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# Unpacking Mutual Expectations in a Scavenger Family: A Case Study Investigating the Parent-Child Relationship

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## Abstract

This study aimed to explore shared expectations about education in scavenger families. Participants in this study consisted of parents and children from 10 scavenger families selected using purposive sampling techniques. Research uses researchers as the main instrument with data collection through face-to-face interviews and observation. The results showed that the children of scavenger families had high expectations regarding education. The high expectations of parents towards the child's education do not cause stress or negative influence on the parent-child relationship. Despite the limitations of scavengers' families, the hope of getting a decent job and getting out of the cycle of poverty remains the main focus of children. These findings suggest that shared expectations about education can be a strong motivator for children of waste picker families to stay in school and achieve. Parents' belief in the role of education in changing the destiny of their families encourages children to prioritize education as a means to escape poverty. Despite the conflict of expectations between parent and child, adaptation and restructuring of views towards education occur in scavenger families. This research provides insight into the important role of families, especially parents, in shaping children's perceptions and expectations regarding education. Therefore, additional support and mentoring are needed to strengthen the confidence of children of waste picker families in education so that they remain motivated to attend school. This research can lay the groundwork for efforts to improve access to education and understand the factors that influence the expectations and motivations of children of scavenger families.

**Keywords:** Expectation, Scavenger, Education, Parents, Children

## 1. Introduction

The escalating population, coupled with imbalanced employment growth, has led to a surge in numbers. Faced with this challenge, individuals resort to seeking opportunities in the informal sector to meet their needs. The International Labor Organization reports that over 60 percent of the global working population engages in the informal economy (ILO, 2018). In Indonesia, an estimated 70% of the workforce is involved in informal work, particularly in the agricultural sector (Asian Development Bank, 2011).

Informal workers operate without formal employment relationships, lacking agreements on labor elements, wages, and power (Law No. 13 of 2003 on Employment, Pubs. L. No. 13, 2003). Scavengers, performing tasks such as collecting recyclables from households, fall under the category of informal workers (Nazara, 2010). Working as a scavenger not only provides income for daily needs but also contributes to education expenses (Slamet & Nasution, 2020).

Education holds a significant role in the lives of scavenger families, who prioritize it despite economic constraints. The emphasis on education is observed in the Gampong Village of Java Banda Aceh, where parents actively support their children's learning, even amid economic limitations (Clara, 2015). The commitment of scavenger families to education underscores its vital role in shaping the future of their children (Putro, 2012). Parental expectations, often defined as realistic beliefs about their children's future achievements, reflect judgments based on academic performance, educational attainment, or college attendance (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). The desire to send children to school emanates from the aspiration for a better life through higher education (Chasanah, 2009).

Another study on parental expectations conducted by Ma et al. suggests that positive parental expectations will improve their child's academic performance (Ma et al., 2018). The educational expectations of parents towards their children have a strong impact on their children's academic achievement (Do & Mancillas, 2005). Therefore, it is very important to have a positive perception and attitude towards their children's education so that children can perform well in their learning. These findings reinforce research conducted by Zhang et al., where they found that there is a reciprocal relationship between parental expectations and adolescent expectations, meaning they influence each other (Zhang et al., 2011).

Examining mutual expectations between parents and scavenger children becomes a compelling area of study. Understanding whether parental expectations align with the aspirations of their children in the context of scavenger families is crucial. Research by Lotko et al. emphasizes the importance of mutual expectations in relationships, suggesting that it fosters understanding and minimizes risks (Lotko et al., 2016). In scavenger families, such mutual expectations play a vital role in shaping motivations for education and family dynamics. Moreover, it is noteworthy that older people within scavenger families may hold high expectations for their children, even though they have a low level of education (Kirk et al., 2011). This dynamic adds another layer to the intricate relationship between parental expectations, education, and family dynamics in the context of informal work.

## 2. Method

This study used a qualitative approach to understand the expectations of parents and children of waste picker families towards education. This approach provides space for a deep understanding of their experiences and perceptions regarding education and future expectations.

Participants (Respondents) in this research were parents and children. Parents (P1-P10): The main respondents of this study were parents from a family of waste pickers in the Tamangapa Landfill area, Makassar. The inclusion criteria involve parents who have children who are or have undergone formal education. Children (C1-C10): Additional respondents are children from scavenger families who are or have undergone formal education. The selection of children who have firsthand experience with formal education and waste picker work provides comprehensive insight.

