

# Disparities in Access to Education in Developing Countries: Determinants, Impacts, and Solution Strategies

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## ABSTRACT

Disparities in access to education in developing countries remain a significant challenge that impacts economic growth and social welfare. The main factors affecting this disparity include economic conditions, gender disparity, limited educational infrastructure, and inequitable policies. This study uses a literature review approach to analyze the causes and impacts of education disparities and identify strategies that can be implemented to improve equitable access to education. The results show that the education gap hinders social mobility, exacerbates economic disparities and lowers the quality of human resources. Proposed solutions include increased investment in education infrastructure, affirmative policies for marginalized groups, and the use of technology to reach remote areas. Scholarship support and teacher training are strategic steps to improve the quality of education. Developing countries can reduce educational inequalities and create more equitable learning opportunities for all individuals by implementing comprehensive and inclusive strategies.

## INTRODUCTION

Education is a major factor in improving the quality of human resources and socio-economic development of a country. Access to quality education enables individuals to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to improve their lives and contribute to the overall progress of community. Countries with strong education systems tend to have higher levels of prosperity and development. There are still significant disparities in access to education in some developing countries, both in terms of the quality of teaching, the availability of education infrastructure and learning opportunities for disadvantaged groups. Disparities in education can hinder economic growth and exacerbate the cycle of poverty in community.

Disparities in access to education in developing countries can be seen in several key indicators. There are still many children in the world out of school, with the majority coming from developing countries. Economic factors are a major barrier, with low-income families often unable to afford their children's education. Gender disparity also remains a challenge, with girls in some developing countries less likely to complete primary education than boys due to social and cultural factors (Buchmann & Hannum, 2016).

Geographical factors also contribute to educational disparities. Many rural and remote areas in developing countries still face limited school infrastructure, a shortage of qualified teaching staff and limited access to teaching materials and educational technology (Glewwe & Muralidharan, 2016). This results in children living in remote areas having limited access to the same education as those living in urban areas. It is important to conduct an in-depth analysis of the factors causing this education disparity, design, and implement policies that can address this geographical problem to ensure that all children have equal opportunities to receive a quality education.

There are still various problems that hinder the achievement of educational equality despite efforts to improve access to education in developing countries. One of the most fundamental problems is the limited budget allocated to the education sector in many developing countries (Suresh & Kumaravelu, 2017). Many developing countries find it difficult to provide adequate funding for the education sector, which results in poor quality schools, low teacher salaries and lack of learning facilities. This budget constraint often prevents the government from implementing effective and sustainable education policies.

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Socio-economic disparity is also a dominant factor in the gap in access to education. Children from poor families are less likely to complete primary education than those from better-off families. This is because the high cost of education, lack of financial support and the need to help the family economy prevent children from poor families from completing their education (Glewwe & Muralidharan, 2016).

Disparities in access to education technology also exacerbate differences in the quality of education. Laufer et al. (2021) state that limited access to the internet and technological devices in rural areas leads to disparities in digital learning, especially in the post-pandemic COVID-19 era. Students in urban areas have more opportunities to access online learning resources compared to students in remote areas, further widening the disparity in academic achievement.

Cultural and gender factors also play a role in exacerbating disparities in access to education in developing countries. Buchmann and Hannum (2016) highlight that girls in some developing countries face various barriers, such as early marriage and social norms that restrict them from pursuing higher education. These cultural norms cause girls to have higher dropout rates than boys, hindering equality in education.

The lack of qualified teaching staff is also a major obstacle to improving access to education. Many developing countries experience a shortage of highly qualified teachers, especially in rural and remote areas. The high teacher-to-student ratio in many developing countries leads to poor teaching quality and low levels of student understanding of the subject matter.

The study of disparities in education access in developing countries is becoming increasingly important given their far-reaching impact on social and economic development. These gaps affect individuals and slow down a country's economic growth (Bruton et al., 2021). Countries that have low education levels tend to have difficulty creating a competitive workforce in the global market. Narrowing the disparity in access to education is one of the top priorities for achieving sustainable development.

