situation. They realized that enduring the crisis was a necessary choice for the sake of their children's future, particularly concerning the continuity of education.

Accepting the reality of being laid off was not easy. When faced with this situation, the mothers reported a heightened awareness that various difficulties—especially economic ones—would befall their families. In an interview on December 29, 2023, Mrs. H stated, "Life has to go on. The children, my husband, and the whole family need care. I never imagined this pandemic would shake the world to this extent. I tried to talk to myself and began searching for solutions amid a very difficult situation during the first six months of the pandemic." After four months, most respondents began to think more positively and calmly accept the situation. They began formulating new goals as a form of adaptation in an uncertain environment.

According to the questionnaire, 26% of respondents strongly agreed and 24% agreed that they had begun to accept reality and set new life goals. In an interview on January 6, 2023, Mrs. R, a single mother

living in a big city, admitted to experiencing severe emotional stress. She often cried, got angry for no reason, and avoided communication after being laid off. She felt the decision was unfair, considering she was the sole breadwinner. However, after three months, Mrs. R realized that her child in the village still needed educational support. Gradually, she rebuilt her spirit and adopted a positive mindset to strengthen her resilience. She noted that keeping a positive mindset was highly beneficial in building mental immunity during the pandemic. Data also showed that 16% of respondents strongly agreed and 36% agreed that they successfully developed personal resilience after passing the three-month period following the layoff.

Mothers' Efforts to Restore Mental Health After Termination of Employment

The termination of employment due to the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant psychological impact on many individuals, including mothers who serve as the backbone of their families. Based on questionnaire results, 24% of respondents strongly agreed and 48% agreed that they were confident in their ability to recover and rediscover their motivation and enthusiasm for being productive. They expressed optimism about being able to actualize themselves by exploring new potentials despite the limitations of the situation. However, 28% of respondents admitted they were not confident in their ability to recover from the intense psychological pressure caused by job loss.

In an in-depth interview conducted on January 25, 2023, Mrs. G expressed her belief that she would find a job better than the one she had before. She hoped that this new employment would offer a more sufficient income to meet her family's needs, especially her children's educational expenses. Another respondent, Mrs. L, affirmed a similar determination, although she acknowledged the challenges—particularly having to compete with younger, more agile graduates.

Nevertheless, her fighting spirit remained unwavering. This statement is supported by questionnaire data, which shows that 40% of respondents strongly agreed and 44% agreed that they remained optimistic about securing a new job. Only 16% expressed doubt. To restore their mental condition, these mothers employed various coping strategies that demonstrated their adaptive resilience in the face of crisis:

1. Spiritual Coping

Many respondents chose to draw closer to God as a positive means of coping with psychological stress. Activities such as praying, attending online religious study sessions, and reading holy scriptures became spiritual routines that fostered inner peace and hope. As shared by Mrs. S, religious practices became her main source of strength in facing the economic uncertainty following her job loss.

2. Social Coping

Social support from extended family, neighbors, and local communities played a critical role in the recovery process. These mothers actively engaged through social gatherings, community groups, and social media to share stories and seek collective solutions. Some even formed small home-based business groups as a form of solidarity and economic empowerment.

3. Productive and Economic Coping

Several mothers began establishing home-based small businesses, such as selling food, clothing, or becoming online resellers. For instance, Mrs. R now produces traditional snacks for sale in her neighborhood. These activities not only supported their family economy but also brought new meaning to their daily lives and enhanced their self-confidence.

4. Cognitive and Emotional Coping

The mothers also made efforts to reframe their mindset about the difficult situation. By viewing job loss as an opportunity for growth, they started attending free online

training, reading self-development books, and creating new plans for the future. This became an essential part of building psychological and emotional resilience.

Overall, although job loss presented a severe blow to the lives of these mothers, they demonstrated resilience through a combination of spiritual, social, productive, and emotional coping strategies. Their journey toward recovery has not been easy, but driven by love for their families and hope for a better future, they gradually rose up and continued to play their central role as key figures in their households.

CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that the socio-economic resilience of parents—particularly mothers who became victims of termination due to the COVID-19 pandemic—plays a vital role in maintaining family stability, including the continuity of their children's education at the junior high school level. Despite experiencing psychological distress and significant economic hardship, most mothers showed an ability to recover through various coping strategies, such as spiritual reinforcement, building social networks, initiating home-based productive enterprises, and rebuilding confidence and hope for the future.

This resilience not only aided in the mental and economic recovery of their families but also had a direct impact on students' academic performance. With emotional support and a strong fighting spirit from their parents, children were able to continue learning with adequate motivation and encouragement, even under constrained circumstances. Although not all parents possessed the same level of resilience, the findings show that socio-economic resilience acts as a protective factor that can minimize the negative impact of job loss on children's education. Therefore, parental socio-economic resilience is a crucial aspect in ensuring educational continuity post-household economic crisis and deserves serious attention from all parties, including government, schools, and society at large.

Declaration by Authors

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