

RESEARCH ARTICLE

EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES OF ADOLESCENTS IN THE DIGITAL AGE: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EAST JAVA EDUCATION SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the dynamics of adolescent educational participation in East Java amid digital transformation using a qualitative, library-based approach. Drawing on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) and academic literature, the research identifies a slight yet significant decline in school participation, especially among adolescents aged 16–18. The decline is linked to economic constraints, unequal school distribution, and fluctuating learning motivation. The findings highlight that educational success should be assessed not only by enrollment numbers but also through social, psychological, and technological factors. The study advocates for a holistic educational framework that promotes equal access, digital literacy, and character development to create a more adaptive and sustainable education system.

Keywords: *Digitalization, Qualitative, Literature Review, and Psychological*

INTRODUCTION

Education in the contemporary era faces complex challenges, especially among adolescents who are in a transitional phase toward adulthood (Ningsih & Jannah, 2022). This period is marked by physical, emotional, social, and cognitive changes that influence the formation of self-identity and learning behavior. The presence of digital technology and social media also influences interaction patterns and the way adolescents obtain and process information. Therefore, education at this stage needs to emphasize a balance between academic mastery and character building through the integration of ethical values, digital literacy, and emotional intelligence (Nurliana & Ulya, 2021).

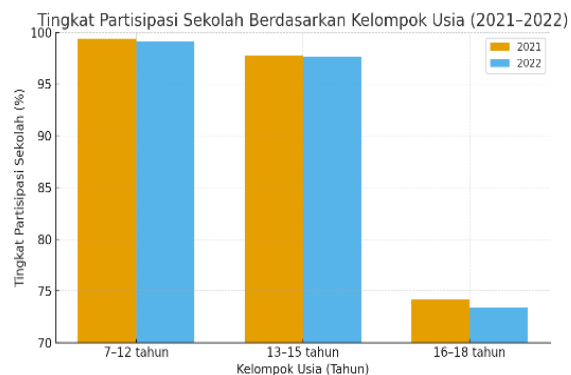


Figure 1, Student Participation Rate

From the data above, taken from BPS statistics, it is known that there has been a decline in education participation among adolescents (Central Statistics Agency, 2023). From an educational psychology perspective, adolescence is a crucial period for the development of self-concept, independence, and critical thinking skills. The learning environment in secondary schools must be designed to support this

development comprehensively (Zainiya, 2024). However, the challenges of the digital age, such as gadget addiction, decreased social empathy, and digital identity pressure, demand serious attention from educators and parents. Based on this urgency, this study uses a qualitative method with a library research approach to examine the psychological factors that influence adolescent education and provide conceptual contributions to the development of an education system that is adaptive to the dynamics of the times (Ilham et al., 2023).

METHOD

This type of research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with library research methods. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on collecting and analyzing data sourced from scientific literature such as journals, books, research reports, and educational policy documents, rather than through observation or field interviews (Candra Susanto et al., 2024). The purpose of using this approach is to gain an in-depth understanding of phenomena related to educational psychology, the impact of digitalization on the learning process, and the character building of students based on theoretical perspectives and previous research results. Thus, this study seeks to present a rich and comprehensive conceptual overview of the relationship between psychological, social, and technological aspects in the modern world of education (Rizati et al., 2025).

This study uses two types of data sources, namely primary sources in the form of scientific literature such as indexed journals, dissertations, and research reports discussing educational psychology, learning digitalization, and character education; as well as secondary sources such as books, popular scientific articles, and educational policy documents. The data is qualitative, covering concepts, theories, and research results that support thematic analysis and conceptual synthesis.

Data collection was conducted through scientific literature searches using relevant keywords in databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and the Garuda portal, with selection based on relevance, credibility, and year of publication. The collected data was then classified into main

themes for analysis.

The analysis process was carried out using thematic analysis and content synthesis, including data reduction, theme categorization, and interpretation of the relationships between concepts in educational psychology, digitization, and character building. The analysis was inductive, in which conclusions were drawn from the interpretation of the literature data.

RESULTS

Based on data compiled from the East Java Statistics Agency and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, school participation rates in East Java Province for the 2021–2022 period show a slight downward trend across all age groups. The data illustrates that although participation rates are still relatively high at the primary and lower secondary education levels, there are significant challenges in the upper secondary age group. Details of the changes in participation are presented in Table below.