There are disparities in the education policies implemented by developing countries. Buchmann and Hannum (2016) found that some countries have implemented inclusive education policies but there are still many barriers to implementation on the ground. Factors such as lack of funding, weak infrastructure and limited human resources are the main challenges in improving equitable access to education. A more systematic and evidence-based approach is needed to identify the most effective strategies to address educational disparities.

Glewwe and Muralidharan (2016) highlighted that the use of technology in education can be a solution for areas with limited physical infrastructure, but access to educational technology in developing countries is still uneven. Further studies are needed to evaluate how technology can be effectively used to improve educational equity without exacerbating existing disparities.

This study aims to analyze the main factors causing disparities in access to education in developing countries and their impact on economic growth and social welfare. The study also aims to identify strategies that can be implemented to improve equity in education, whether through government policies, utilization of technology, or capacity building of teaching staff. The results of this study are expected to provide evidence-based recommendations for policy makers to address education disparities and improve learning opportunities for all individuals in developing countries.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The literature study approach is a research method that relies on critical analysis of various written sources relevant to the research topic. Through reviewing existing literature, researchers can identify patterns, themes and gaps in previously published knowledge. This allows researchers to build a solid theoretical framework and formulate appropriate research questions. As stated by Creswell (2014), literature review helps to understand the orientation of the research and identify potential contributions of the study to be conducted.

The process of conducting a literature review begins with determining credible and relevant sources. Researchers should be able to select literature that is of high academic quality, such as reputable journal articles, scholarly books, and official research reports. According to Merriam (2009), the validity and reliability of sources are crucial to ensure that the information collected is reliable and supports the research objectives. The use of multiple sources allows the researcher to gain a comprehensive perspective on the topic under study.

Data analysis in a literature review involves the process of synthesizing information from multiple sources to identify key findings and research gaps. The researcher must be critical to assess the methodology, results, and conclusions of each source, as well as consider the perspective in which the research was conducted. As suggested by Hart (1998), this critical analysis helps to develop solid arguments and steer the research in the right direction. Researchers can propose hypotheses that are based on strong and relevant empirical evidence through this analysis.

The presentation of the results of the literature study should be done in a systematic and structured manner. Researchers need to organize key findings into logical categories or themes to make it easier for readers to understand the flow of thought and research contributions. Gall et al. (2007) emphasized the importance of preparing a clear and coherent report to ensure that the research results can be accessed and applied by the scientific group and practitioners in related fields. Literature studies contribute to theory development, and to evidence-based practice and policy.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Key Factors Causing Disparities in Access to Education in Developing Countries**

Disparities in access to education in developing countries is a multidimensional issue that is influenced by various economic, social and government policy factors. These factors are interrelated and contribute to differences in opportunities for quality education.

One of the main factors leading to educational disparities is the high poverty rate in developing countries. Many poor families cannot afford to pay for their children's education, especially in terms of school fees, books and transportation. This inability creates significant barriers for children to access quality education, trapping them in a cycle of poverty that is difficult to break. A study by Tan and Wang (2021) found that low education spending in the state budget contributes to educational inequality, as schools in poor areas often lack adequate resources. This results in the quality of education received by students in these areas being far below standard, exacerbating the existing disparities.

This suggests that without appropriate interventions, children from poor families will continue to face greater challenges in getting a decent education. Inadequate resources in schools in poor areas impact on physical facilities, and on the quality of teaching and learning materials available. It is important for the government to increase education budget allocations, especially in the neediest areas, so that all children, regardless of their economic background, have equal opportunities to get a quality education. It is hoped that education disparities can be minimized by addressing poverty and increasing investment in education to provide better opportunities for future generations.

The second factor is that gender disparities in access to education remain a major challenge in many developing countries. Women often face social and cultural barriers that can restrict them from attending school, especially in areas with strong patriarchal norms.

