



Social Reintegration of School Dropouts Through Nonformal Education at Suka Mandiri CLC

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Abstract: Adolescents who have dropped out of school face various challenges in their identity development that can affect their self-confidence, social relationships, and ability to reintegrate into society. This situation not only results in the interruption of formal education but also triggers identity crises, social stigma, and obstacles to social reintegration. Non-formal education provided through Community Learning Centers (CLC) offers a "second chance" for these adolescents to continue their education while rebuilding their identities and social roles. This study aims to: (1) understand the experiences of school dropouts in facing identity formation challenges; (2) uncover the meaning they attach to their experiences in non-formal education at CLC Suka Mandiri; and (3) describe the social reintegration process experienced by these adolescents after participating in the program. A qualitative approach using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation involving eight adolescents who had dropped out of school and were attending CLC Suka Mandiri in Lamongan Regency. The findings reveal that these adolescents face identity-related challenges such as the loss of student status, social stigma, diminished self-confidence, and uncertainty about the future driven by familial, social, and personal factors. Their experience at the CLC is perceived as an opportunity to gain social acceptance, develop skills, rebuild self-confidence, and find new hope for the future. This process fosters identity reconstruction, characterized by increased self-belief, a commitment to pursuing further education or employment, and greater participation within their families and communities.

Keywords: Adolescent identity, school dropouts, non-formal education, CLC, social reintegration, phenomenology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental right for every citizen, playing a vital role in developing individual potential, shaping character, and enhancing the quality of human resources. Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System affirms that every citizen has the right to quality education through either formal or non-formal channels. However, the issue of adolescents dropping out of school remains a significant challenge for educational development in Indonesia. According to 2023 data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS), the number of out-of-school children in Indonesia remains high, particularly among adolescents at the Junior High School (SMP) and Senior High School (SMA) levels. (BPS., 2023). The data indicates that the rate of children out of school at the junior high school level (or equivalent) stands at 7.97% for boys and 5.86% for girls. Furthermore, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (2025) records approximately 3.9 million out-of-school children in Indonesia, while UNICEF Indonesia estimates the figure to be 4.1 million children aged 7–18 (Nugraha, 2025). This situation indicates that various compulsory education programs have not yet fully reached all students, leaving millions of children at risk of losing the opportunity to develop their potential optimally. Adolescents who drop out of school face a range of multidimensional risks, including low human capital quality, rising youth unemployment, intergenerational poverty, and limited

prospects for securing decent employment. Consequently, the phenomenon of school dropouts is not merely an educational issue but also a complex social, economic, and human development challenge.

The phenomenon of school dropout does not stem from a single cause; rather, it results from the interaction of various interconnected factors. Based on the human developmental ecology perspective proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), individual development is influenced by interacting environmental systems—ranging from the family (microsystem), school, peers, and the community (mesosystem and exosystem) to government policy (macrosystem) (Gubbels, 2019). From this perspective, the family—as the immediate environment—plays a dominant role in shaping the development and educational decisions of adolescents. Financial constraints, domestic conflict, a lack of parental attention regarding education, and the need to contribute to the household economy often compel adolescents to choose work over continuing their formal education. Social Capital Theory, as developed by Coleman (1988), further explains that positive relationships and interactions within the family constitute a crucial asset for a child's educational success (Rogo & Baranovi, 2016). When families face economic hardship or prolonged conflict, these experiences directly impact the continuity of adolescents' education. Beyond family factors, the social environment also exerts a significant influence on educational continuity. Peer influence, a community culture that undervalues education, experiences of bullying, and the appeal of the workforce compared to school often drive adolescents to decide to drop out. (On & Terms, 2023) It is stated that bullying is a factor increasing the risk of school dropout, as it impacts mental health, learning motivation, and student engagement in the educational process. In addition to these external factors, there are also internal factors stemming from the adolescents themselves, such as low learning motivation, difficulties in keeping up with lessons, academic failure, low self-confidence, and a loss of hope for the future.