Research Process. Data Collection: Data collection is done through face-to-face interviews. Interview material to parents is related to statements about his job as a scavenger, his views on education, as well as expectations for his child's education. As for the scavenger child, the interview material puzzles with how he views education, why he wants to continue school, and what his future expectations are for the education he is undergoing. In addition to interviews, this study uses observations to triangulate the interview results data so that this study has more guaranteed validity. Interviews with parents are conducted by the first author and field record recording and observations on interview situations are conducted by the second author. Interviews with scavenger children are conducted by the third author and field record recording and observation of the situation of the interview is

conducted by the fourth author. Each interview session with parents and children is conducted with a span of 30 minutes to 50 minutes. Interviews are recorded using digital recording. During the interview process, questions constructed from the above research objectives are asked to parents and children with the freedom to answer what they feel about the question material. Use interview guidelines and observation guidelines and use recording aids for conversations. Parents are asked to answer questions about their current work experience, their desire for the continuation of their child's schooling, and their future expectations for their children. In children, they are asked to answer questions about their current school, the continuation of their education, and their hopes for the future. Research Context: The context of the research is explained in detail to provide a thorough understanding of the condition of waste picker families and their impact on education.

Research Limitations: Potential limitations of research include subjectivity of respondents and generalization of findings due to focus on one specific location and group.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Parents expectation

Parents, serving as the progenitors of a child through both biological and social bonds, assume a pivotal role within familial dynamics. Their significance extends beyond the conventional role of primary educators, encompassing a broader responsibility as the primary agents of socialization for their offspring. Parents undertake the crucial task of imparting behavioral patterns, attitudes, beliefs, and ideals to their children.

In the pursuit of their objectives, parents emphasize the paramount importance of sending their children to school. Despite residing in the Tamangapa landfill area of Makassar city and engaging in scavenging for livelihood, these parents recognize the enduring value of formal education. The decision to work as scavengers does not preclude them from prioritizing their children's education, acknowledging that education is a holistic process that extends beyond the familial domain to encompass schools as intermediaries in achieving their children's aspirations. The subsequent interviews conducted with parents working as scavengers in the Tamangapa landfill area shed light on their expectations.

When queried about their choice to engage in scavenging, the parents provided insightful responses:

*"I'm still a scavenger because I don't have the skills to work in an office. The important thing is that I can get money every day to help support my family". (P1).*

*"I became a scavenger because I didn't have another job. It's hard to find another job. I don't have the skills. I used to apply for a company, but asked for letters, I didn't have any. Cancel again, return to being a scavenger" (P2).*

*"So scavengers don't have to be difficult. If there is a basket and long iron to scavenge garbage. Jadila as a scavenger" (P3).*

The recurring theme among scavengers is the perceived lack of skills for alternative employment, necessitating their involvement in scavenging. Scavenging, perceived as a skill-independent activity, involves utilizing basic tools such as baskets and iron hooks to collect recyclables. The absence of formal qualifications often impedes these parents from securing alternative employment, underscoring the necessity of their continued involvement in scavenging for daily sustenance.

Economic considerations further highlight the significance of scavenging for these parents, with daily earnings ranging from Rp 30,000 to Rp 50,000. Despite the modest financial returns, these parents value the consistency of income derived from scavenging, given the absence of viable alternatives.

The interviews also reveal the parents' strong desire to provide their children with educational opportunities beyond their own level of education. One parent expresses this sentiment:

*"Let my son go to school. I'm making money for his school fees from scavenging so that I'll find another job that's better than this. Moreover, my son has already gone to college. Let me be the scavenger because I can get money every day" (P1).*

Despite their challenges as scavengers, parents are committed to ensuring their children attend school with the hope that education will open doors to better employment opportunities. Additional aspirations include the pursuit of their children's ideals and the prospect of their children not having to follow in their footsteps as scavengers. Other parents express hopes for their children to secure higher salaries:

*"If I can, don't be a scavenger, he better go to school so that he gets a job that has a higher salary than a scavenger" (P4).*

*"I don't want to stop being a scavenger. Hopefully my son can pursue his goals so as not to be a scavenger let alone my son gets a scholarship. Let me be the scavenger" (P7).*

It is not an exaggeration that all parents want high school children and pursues their ideals, as well as parents in scavenger families. They want their children to go to school and pursue their goals so that the work they do today does not decrease in their children. Parents may assume a job so scavenger does not promise a better future so do not want their child to be a scavenger. A parent has high hopes for his son by saying that:

*"My son stopped being a scavenger, so I schooled my son so that later I could get a better job so that he could work on the cruise. I would love to see my son work on a cruise so that later he can help the family buy a house, buy land because the current occupied is only rented" (P8).*

*"I want my son to go to high school so he can work in the office, or be a merchant so that he can help us later if he can't scavenge" (P10).*

He sent his son to work in shipping. Local people believe and see a lot of evidence that if people work in shipping then the income is very high and has a very good livelihood. The hope is that if his son works on the cruise then his son can help the family meet the needs of clothing, food, and boards. From observations made by the research team, it was found that what they have today is indeed below the poverty line. A house that is not habitable and is in the middle of a pile of garbage. Roofed and walled zinc used from the garbage. The clothes they wear are also not worth wearing. But they think it's just work clothes when they roll. Under such circumstances, it is natural that scavenger families are eager to get out of poverty by pinning their hopes on their children. If his son gets a good job, he will stop working as a scavenger.

In essence, the prevailing sentiment among parents in scavenger families is the desire for their children to pursue higher education, secure better employment, and ultimately break the cycle of scavenging. Despite their challenging circumstances, these parents harbor hopes and aspirations for a brighter future for their children.

### 3.2 Children Expectation

Children are considered the vanguards of a new generation, succeeding the ideals of the nation's struggle and serving as human resources for national development, commonly referred to as the nation's assets. During their school-age years, children exhibit distinct characteristics compared to younger age groups. This period marks their increasing responsibility for behavior in relationships with parents, peers, and others. The school-age phase becomes crucial as children acquire fundamental knowledge essential for successful adaptation to adult life and the development of specific skills.

In the context of scavenger families in the Tamangapa landfill area, the initiation of formal education for their children commences at the age of 7, specifically at the elementary school level. These children pursue formal education with various expectations from both parents and themselves. Interviews conducted with scavenger families' children shed light on their educational aspirations.

When questioned about their education, the children of scavengers provided insights into their educational journeys:

*"I began attending school at the age of 7, experienced a one-year dropout, and later resumed attending junior high school and high school with assistance. Initially, upon returning home from*

*school, I engaged in scavenging. Currently, during my college years from Monday to Thursday, I continue attending classes at my own expense" (C1).*

*"I attended Makassar Mulia High School with the aspiration to cease scavenging" (C2).*

*"I initiated my schooling at the age of 7, experienced a one-year hiatus upon completing elementary school due to my parents' divorce. Despite ranking 3rd in elementary school, I secured scholarships for junior high school. Currently, I attend Amanah Nusantara Junior High School" (C5).*

Among the respondents, scavenger children pursued education at various levels, including elementary, junior high, and college. Their educational journey, starting at the age of 7 and overcoming periods of unemployment or dropout, reflects a commitment to the significance of education for their future. Some children received scholarships from the government and aid from social institutions, indicating the recognition of their eligibility for such support.

Inquiries about their future aspirations revealed the following statement from one of the scavenger family's sons:

*"I hope to secure an alternative job that can change my family's fate and lift us out of poverty" (C4).*

This child shared his educational path, emphasizing that despite facing challenges such as dropout periods, he persevered in pursuing education up to the college level, aiming to alter the family's economic circumstances. Similar aspirations were expressed by another child aspiring to become a police officer, emphasizing the desire to discontinue scavenging:

*"Despite my parents being scavengers, I aspire to stay in school to become a policeman. The police look very impressive in their uniforms. I aim to be a guardian of small communities and improve our fate, steering away from scavenging" (C5).*

Scavenger children are acutely aware of the importance of education for their future prospects. They recognize that education not only provides opportunities for decent employment but also aligns with their parents' expectations. Interviews further demonstrated that these children were committed to their studies, with some receiving scholarships and government assistance.