The study by Østby et al. (2016) shows that countries with diverse ethnicities and a majority Muslim population tend to have higher levels of gender inequality in education.

Limited infrastructure and facilities are another factor affecting this disparity. Many areas in developing countries face serious challenges related to poor education infrastructure, including a lack of qualified schools, books, technology and teaching staff. This creates significant barriers for children to access adequate education. Research by Rehman and Siddiqui (2020) highlights that disparity in academic distribution, such as the number of schools and the quality of teachers, contribute to educational inequality between regions. Students often do not have access to adequate facilities in underserved areas which directly impacts the quality of education they receive.

These disparities affect student learning outcomes, and exacerbate social and economic disparities in community. Without enough schools and qualified teachers, children in remote or poor areas will continue to be trapped in a cycle of powerlessness, where they lack the necessary skills and knowledge to compete in the job market. It is important for the government and other stakeholders to invest in building better education infrastructure, including increasing the number of schools and training teachers. It is hoped that the education disparity can be reduced through these measures and provide better opportunities for all children to reach their potential.

Another factor concerns family background and educational legacy. Education disparities are often passed down from one generation to the next, creating a cycle that is difficult to break. Children from families with low education levels tend to have difficulty accessing quality education, which hinders their ability to improve their social and economic status. Research by Pastore and Roccisano (2015) found that in many developing countries, the level of inter-generational educational mobility is low. This suggests that children often follow in the footsteps of their parents' education so if parents do not have adequate education, their children are at risk of experiencing the same.

This situation creates significant challenges for a country's social and economic development. The inability to break the cycle of educational disparity impacts on individuals, on community as a whole, as lack of access to quality education can reduce the potential for innovation and economic growth. It is important to implement policies that support access to education for children from disadvantaged families, such as scholarship programs and financial support.

This hoped the education disparity can be minimized by providing better opportunities for future generations so that every individual has the chance to reach their full potential.

Other factors include disparities in education policy. Many developing countries have disparate education policies, with urban areas receiving greater investment than rural areas. Education policies that are less inclusive and do not consider the socio-economic conditions of the groups exacerbate educational disparity. Shimeles (2016) reveals that although many developing countries have increased education budgets, the policies are still uneven to support education for vulnerable groups.

Disparities in access to education in developing countries are a deep-seated problem rooted in various structural factors. Poverty is a major barrier, with families trapped in a cycle of poverty often lacking the resources to pay for their children's education. This creates a situation where education is considered a luxury rather than a basic right. Gender disparity also exacerbates this problem, where girls are often prioritized to perform domestic roles, reducing their chances of getting an equal education. Poor infrastructure, such as the lack of proper schools and limited accessibility, creates physical barriers that prevent children from remote areas from accessing quality education. Family background plays a crucial role in determining access to education. Children from families with low education levels often do not get the necessary support to pursue higher education. These injustices are compounded by inequitable education policies, where rural areas and marginalized communities are often overlooked in resource allocation. These injustices create a cycle that is difficult to break, where the next generation is trapped in the same conditions, without adequate access to improve their quality of life through education. Education is not just about access to schools, but also includes the quality of teaching and the relevance of the curriculum offered.

Comprehensive and integrated interventions are urgently needed. Increased investment in education should be a top priority, with a focus on building adequate infrastructure and providing sufficient resources for schools in disadvantaged areas. More inclusive policies should be designed to ensure that all children, regardless of economic background or gender, have equal opportunities for quality education. Empowerment efforts for marginalized groups, such as scholarship programs and training for parents, can help create an enabling environment for education. Disparities in access to education are expected to be minimized with this effective approach, giving future generations a better chance to reach their full potential.

### **The Impact of Education Access Disparities on Economic Growth and Social Welfare**

Disparities in access to education are one of the factors contributing to economic and social inequality in many developing countries. Unequal education leads to unequal income distribution, hinders economic growth and worsens social welfare conditions. Studies show that the higher the disparity in access to education, the more difficult it is for a country to achieve inclusive economic growth and equitable social welfare (Ahuja & Pandit, 2022).