In the perspective of Erikson's (1968) psychosocial development in (Branje & Moor, 2021), Adolescence is a phase of identity formation (Identity versus Role Confusion). When adolescents experience failure in or the discontinuation of their formal education, they are at risk of experiencing identity confusion a state that can lead to low self-confidence and difficulty in planning for the future. Many school dropouts find themselves in a state of "identity diffusion," a condition characterized by a lack of commitment or clear life direction resulting from limited opportunities to explore various educational and career options. (Branje, 2012). This fragile psychological condition is further exacerbated by the social stigma attached to school dropouts, thus hindering their social reintegration into productive community life. According to (Nemtcan et al., 2022), Low self-efficacy leads individuals to feel incapable of completing tasks, making them more prone to giving up when faced with difficulties. This explains why adolescents who have dropped out of school often struggle to regain the self-confidence and motivation needed to resume their education. In response to this issue, Indonesia's national education system has developed various complementary educational pathways, including non-formal education. Non-formal education serves as a substitute for, a supplement to, and a complement to formal education, thereby supporting lifelong learning. *rendahnya self-efficacy* (Pratiwi & Samudro, 2025). Community Learning Centers (CLC) serve as a form of non-formal education that offers "second-chance education" to school dropouts. These centers not only provide equivalency education services (Packages A, B, and C) but also create a space for young people to resume their studies, enhance life skills, and prepare for the future. The concept of second-chance education is highly relevant for restoring educational access to those who have previously faced failure or dropped out of school, while simultaneously supporting their social reintegration into the community. CLC Suka Mandiri located in Gempolpading Village, Pucuk District, Lamongan Regency, East Java Province is one such non-formal educational institution that runs equivalency education programs for individuals who did not complete formal schooling, including school dropouts. Geographically, Gempol pading Village is situated in Pucuk District, a rural area where livelihoods are dominated by agriculture, small-scale trade, and informal employment. The community's diverse socioeconomic conditions mean that some children and adolescents face obstacles to continuing formal education, such as limited family finances, a lack of educational support, or the need to assist with their parents' work. Consequently, there is a significant need in this area for non-formal education services as an alternative educational pathway.

CLC Suka Mandiri is managed by Drs. H. Suparto, SH., M.Pd., serving as the Head of the Center, and is supported by educators and educational staff who meet competency standards aligned with national education standards. The vision of CLC Suka Mandiri is "To become an excellent non-formal education institution that provides educational access to the community, thereby improving quality of life and fostering self-reliance." The institution's mission encompasses optimizing learning processes and guidance for learners; providing skills training to meet the demands of the workforce and entrepreneurship; fostering self-reliance through habit-building activities, life skills development, and entrepreneurial initiatives; and delivering equivalency education programs (Packages A, B, and C) of a quality comparable to formal education. The primary objectives of CLC Suka Mandiri are to provide non-formal education services to individuals who have not had the opportunity to

participate in formal schooling; to offer Equivalency Education Programs as an alternative for children, adolescents, and community members who have dropped out of school, enabling them to obtain an education equivalent to the formal system; and to enhance the academic competence, life skills, and character of learners so they are equipped to pursue further education, enter the workforce, or engage in entrepreneurship.

However, prior to enrolling in CLC, each adolescent possesses a unique set of "lived experiences" regarding the reasons behind their school dropout. These experiences are shaped by a combination of family circumstances, social environments, and personal factors. Preliminary observations indicate that the learners bring diverse life experiences to the equivalency education program. Some left school due to family financial constraints, others were influenced by their social environments, and some simply lost the motivation to learn. These varied experiences present a compelling phenomenon for in-depth study using a phenomenological approach, as this method allows for a direct and authentic portrayal of the meaning these adolescents attach to their lived experiences.