Table 1, Details Of The Changes In Participation

Kelompok Usia (Tahun)	2021 (%)	2022 (%)	Perubahan (%)
7–12 (Setara SD)	99,4	99,14	-0,26
13–15 (Setara SMP)	97,76	97,64	-0,12
16–18 (Setara SMA/SMK)	74,14	73,4	-0,74

In addition to school participation rates, the Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) and Net Enrollment Rate (NER) indicators also show a similar downward trend. The data can be seen in Table below.

Table 2, School Participation Rates

Jenjang Pendidikan	APK 2021 (%)	APK 2022 (%)	APM 2022 (%)
SD / MI	109,12	108,47	97,31

SMP / MTs	98,22	97,85	89,42
SMA / SMK	83,14	81,9	69,77

The analysis shows that the most significant decline in school participation rates occurred in the 16–18 age group, at 0.74 percent. This finding indicates that the main challenge facing the education system in East Java Province lies in senior secondary education (SMA/SMK). Although quantitatively the decline appears small, qualitatively it is significant because it reflects fundamental problems related to learning motivation, socio-economic conditions, and unequal access to education among adolescents. This phenomenon emphasizes the need for a multidimensional approach in understanding the dynamics of educational participation, which is not only limited to structural aspects but also concerns the psychological and cultural dimensions of students.

DISCUSSION

From a socio-economic perspective, based on data from the 2022 National Socio-Economic Survey (Susenas), the poverty rate in East Java Province was recorded at 10.38 percent, making it one of the provinces with the highest number of poor people on the island of Java. This condition has direct implications for the sustainability of education, where some high school-aged adolescents tend to choose to work or help their families financially rather than continuing their studies. Economic factors thus play a significant role as external determinants in influencing individuals' decisions to continue participating in formal education.

From an educational psychology perspective, adolescence is a crucial period in the development of self-identity, as explained by Erikson through his theory of psychosocial development in the stage of identity versus role confusion. At this stage, adolescents face tension between the need to find their identity and social pressures that demand adjustment to certain roles. An imbalance in emotional support, academic

guidance, and a conducive social environment can result in low motivation to learn and decreased involvement in academic activities. Therefore, an educational approach that integrates psychological aspects is important in encouraging continued participation.

In addition to psychological factors, the influence of digitalization is also a variable that plays a dual role in the context of education. Based on data from Statistics Indonesia (2022), only about 78.4 percent of households in East Java have internet access, with a striking gap between urban (92 percent) and rural (61 percent) areas. This disparity has implications for differences in the ability to adapt to technology-based learning. While digitization can increase the efficiency and flexibility of learning, at the same time it also has the potential to widen the gap in access to education between different social and geographical groups.

Furthermore, the availability and distribution of educational institutions also have a significant influence on school participation rates. Based on data from the East Java Provincial Education Office, around 30 percent of sub-districts in rural areas still lack secondary education facilities. This spatial inequality exacerbates geographical barriers, which leads to an increase in school dropout rates, especially in areas with limited access to transportation and educational infrastructure.

The relationship between the analysis results and the research questions in this study shows that the decline in education participation in East Java is the result of a complex interaction between digitalization, psychological, and socio-economic factors. Digitalization has proven to play a dual role—as an innovative learning tool and a source of new disparities due to limited access to technology. From an educational psychology perspective, the decline in participation can be explained by weak intrinsic motivation and a lack of emotional support during the adolescent identity formation phase. Therefore, strengthening character and learning motivation is urgently needed to create an adaptive and sustainable education system.

The results of this study confirm that the decline in school participation in East Java is small in

quantitative terms but significant in qualitative terms because it indicates disparities between educational levels and regions. The policy implications that can be drawn include the need for local governments to expand access to secondary education in rural areas, integrate digital literacy programs with character building and technology ethics, and strengthen the educational psychology approach through self-development-based counseling and mentoring programs. Thus, education policies that focus on balancing cognitive, emotional, and moral aspects are expected to increase learning motivation and sustainable educational participation in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis of education participation data in East Java in 2021–2022, it can be concluded that the education system in this province faces complex dynamics amid the process of social and digital transformation. Although the overall school participation rate remains high, the downward trend across all age groups indicates structural and cultural challenges that require serious attention. This phenomenon illustrates that the success of education is not only measured by participation rates, but also by the quality of access, motivation to learn, and readiness to adapt to technological developments.

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