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Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Children's Education in Indonesia and Cambodia: A Cross-Cultural Approach

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This study aims to explore and compare parental perceptions and attitudes towards children's education in Indonesia and Cambodia, focusing on how cultural, economic, and social factors influence their views. Data analysis concentrated on identifying the motivations, expectations, and barriers faced by parents regarding their children's education. The findings reveal that in Indonesia, parents view education as a key tool for enhancing social and economic status. They are willing to make significant investments in their children's education and emphasize high academic achievement as a pathway to future success. In contrast, in Cambodia, education is often seen as a moral obligation and a means of preserving cultural values. Many parents face challenges such as limited access and quality of education and pressing economic needs, which impede their children's continuation in higher levels of education. Despite an awareness of the importance of education, many children in Cambodia do not progress beyond basic education due to these barriers. The study concludes that effective education policies must account for the cultural and social contexts of each country. Implementing strategies that are sensitive to local needs and specific challenges is crucial for improving access to and the quality of education in both countries.

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1. Introduction

Child education is a crucial component in the development of individuals and society, and plays an important role in influencing the social and economic progress of a country. However, parents' perceptions and attitudes towards children's education can vary greatly based on each country's cultural, economic and social context. In Indonesia and Cambodia, two countries with different cultural and economic backgrounds, views on children's education show significant differences.

In Indonesia, education is often seen as a primary means of achieving social and economic mobility. Indonesians generally view education as an important investment that can bring positive changes to their children's lives, including better career opportunities and improved quality of life.⁴ In contrast, in Cambodia, education is often seen as a moral obligation and a means of preserving cultural values, despite many families facing constraints such as limited accessibility and pressing economic needs.

Formulation of the problem

How do parents' perceptions and attitudes towards children's education differ between Indonesia and Cambodia?

What factors influence their views on the importance of education?

How do the social and economic contexts in each country influence their decisions regarding children's education?

The theories used in this study include social and cultural theories that emphasize how factors such as cultural norms and economic conditions influence parents' attitudes and decisions towards children's education. This study aims to provide deeper insights into the differences in educational perspectives in the two countries and to identify relevant policy implications.

The significant objective of this study is to understand how differences in cultural and social contexts influence parents' perceptions and attitudes towards education in Indonesia and Cambodia, and to provide policy recommendations that

can improve access to and quality of education in both countries.

Education is one of the fundamental aspects in human development and the progress of a nation. In many parts of the world, education is considered a key tool for improving the quality of life, achieving social mobility, and creating a knowledgeable society. Indonesia and Cambodia, two countries in Southeast Asia with diverse cultural and historical backgrounds, have unique perceptions and attitudes towards children's education.

In Indonesia, education is often seen as the main path to success and social prestige, driven by high family and community values for academic success. On the other hand, Cambodia, still recovering from historical trauma and economic challenges, sees education as an opportunity to improve lives and prevent intergenerational poverty.

However, both countries face significant challenges in ensuring equitable access and quality of education for all children. Differences in social, economic, AND geographical conditions create gaps that affect experiences and perceptions of education. Therefore, this study aims to explore and compare perceptions and attitudes towards children's education in Indonesia and Cambodia, and identify factors that influence these views. By understanding these dynamics, it is hoped that it can provide deeper insight into the challenges and opportunities in improving the education systems in both countries.

2. Method

This study uses Qualitative Research Method with Literature study. The focus of the research study is to discuss perceptions and attitudes towards children's education in Indonesia and Cambodia. Data sources and research analysis come from credible scientific literature, including articles, books, theses and interviews.

3. Result and Discussion

Indonesia is the largest archipelagic country in the world with a population of over 270 million. Education in Indonesia is regulated by the Ministry of Education

and Culture and the Ministry of Religious Affairs for religious-based schools. Since independence, Indonesia has sought to improve access and quality of education, including through a 12-year compulsory education program. However, challenges such as disparities between urban and rural areas, lack of resources, and variability in the quality of education still exist.

Cambodia, with a population of around 16 million, has a history of education disrupted by conflict, particularly during the Khmer Rouge regime (1975–1979), which resulted in massive destruction of the education system. Since then, Cambodia has been working to rebuild its education system, with a focus on improving access and quality. However, many challenges remain, including widespread poverty, lack of infrastructure, and a shortage of qualified teaching staff.