Phenomenological research aims to understand the essence of an individual's lived experience regarding a specific phenomenon, rather than merely measuring relationships between variables. This approach enables researchers to explore how individuals experience, interpret, and derive meaning from events in their lives. In the context of non-formal education, understanding the subjective experiences of school dropouts is crucial for identifying how family factors, social factors, and psychological conditions influence their decision to leave school, as well as how non-formal education can serve as a vehicle for social reintegration. Therefore, this study aims to uncover the lived experiences of school dropouts at CLC Suka Mandiri and to understand how they reconstruct their identities and achieve social reintegration through equivalency education programs. The importance of understanding the subjective experiences of school dropouts is also highlighted by previous studies indicating that a purely quantitative approach is insufficient to capture the complexity of adolescents' lived experiences. Research by Afrini and Loka (2025) demonstrates that non-formal education plays a significant role in enhancing adolescents' social competence, while a study by Mulyati and Amini (2021) emphasizes that adapting learning within non-formal education requires an approach that is contextual and responsive to individual needs. (Imaniar, 2025) (Hamid, 2024). A study by Rosmilawati and Mutaqin (2024) also concludes that non-formal education delivered through Community Learning Centers (CLC) and Learning Activity Studios (LAS) enables school dropouts to resume their interrupted education via flexible and adaptive learning processes. These findings reinforce the argument that non-formal education serves not merely as an academic alternative but also as a space for psychosocial rehabilitation, supporting the social reintegration of adolescents into productive community life.

However, research on the role of CLC in the Indonesian context remains relatively limited, particularly studies employing an interpretive phenomenological approach. Most prior research has utilized descriptive qualitative methods or quantitative surveys, which often fail to capture the depth of meaning inherent in individuals' lived experiences. Yet, a phenomenological approach is highly relevant for understanding how school dropouts interpret their life experiences including the family pressures, social influences, and internal factors that drove their decision to leave school as well as how they reconstruct the meaning of education after joining a CLC. Consequently, this study aims to address this research gap by exploring the subjective experiences of school dropouts at CLC Suka Mandiri using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach.

A deep understanding of the subjective experiences of school dropouts and their social reintegration process within Community Learning Centers (CLC) is expected to contribute scientifically to the study of non-formal education specifically regarding the role of CLC as providers of "second-chance education" that supports educational reintegration and identity strengthening for these youths. Furthermore, the research findings are expected to serve as a basis for consideration by stakeholders including families, non-formal education providers, local governments, and the community in developing more comprehensive and inclusive programs for dropout prevention and the strengthening of nonformal education services.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) design.(Smith et al., 2010). The IPA approach was selected because this study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the subjective lived experiences of school dropouts currently enrolled in education at CLC Suka Mandiri. IPA rests on three main pillars—phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography enabling the researcher to comprehensively explore the meanings of complex, personal experiences. Developed by Smith,

Flowers, and Larkin (2022), this approach has proven effective in examining individual lived experiences within the contexts of education and adolescent development.

This study was conducted at CLC Suka Mandiri, located in Gempolpadding Village, Pucuk District, Lamongan Regency, East Java Province. This institution was chosen as the research site because it offers an Equivalency Education Program attended by numerous school dropouts from diverse backgrounds. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, ensuring the informants' characteristics aligned with the study's objectives. Participant selection criteria included: (1) being aged 15–21 years; (2) having previously dropped out of junior high or senior high school; (3) being able to recount the experience of dropping out openly and reflectively; and (4) currently participating in the package C Program at CLC Suka Mandiri at the time of the study. Based on these criteria, eight male participants (P1–P8) were selected; their highest level of prior education ranged from junior high school (5 participants) to senior high school grades X–XI (3 participants). The duration of their time out of school ranged from one to three years, with dominant reasons for dropping out varying across cases: family-related (P1, P2, P5, P7), social factors (P3, P4), personal reasons (P6), and a combination of family, social, and personal factors (P8).

Data for this study were collected using three primary techniques. First, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face, lasting approximately 60–90 minutes per participant. These interviews aimed to explore the participants' subjective experiences regarding the family, social, and personal factors underlying their school dropout. Second, non-participant observation was conducted to understand the social context and learning environment at the Community Learning Center (CLC). Third, documentation was used to reinforce and verify the data obtained from interviews and observations. Data validity was ensured through member checking, triangulation of sources and methods, and researcher reflexivity, thereby upholding the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

The data were analyzed using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) procedure developed by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin. The analysis process comprised six main stages: (1) repeatedly reading interview transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences; (2) coding the data narratively and exploratively for each case; (3) identifying emergent themes for each participant; (4) formulating superordinate themes that connect the various emergent themes; (5) identifying patterns and relationships across cases; and (6) writing an essential description that captures the overall research findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on data analysis using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the experience of dropping out of school was found to be a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the dynamic interaction of familial, social, and personal factors. These three factors do not operate in isolation but rather influence one another in shaping the adolescents' life experiences, ultimately leading to the decision to leave formal education. Participation in the Equivalency Education Program at CLC Suka Mandiri brought about a shift in the participants' perception of education, thereby facilitating their social reintegration.