Disparities in access to education have a direct impact on economic growth as they hinder the formation of quality human capital. A study by Goumrhar (2017) shows that low average years of schooling and educational disparities negatively impact economic growth in developing countries. A large proportion of the population that does not receive adequate education has the potential to become human resources that cannot be maximized, resulting in low skills and labor productivity (Tawiah et al., 2021). Countries with high levels of educational disparity often experience stagnation in productivity gains, which in turn slows down overall economic growth (Darmawan et al., 2021).

This creates a cycle that is difficult to break, where low education leads to low productivity, and low productivity further discourages investment in education. Without appropriate interventions, these countries will continue to be stuck in a state of stagnation, where economic growth cannot reach its full potential. It is important for governments to address disparities in access to education through policies that support investment in education and skills training. Increased access to quality education is expected to create better human capital, which in turn will drive sustainable economic growth.

Education disparities also contribute to increased poverty and income inequality. Research by Saleem et al. (2021) found that unequal education increases poverty, as individuals who have limited access to education tend to earn lower incomes. The inability to obtain quality education limits employment opportunities and reduces earning potential so that individuals and families remain trapped in a cycle of poverty. This suggests that education is not just a right, but also a key to improving economic well-being.

Unequal access to education means that certain groups in community will continue to struggle to improve their social and economic status, while other groups with better access will continue to advance. This situation creates deep injustice and exacerbates social divisions. Important for governments to implement policies that ensure a fair and



equitable distribution of education so that all individuals have the opportunity to reach their full potential and contribute to more inclusive economic growth.

Education plays an important role in driving innovation and productivity. Disparities in education hinder individuals' access to the skills and resources needed to innovate. Unequal access to education prevents individuals from acquiring essential skills, hindering technological and industrial progress. Developing countries that do not have inclusive education systems tend to lag behind in technology and industrialization, as they are unable to harness the full potential of their human resources.

This is creating a larger disparity between developed and developing countries, where innovation is key to economic growth and global competitiveness. It is important for governments and stakeholders to develop inclusive and sustainable education policies that can provide better access to all individuals. Improving the quality and access to education, developing countries are expected to accelerate the innovation process and increase productivity so that they can compete in the global market and achieve better economic growth.

Disparities in access to education also have a significant impact on social welfare, especially in the aspect of public health. A study by Agranovich and Dreneva (2021) shows that countries with more equitable access to education tend to have higher levels of health awareness and stronger social welfare systems. Unequally distributed education means that less educated individuals often have a low understanding of healthy lifestyles, which can contribute to behaviors that are detrimental to health. This creates additional challenges for national health systems, which must address the consequences of a lack of health knowledge and awareness among the population.

Continued educational disparities affect the health of individuals, and increase the burden on the health system as a whole. Less-educated communities are more vulnerable to disease and often have limited access to quality health services. It is important to integrate education policies with efforts to improve public health. Increased equitable access to education is expected to improve understanding of health and healthy lifestyles, which will further reduce the burden on national health systems and improve overall social welfare.

Educational disparity also has an impact on the social and political stability of a country. Countries with high educational disparity are more prone to social conflict and political instability. This is due to the increasing disparity between those who have access to education and those who do not, triggering social discontent and political tension (Aranda et al., 2021).

Disparities in access to education impact individuals, and have far-reaching consequences for a country's economic growth and social welfare. A large proportion of the population that does not have adequate access to education has the potential to have human capital that cannot be maximized, which further stifles innovation and productivity. This creates a cycle of poverty that is difficult to break, where uneducated individuals tend to be trapped in low-wage jobs and lack the skills needed in the job market. Lack of adequate education contributes to public health problems, as uneducated individuals are more susceptible to incorrect health information and less able to access necessary health services. Educational disparities have the potential to worsen social and economic conditions, creating instability that can disrupt a country's progress.