Perceptions and Attitudes of Children's Education in Indonesia

Parental Perception of Education in Indonesia, parents generally view education as the main tool for achieving social and economic mobility. Interview results show that education is seen as a long-term investment that provides financial benefits and higher social status for their children. 5 Parents often go to great lengths to ensure that their children receive a good education, from primary to tertiary education. Some factors underlying this view include:

Economic and Social Expectations: Many parents believe that a good education will open up better career opportunities and improve the quality of life for their families.

The Importance of Education for Social Mobility

Social mobility refers to the movement of individuals or families in the social and economic hierarchy. Education is one of the main factors that enables social mobility. In the Indonesian context, education is seen as a tool to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty and as a path to a more prosperous life.

The Role of Parents in Education

In Indonesia, the role of parents in children's education is very significant.

They are not only responsible for ensuring that their children get access to education, but also support them financially and emotionally in the learning process. Parents in Indonesia are generally willing to sacrifice other needs to ensure that their children get a good education. In fact, it is not uncommon for parents to try hard to find high-quality schools, even though the costs are quite expensive.

Challenges in Education in Indonesia

Despite optimism about the role of education in improving economic welfare, Indonesia still faces several significant challenges in the education sector. Access to quality education remains a major problem, especially in remote areas. Lack of infrastructure, adequate teaching staff, and limited educational resources often hamper the teaching and learning process in various regions in Indonesia.

In addition, the government is also trying to improve the quality of education by developing a curriculum 9 that is more relevant to the needs of the job market, as well as training and improvement – teacher capacity. This policy is expected to produce graduates who not only have academic knowledge, but also practical skills needed in the world of work.

Academic Pressure in Indonesia

In Indonesia, academic pressure on children is often a major issue faced by many families. This pressure usually comes from parents' high expectations of their children's academic achievement. Parents in Indonesia generally highly value education as a path to future success. Therefore, they tend to demand their children to achieve high academic achievement, with the aim that the children can enter the best schools and, ultimately, have a successful career.

Solutions and Approaches to Reduce Stress

To reduce the negative impact of academic pressure, it is important for parents, educators, and society to adopt a more balanced approach to education. Parents can play a role by providing greater emotional support to their children and emphasizing the importance of balancing education and happiness. They should also understand that every child learns at a different pace, and it is important to value the learning process, not just the end result.

Parents' Perceptions of Education in Cambodia

In Cambodia, Views on education are different compared to Indonesia. Education is often seen as a moral obligation and a means to preserve cultural values, although parents face various economic and accessibility challenges.

Moral and Cultural Obligation: Education in Cambodia is often seen as a moral responsibility to preserve cultural values and traditions. Many parents feel it is important to teach their children about cultural values through education, despite limited resources.

Moral and Cultural Obligations in Education in Cambodia

Education in Cambodia is not only seen as an instrument for acquiring knowledge and skills, but also as a moral obligation¹³ to preserve and pass on cultural values and traditions to the younger generation. In the context of Cambodian society, education is often seen as a responsibility that goes beyond academics, with parents feeling obligated to instill moral and cultural values through the educational process.

For parents in Cambodia, children's education is very important, even though they are constrained by economic problems, they continue to fight for their children to get to college. Because for them, education is an obligation and very important.

Education as a Means of Cultural Preservation

In Cambodia, education has long been considered a key tool for preserving Parents there feel that education is the most effective means of instilling cultural values and traditions in their children. This moral and cultural education is not only taught formally in schools, but also through non-formal education that often takes place within the family and community. This shows the importance of education as an instrument in maintaining cultural continuity amidst the social changes taking place in Cambodia.

Challenges in Cultural Preservation Through Education

However, although education is seen as a moral obligation to preserve culture, there are many challenges in its implementation. One of the main challenges is limited resources. Many schools in Cambodia lack basic facilities such as books, stationery, and adequate infrastructure. This results in less than optimal

quality of education, especially in remote rural areas. The lack of trained teachers is also a significant problem, as teachers play a vital role in conveying cultural values and traditions to students.

Efforts to Overcome Challenges

To address these challenges, the government and various organizations in Cambodia have made efforts to improve the quality of education with a focus on cultural preservation. Training programs for teachers have been enhanced to ensure that they are able to effectively teach cultural values to students. In addition, school curricula have been revised to include more elements of Cambodian culture and traditions.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) ¹⁵ also play an important role in supporting cultural education in Cambodia. They-

working with local communities to develop educational programs that emphasize the importance of cultural preservation. Some NGOs have even established cultural schools that teach traditional arts, music, dance, and other skills that are part of Cambodia's cultural heritage.