Experiences of School Dropouts Due to Family Factors

The results of the IPA analysis indicate that family factors served as the initial experiences shaping the adolescents' decisions to drop out of school. This theme emerged from the experiences of five informants (P1, P2, P5, P7, and P8), revealing that the family was the dominant factor influencing the continuation of their education. Based on the coding and IPA analysis processes, these experiences evolved into four main sub-themes: family economic constraints, low parental support for education, family conflict, and the responsibility to contribute to the family's finances. Most informants reported that their family's economic situation was the primary reason they could not continue their formal education. P1 explained that after graduating from junior high school, his/her parents could not afford the cost of senior high school education, leading him/her to choose to work instead:

"When I finished junior high school, I actually wanted to continue to senior high, but my parents said there wasn't enough money. My father was just a farm laborer with an unstable income. In the end, I started working to help the family." (P1)

A similar experience was shared by P7, who felt uncomfortable asking for school fees when the family struggled to meet even basic needs. These narratives suggest that the decision to drop out of school was not driven solely by a lack of academic motivation but was, rather, an adjustment to the family's economic circumstances. From Bronfenbrenner's (1979) perspective, a family's economic situation is part of the microsystem the immediate environment that directly influences an individual's development. Coleman's (1988)

theory further explains that limited family resources can reduce a child's opportunities to receive adequate educational support.

Beyond economic factors, several informants revealed that a lack of parental attention and support regarding education also influenced their decision to drop out. P2 noted that their parents never asked about school, leading them to eventually perceive schooling as unimportant. This experience highlights the crucial role of parental emotional support in sustaining adolescents' motivation to learn. When attention toward education is lacking, adolescents may come to view school as less significant, making the decision to drop out easier. According to Epstein (2018), parental involvement in education is a key factor determining a child's academic success.

Experiences of School Dropouts Due to Social Factors

The second theme derived from the IPA analysis concerns the experiences of adolescents who dropped out of school due to social factors. This theme emerged from the narratives of informants (P3, P4, P6, and P8), indicating that the social environment significantly influenced their decisions to leave school. Through the processes of coding, identifying emergent themes, and establishing superordinate themes, four main sub-themes were identified: peer influence, experiences of bullying and discrimination, a lack of environmental support for education, and the influence of culture and the community environment.

Interview results indicate that peers exert a strong influence on adolescents' decision-making processes. Informant P3 recounted that many of their friends were already working and frequently remarked that earning money was preferable to attending school; consequently, P3 adopted this mindset over time and eventually dropped out. This experience demonstrates that the decision to leave school is driven not merely by personal choice but also by the need for social acceptance within a peer group. From the perspective of Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1986), individual behavior develops through observational learning by observing the behavior of others. Adolescents who consistently see their peers working or dropping out of school tend to emulate such behavior, perceiving it as a normal choice that garners social reinforcement.

Another emerging theme involves experiences of bullying and discrimination during formal schooling. Informant P4 revealed being frequently mocked for their family's economic situation, leading to a reluctance to attend school due to the fear of encountering peers. Such experiences cause adolescents to lose their sense of safety, self-confidence, and comfort within the school environment. According to UNESCO (2023), bullying is a factor that increases the risk of dropping out, as it impacts mental health, learning motivation, and student engagement in the educational process.

Furthermore, the research findings indicate that some informants felt they lacked adequate social support from their immediate environment. The communities in which they lived placed greater value on adolescents who worked than on those who continued their education. According to Bourdieu (1986), the social environment possesses social capital and cultural capital that influence an individual's educational opportunities. If the environment does not place importance on education, adolescents will be more likely to drop out of school.

The Experiences of Teenagers Who Dropped Out of School Due to Personal Factors

The third theme identified through IPA analysis concerns the experiences of adolescents who dropped out of school due to personal factors. This theme captures the adolescents' subjective interpretations of their decision to leave school—decisions influenced by internal conditions such as low academic motivation, uncertainty regarding their life direction, low self-confidence, and a lack of ability to manage academic or psychological challenges. This theme emerged from in-depth interviews with informants P5, P6, and P8.