Governments have a responsibility to implement inclusive and sustainable education policies to reduce these disparities. Such policies should be designed to reach all segments of community, especially marginalized groups, by providing equal access to quality education. This includes investments in education infrastructure, teacher training and curriculum development that is relevant to the needs of the group. Scholarship programs and financial support for low-income families can help overcome economic barriers that prevent children from attending school. Through these measures, it is hoped to improve access to education, and create a more just and prosperous community, where every individual has the opportunity to contribute maximally to economic growth and social stability.

### **Strategies to Improve Equitable Access to Education in Developing Countries**

Equitable access to education in developing countries is a complex challenge that requires a comprehensive strategic approach. Many factors such as economic, social and public policies affect the extent to which education is accessible to all groups in community. Several strategies have been proven effective to improve education equality, including policy reform, investment in education infrastructure and integration of technology in the learning process. (Chapman & Ainscow, 2021).

The government needs to design and implement policies that focus on equitable access to education to ensure that all individuals have equal opportunities to learn. Troncoso (2015) highlights the importance of public policies to regulate the equitable distribution of education resources, including education subsidies for low-income families and increased budgets for schools in disadvantaged areas.

Governments can help overcome the financial barriers that often prevent children from poor families from getting a decent education by allocating resources more equitably. This policy will improve access to, and the quality of, education received by students.

Affirmative policies that support vulnerable groups, such as girls and people with disabilities, are critical to narrowing the gap in access to education. Governments can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students by paying special attention to these groups. For example, programs designed to encourage girls' participation in education or provide disability-friendly facilities can help ensure that no child is left behind. This comprehensive and equity-focused policy approach is expected to minimize disparities in access to education so that every individual has the opportunity to reach their full potential (Al Hakim et al., 2021).

The availability of adequate education infrastructure is crucial to improving overall access to education. Countries that invest more in school construction, book provision and improved teacher training tend to have better levels of educational equality. Investment in education infrastructure includes the physical construction of schools, and includes the provision of resources needed to create a conducive learning environment. Students will be more motivated to attend school and be able to learn more effectively.

The government should increase investment in school construction in remote areas and provide quality education facilities. This includes ensuring that schools are equipped with adequate resources, such as textbooks, teaching aids and access to information technology. Improved training for teachers is also crucial to ensure that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to teach effectively. Through a focus on building strong education infrastructure, it is hoped that the disparity in access to education can be minimized so that all children, especially those in remote areas, have an equal opportunity to get a quality education.

Technology can serve as a highly effective tool to improve access to education for disadvantaged groups. The potential of artificial intelligence-based learning platforms, such as ChatGPT, to provide educational materials for students in remote areas who face limited access to physical schools. The existence of digital technology benefits students who were previously isolated from educational resources can access quality information and learning materials, opening up new opportunities to learn and grow. This is particularly important where education infrastructure may be inadequate or hard to reach.

Utilizing digital technology can help reduce the gap in the availability of teachers and learning materials. In many areas, the shortage of qualified teachers is often a major barrier for students to get an adequate education. Technology-based learning platforms can be a means for students to learn independently with guidance from interactive and informative digital resources. This increases the accessibility of education, and allows students to learn at a pace and manner that suits their needs. Students living in remote areas or with limited access to teachers can still get quality education without having to rely on the physical presence of teachers in the classroom. The integration of technology in education can be an important step towards creating a more inclusive and equitable education system, providing better opportunities for all individuals to reach their potential.

Scholarships and financial aid programs are crucial strategies to improve equitable access to education for the poor. Education disparities can be significantly reduced through aid programs that specifically target students from low-income families. The right financial support results in students who were previously hindered by the cost of education being able to gain better access to schools and the educational resources needed to succeed. Financial assistance programs can provide direct support to cover the cost of school fees, books, uniforms and other necessities, thus reducing the financial burden faced by families. This helps them complete their education, and opens up opportunities to improve their quality of life in the future. Financial aid programs not only help to overcome barriers to education costs, but also contribute to long-term socio-economic development by creating more individuals who are skilled and ready to contribute to their community.