Education in Cambodia plays a very important role in preserving cultural values and traditions. Despite the many challenges faced, including limited resources and the influence of globalization, efforts are being made to ensure that education remains an effective tool for preserving and passing on cultural heritage to future generations. Through collaboration between the government, teachers, communities, and non-governmental organizations, these challenges can be overcome, so that Cambodian cultural values can continue to live and thrive in the future.

Economic Factors as the Main Barrier

One of the main reasons why the economy is such a big obstacle is because many families in Cambodia live below the poverty line. According to data from the World Bank, about 30% of Cambodians live on less than \$2.50 a day. In such an economic climate, education is often not a top priority. Parents prefer to allocate limited resources to daily needs such as food, housing, and health.

In addition, additional costs such as uniforms, books and transportation also become barriers for many families to send their children to school. According to

a report by UNESCO 16 , although primary schools in Cambodia are free, there are still other costs that are a burden for poor families, especially in rural areas.

Impact on Children's Education

When economic constraints become a barrier, children from poor families often have to drop out of school or not attend school at all. This is especially true for children in rural areas, where opportunities for a decent education are limited. They are often expected to work to help supplement the family income. According to a study conducted by UNICEF 16 in 2020, more than 19% of children in Cambodia involved in child labor. This reduces their time and opportunities to study and attend formal education.

In addition, drop-out rates are also quite high in Cambodia, especially among girls. Girls are often expected to help with household chores or marry at a young age, further exacerbating the gender gap in education. Data from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) 17 shows that in 2021, girls' participation rates in secondary education were still far below those of boys.

Government and NGO Intervention

The Cambodian government has tried to address this issue through various policies and programs. One of these is a scholarship program for children from poor families, designed to help ease their economic burden. In addition, there are also programs from NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) 19 that work with the government to provide free or subsidized education facilities in areas that need education facilities the most. However, while these efforts are important, the biggest challenge is ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of these programs.

Quality of Education and Infrastructure in Cambodia: An Analysis

The quality of education in Cambodia has been a complex and multi-layered issue, especially in the context of the disparity between urban and rural areas. Although the Cambodian government has made efforts to improve access to education, significant gaps remain in educational facilities and teacher quality. These factors have affected student learning outcomes across regions, creating stark disparities between urban and rural areas.

Education Infrastructure Gap

Cambodia's educational infrastructure, especially in rural areas, is often inadequate. Rural schools often lack basic facilities such as proper buildings, adequate classrooms, and sanitation facilities. Lack of access to electricity and clean water are also challenges. On the other hand, schools in urban areas usually have better facilities, including access to more advanced educational technologies, such as computers and the internet.

This disparity causes significant differences in the quality of education between students in urban and rural areas. In rural areas, limited infrastructure makes the learning process less effective, which ultimately affects students' ability to compete at the national and international levels.

Teacher Quality and Training

One of the main problems in education in Cambodia is the quality of teachers, especially in rural areas. Many 20 teachers in rural areas do not have adequate qualifications or sufficient training. They often have to teach several subjects at once without in-depth expertise in any particular area. In addition, low wages and inadequate working conditions lead to low motivation among teachers to improve the quality of their teaching.

The Cambodian government has attempted to improve teacher quality through various training programs. However, these programs often do not reach teachers in rural areas due to logistical and access issues. As a result, the quality of education in rural areas remains low, and the gap between urban and rural areas widens.

Impact on Student Learning Outcomes

Infrastructure gaps and teacher quality have a direct impact on student learning outcomes. Research shows that students in rural areas have lower graduation rates compared to students in urban areas. In addition, students in rural areas tend to have lower literacy and numeracy skills, reflecting the quality of education they receive.

This inequality is also reflected in access to higher education. Students from rural areas are less likely to continue to higher education due to limited access and adequate educational support during primary and secondary education. This exacerbates the cycle of poverty in rural areas, as education is a key factor in social mobility.

Government Efforts and Challenges Faced

The Cambodian government has adopted several policies to reduce the education gap, including a program to build 25 new schools in rural areas and increase the budget for education. However, the implementation of these policies is often hampered by corruption, lack of coordination, and resource constraints.