Interview results indicate that a frequently cited experience among the informants was a loss of motivation to engage in school-based learning activities. P5 revealed a lack of clear goals, a failure to enjoy the learning process, and a perception that school no longer offered any real-life benefits. P6 similarly noted that lessons were becoming increasingly difficult while their enthusiasm for learning had vanished, leading to frequent truancy and, ultimately, the decision to drop out. From a phenomenological perspective, motivation is not merely a drive to learn but represents the way adolescents assign meaning to the purpose of education in their lives. When education is no longer perceived as meaningful, the adolescent's attachment to school diminishes. These findings align with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory (1954), which posits that individuals struggle to achieve self-actualization if their basic and psychological needs remain unmet.

The second sub-theme reveals that several informants experienced confusion regarding their self-identity and future aspirations. P6 explained their uncertainty about what they wanted to become; seeing peers already working or married made them feel aimless and rendered school seemingly pointless. These experiences demonstrate that the decision to drop out is closely linked to an unresolved process of identity formation. This

finding is consistent with Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development (1968), which identifies the resolution of the "Identity versus Role Confusion" conflict as a primary developmental task during adolescence. Furthermore, Marcia (1966) suggests that the majority of the informants were in a state of "Identity Diffusion" a condition characterized by a lack of both exploration and commitment regarding life goals.

Research Findings

Based on the overall analysis, four key findings emerged:

First, dropping out of school results from the interaction of familial, social, and personal factors. These findings indicate that the experience of dropping out is not caused by a single factor. All participants described the decision to leave school as the outcome of an interplay between family conditions, the social environment, and the individual's psychological state. Initially, most participants faced pressures from their families, such as economic constraints, a lack of parental emphasis on education, family conflict, or the need to assist with their parents' work. These conditions were subsequently reinforced by social environmental influences such as peers who were already working, experiences of bullying, low community support for education, and a cultural mindset that prioritized working over continuing one's education. These familial and social pressures impacted the adolescents' internal states; they began to lose motivation to learn, felt confused about their futures, and suffered from low self-confidence. The accumulation of these experiences ultimately led to the decision to drop out. These findings demonstrate that dropping out is a multidimensional process that cannot be explained by a single causal factor.

Second, the experience of dropping out altered how the adolescents perceived education. Prior to leaving school, most participants viewed school as a source of stress. They regarded it merely as a burden because they could not meet the academic and social demands placed upon them. However, after joining CLC Suka Mandiri, their perception of education shifted. Education was no longer viewed as an onerous obligation but rather as an opportunity to improve their lives. This shift in meaning was evident in the participants' growing desire to complete the package C program, secure better employment, support their families, and even pursue higher education. From a phenomenological perspective, this shift represents a "meaning transformation" a change in how an individual interprets their life experiences following the acquisition of new experiences.

Third, the CLC serves as a space for the reconstruction of adolescent identity. The findings indicate that the CLC functions not merely as a provider of equivalency education but also as a space where adolescents can rebuild their identities. Most participants revealed that while attending formal school, they felt like failures, incapable, and without a clear future. After participating in learning activities at the CLC, they gained access to more flexible learning experiences, closer relationships with tutors, and a learning environment that was more accepting of their circumstances. These experiences helped the participants rebuild their self-confidence, boost their learning motivation, and foster new hope for the future. The findings demonstrate that non-formal education through the CLC serves a broader function than simply awarding equivalency diplomas; it acts as a medium for social reintegration and the strengthening of identity for school dropouts.

Fourth, the experience of dropping out of school fostered a new awareness regarding the importance of education. All participants expressed regret over having left school. Experiences such as working for low wages, facing difficulties in finding employment, and observing peers who successfully continued their education led them to realize the immense value of education for their futures. This realization became the primary motivation for enrolling in the Equivalency Education Program at CLC Suka Mandiri. The participants began to view education as a long-term investment capable of improving their quality of life. These findings indicate that past negative experiences served as a source of learning that drove the emergence of a new motivation to resume their education.