These assistance programs can include various forms of support, such as school fee subsidies, provision of learning equipment, and skills training programs for students. School fee subsidies can ease the financial burden borne by families, while the provision of learning equipment, such as books and stationery, ensures that students have the necessary resources to learn effectively. Skills training programs can help students prepare to enter the workforce, providing them with relevant skills and increasing their competitiveness in the job market. Through the effective implementation of these programs, it is hoped that equitable access to education can be achieved so that every individual, regardless of their economic background, has the opportunity to achieve quality education.

Improving equitable access to education requires close collaboration between governments, the private sector and international institutions. This cooperation is critical to creating an inclusive and sustainable education system, where all levels of community, regardless of economic status or geographical location, have equal opportunities for quality education. Sun (2022) highlights Japan's success in developing a more equitable education system through strategic partnerships between the government and the private sector. The private sector plays an active role in providing the resources, infrastructure and innovation needed to improve the quality of education, while the government ensures that policies supporting equal access to education are effectively implemented. Japan's success shows that synergistic collaboration can generate significant positive impacts to create a more equitable education system.

The successful partnership model in Japan can be applied in developing countries by involving Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and international agencies. NGOs have an important role to play in reaching out to marginalized groups and identifying their specific needs, while international agencies can provide the financial and technical support needed to implement education programs. Developing countries can create education programs that are more responsive and adaptive to the challenges they face by integrating these various stakeholders. Through this collaborative approach, it is hoped that disparities in access to education can be minimized so that every individual has an equal opportunity to obtain a quality education and contribute to the overall development of community.

Strategies to improve equitable access to education in developing countries should include comprehensive, inclusion-oriented policy reforms. Existing education policies need to be evaluated and adjusted to reach marginalized groups, including children from low-income families and isolated communities. This step is important to reduce existing disparities and ensure that education is accessible to all levels of the community without exception. Investment in education infrastructure is essential to ensure that all children have access to adequate facilities, such as decent schools and sufficient learning resources. Many schools in rural or less developed areas face a lack of basic facilities. By improving the physical condition of schools and providing a safe learning environment, children will be more motivated to attend school and complete their education. A safe environment also helps create a sense of confidence and well-being for students, which in turn contributes to their success in education.

The integration of technology in education is also a crucial step to improve access and quality of education. By utilizing technology, such as online learning and digital resources, education can be reached by more students, especially in remote areas. Providing scholarships for underprivileged students will help overcome financial barriers that are often a barrier to continuing education. Collaboration between the government and the private sector can create strong synergies in efforts to improve access to education. Through this partnership, resources and expertise from both parties can be leveraged to create innovative programs that support education. The comprehensive implementation of this strategy will help reduce the education gap and ensure that every individual, regardless of background, has an equal opportunity to obtain a quality education.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that disparities in access to education in developing countries are influenced by various factors, including poverty, gender inequality, poor infrastructure, family background and inequitable education policies. These disparities hamper economic growth, exacerbate social inequality and reduce opportunities for individuals to improve their lives. Addressing the education disparity is a crucial step towards creating a more just and prosperous community. Inclusive and equitable education provides equal opportunities for every individual to thrive, regardless of their social or economic background. Addressing education disparities is not just about improving access to education, it is also about creating a more equitable society that provides equal opportunities for all to thrive and contribute to socio-economic progress.

Strategic measures involving various stakeholders are needed to reduce disparities in access to education. The government should increase investment in education infrastructure and provide financial support for low-income families. More inclusive policies should be implemented to ensure that marginalized groups, such as girls and communities in remote areas, have equal access to quality education. Technology can also be utilized to reach students who do not have direct access to conventional education facilities.

Scholarships and teacher training programs are also important strategies to improve the quality of education. Partnerships between governments, the private sector and international organizations can help provide wider resources to support efforts to equalize access to education. By implementing evidence-based and sustainable strategies, education disparities in developing countries can be significantly reduced.

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