In addition, geographical challenges and lack of adequate transportation infrastructure make access to schools in rural areas difficult. While progress has been made, much remains to be done to ensure that every child in Cambodia, both in urban and rural areas, has equal access to quality education.

The quality of education in Cambodia is greatly affected by the differences in infrastructure and teacher quality between urban and rural areas. Despite government efforts to address this issue, the challenges remain enormous.

Comparison of Education Perceptions in Indonesia and Cambodia

Parents' perceptions of education in Indonesia and Cambodia show significant differences influenced by the cultural and social context of each country. In Indonesia, education is seen as a means to improve social and economic status, whereas in Cambodia, education is often seen as a moral obligation and preservation of cultural values.

Economic and Social Factors: In Indonesia, despite significant investment in education, there are disparities in access to and quality of education, particularly between urban and rural areas. In Cambodia, significant economic barriers reduce children's educational opportunities, particularly in rural areas. 26

Cultural Context: In Indonesia, social and cultural values support investment in education as a means to achieve social progress. In contrast, in Cambodia, strong cultural values related to education as a moral responsibility influence how parents prioritize education despite economic constraints.

In the past five years, perceptions of the cultural context of education in Indonesia have emphasized the importance of formal education as a pathway to social and economic mobility. Education is seen as a moral and social obligation for parents, with a focus on academic achievement and achievement as indicators of success. Meanwhile, in Cambodia, although education is increasingly valued,

especially in urban areas, economic and geographic barriers often hinder access. The culture of education in Cambodia is also influenced by cultural traditions and practices, where involvement in family economic activities is sometimes prioritized over formal education, especially in rural areas.

Implications for Education Policy

Policies that are more inclusive and responsive to local needs and specific challenges of each country can help improve the effectiveness of education systems and ensure that all children have an equal opportunity to receive a quality education.

Education policies in Indonesia and Cambodia have significant implications for the quality of education and its accessibility. In Indonesia, policies such as the 12-Year Compulsory Education Program and the Smart Indonesia Program aim to increase school participation and reduce dropout rates. These policies provide financial support to students from low-income families. However, challenges in implementation include the gap in education quality between urban and rural areas and limited infrastructure in some remote areas.

In Cambodia, education policies focused on increasing access to primary and secondary education also seek to reduce dropout rates, especially in rural areas. The Role of Government and Non-Governmental Organizations In both countries, the role of government and non-governmental organizations is critical in addressing the challenges faced by families in supporting children's education. Programs such as the Smart Indonesia Program and international initiatives in Cambodia play a key role in improving access and quality of education.

Strategies to Improve Access and Quality of Education: To address the challenges identified in this study, it is important to develop strategies that take into account the contextual differences in each country. In Indonesia, the focus should be on reducing educational inequality, while in Cambodia, strategies should include financial support and improvements in educational infrastructure. This study provides valuable insights into the differences in parents' perceptions and attitudes towards children's education in Indonesia and Cambodia. Using a qualitative approach

involving in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, the research findings

reveal how strong the influence of cultural, economic and social factors is in shaping parents' views on education. their children.

4. Conclusion

In Indonesia, education is seen as a key means to achieving better social and economic mobility. Parents in Indonesia demonstrate a high level of commitment to their children's education, with many willing to make significant investments in education to achieve the desired outcomes. However, despite significant efforts to improve the quality of education, disparities in access and quality between urban and rural areas remain a significant challenge.

In contrast, in Cambodia, education is often viewed as a moral obligation and a means of preserving cultural values, with many families facing serious economic constraints. Research findings suggest that while many parents recognize the importance of education, financial constraints and accessibility are major barriers that limit their children's educational opportunities. These barriers indicate the need for additional support to improve the quality of education and improve infrastructure in less developed areas.

In Cambodia, attention should be directed to solving the economic problems that affect access to education, as well as improving the quality of education in rural areas. Support from governments and non-governmental organizations is essential to overcome these barriers. Successful initiatives, such as scholarship programs and the construction of educational facilities, should be expanded and strengthened to achieve better results.

Moving forward, further research is needed to explore how other factors, such as policy changes or specific interventions, may influence parental perceptions and children's educational outcomes across contexts. This study provides a solid basis for developing better policies and implementation strategies that can improve the education systems in Indonesia and Cambodia as a whole.

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