Discussion

The research results indicate that the experience of dropping out of school is a phenomenon shaped by the dynamic interplay between family, the social environment, and the individual's psychological state. These three factors are inseparable, as they mutually influence one another at every stage of the participants' experiences. The findings reveal that the family serves as the initial source of pressure regarding the continuity of education. This pressure is subsequently reinforced by a social environment that offers little support for education, ultimately affecting the adolescents' internal states manifesting as diminished learning motivation, identity confusion, and low self-confidence. This process culminates in the decision to leave school.

From a Husserlian phenomenological perspective, this constitutes a conscious experience subjectively interpreted by the adolescents. They do not merely experience poverty as an objective condition; they also attach meaning to the act of helping their families, viewing it as the right and necessary course of action. Meanwhile, according to Heidegger, this decision represents a form of the individual's existence within their

"lifeworld" being-in-the-world, wherein the adolescent cannot detach themselves from their surrounding familial context.

However, the study also finds that dropping out of school does not mark the end of the adolescents' educational journey. The presence of CLC Suka Mandiri offers a new experience that enables participants to reconstruct the meaning of education. Equivalency education is understood not merely as a means to obtain a diploma, but as a space for rebuilding identity, boosting self-confidence, and fostering hope for the future. Thus, the discussion demonstrates that the essence of the experience uncovered through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is that adolescents drop out not because they undervalue education, but because they perceive familial, social, and personal pressures as obstacles that outweigh their capacity to sustain formal schooling. Upon entering a more inclusive learning environment through the CLC, this perception shifts into a conviction that education can still serve as a pathway to improving their future.

This finding represents the study's primary contribution to the field of non-formal education, specifically regarding the role of Community Learning Centers (CLC) as a "second-chance education" mechanism that supports educational reintegration and strengthens the identities of out-of-school youth. The results also align with research by Imaniar and Nurhidayatika (2025) on the role of CLC in boosting the learning motivation of out-of-school youth, as well as studies by Hayatuddin and Hamid (2024) affirming that non-formal education serves as a vehicle for social transformation for marginalized youth.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to understand the experiences of adolescents who dropped out of school and are attending CLC Suka Mandiri, utilizing an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach. Based on in-depth interviews, observations, documentation, and IPA-based data analysis involving eight participants, the following conclusions were drawn.

First, regarding school dropout experiences linked to family factors, the findings indicate that the family plays a foundational role in shaping the adolescents' experiences leading up to their decision to leave school. Economic constraints prevented parents from meeting educational needs, prompting the adolescents to end their formal education. A lack of parental attention and support regarding education resulted in diminished learning motivation and a weakened commitment to staying in school. Family conflict also created psychological pressure that hindered study concentration and affected the adolescents' emotional well-being. Through the phenomenological approach, it was revealed that the adolescents interpreted their family experiences as a matter of responsibility toward their parents; consequently, the decision to drop out was viewed more as an act of sacrifice and an adaptation to family circumstances rather than a truly desired choice.

Second, regarding school dropout experiences linked to social factors, the findings show that the social environment reinforced the adolescents' decision-making process. Peer influence played a significant role in shaping how the adolescents perceived education. Experiences of bullying meant that school was no longer perceived as a safe and comfortable place for learning, thereby reducing motivation to remain in school. Furthermore, the community environment fostered the perception that working was more beneficial than continuing one's education.

Third, the experiences of school dropouts specifically regarding personal factors reveal that these internal elements stem from an accumulation of experiences within the family and social environment. These experiences manifest as diminished learning motivation, confusion regarding identity and future prospects, and low self-confidence, alongside a reinterpretation of the meaning of education following participation in the Equivalency Education Program at the Community Learning Center (CLC).

Overall, the experience of dropping out of school is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the interplay of familial, social, and personal factors. The study further demonstrates that the decision to drop out is not sudden but rather the result of a prolonged life-experience process. Phenomenological analysis reveals that the meaning of these experiences shifts after the adolescents participate in the Equivalency Education Program at CLC Suka Mandiri. The CLC serves not merely as a provider of equivalency education but also as a space for identity reconstruction, the strengthening of learning motivation, and social reintegration for school dropouts. These findings enrich the discourse on non-formal education and underscore the importance of reinforcing the role of CLC in supporting the continued education of adolescents who have dropped out of school.

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