To substantiate their claims, the research team requested educational report books as evidence. These documents confirmed the academic achievements of the children, with one child achieving the 2nd rank in their class. Despite facing familial challenges, the children's commitment to education remains unwavering. One child articulated their reason for continuing education:

*"I used to scavenge after school, but now my parents forbid it because I need to focus on my studies. Education is crucial for the future, and it takes precedence. My plan is to enter an office job" (C6).*

Prioritizing education at present is a strategy to secure a job aligned with future expectations. In addition to aspiring to work in an office, this child expressed views and expectations for other scavenger children:

*"Education is vital as it prepares individuals for the future, enabling the development of our potential for the workforce and facilitating an escape from poverty. Therefore, I hope more kids here aspire to attend school, providing a pathway to employment" (C5).*

This child desires other children to pursue education and anticipates obtaining decent employment. Interviews with additional children yielded similar sentiments:

*"I entered school at 7 years old, briefly pausing for 6 months to contribute to my parents' economic needs. I engage in scavenging after school until 5 p.m." (C8).*

According to this child, both school and scavenging are indispensable. While education is crucial for the future, helping the family economically through scavenging is equally vital for current needs, especially with the aspiration to become a sailor:

*"School is crucial for achieving your goals. I aspire to become a sailor and cease scavenging to escape poverty" (C9).*

Another informant affirmed:

*"I started school at 7 years old and never stopped until now. The reason I pursued education is that I observed my older brother working as a shopkeeper, and my second brother became an online driver. I aim to attend school to secure a good job" (C5).*

Despite acknowledging the challenges associated with scavenging, these children are determined to pursue education as a means to secure more promising employment opportunities. While scavenging may be a temporary economic solution, the long-term goal is to break the cycle of poverty by obtaining stable and fulfilling jobs through education.

In conclusion, scavenger children recognize the pivotal role of education in transforming their lives and the lives of their families. Their aspirations extend beyond immediate economic concerns, emphasizing the importance of education for personal and familial advancement. Despite facing obstacles, these children demonstrate resilience and a steadfast commitment to realizing their dreams through formal education.

#### **4. Discussion**

Deduced from the aforementioned interviews, the progeny of scavenger families aspire to extricate themselves from the scavenging profession, aiming for alternative and improved employment opportunities. Their ambitions extend to advancing their education to higher echelons, envisioning the mitigation of generational poverty. The altruistic inclination to aid both immediate family and peers in emancipating themselves from scavenging underscores the importance accorded to education as a conduit for breaking the cycle of poverty.

In the context of scavenger families, the familial structure, encompassing fathers, mothers, children, and additional members, exerts a profound influence on the developmental trajectory of the offspring. This influence permeates various facets of the developing child, including attitudes, beliefs, opportunities, habits, and personality traits. The family unit is posited as a fundamental institution in the realm of education, as delineated by educational theories and encapsulated (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2008, and Baferani, 2015).

Within the educational milieu, the significance of familial and parental roles is underscored by the widespread belief among parents and educators in the pivotal role of parental involvement in shaping a child's educational trajectory. This is notably evident in scavenger families, where parental commitment persists despite social and economic constraints. Flecha's study accentuates the nuanced correlation between family socioeconomic status and student learning outcomes, challenging deterministic perspectives that predispose children from certain backgrounds to academic failure (Flecha, 2012). The inculcation of cultural values, extending beyond mere sustenance, encompasses education, manners, discipline, responsibility, and independence, illustrating the multifaceted role of parents in shaping their children's ethos. From the beginning, parents can have a positive impact on academic achievement through early home literacy and maintain a strong expectation that their children will succeed in college (Froiland et al., 2013).

In the face of socio-economic challenges, the children's unanimous desire to attend school emerges as a testament to their conviction that education is the gateway to securing gainful employment, higher remuneration, and emancipation from poverty. However, the necessity for fortifying trust in schools, as indicated by Anzanie et al.'s research, underscores the fragility of confidence among scavenger children and the imperative need for mentorship to bolster their trust in the educational system (Sagita Dewi Anzanie et al., 2020).

Parents' heightened expectations regarding their children's education, geared towards securing respectable employment, are explored in light of Lotko et al.'s findings (2016), which posit that high expectations can induce stress. Contrary to this notion, the study observes a lack of stress among scavenger children, who exhibit remarkable resilience, engaging in scavenging after school, excelling academically, and even attaining scholarships. The absence of detrimental effects on the parent-child relationship and productivity in both familial responsibilities and academic pursuits challenges the conventional stress-induced paradigm.

The parent-child relationship is characterized as a psychological bond, posing potential short- and long-term implications for positive mental well-being. The inherent conflicts within this relationship, especially regarding mutual expectations in education, are acknowledged. However, parent-adolescent couples demonstrate adaptive capabilities, effectively recalibrating their relationships in response to the evolving needs of adolescent development. The family's operational efficiency is depicted as a collaborative endeavor to sustain equilibrium, featuring emotional interconnectedness and an encouragement for individual identity expansion. This familial cohesion, marked by unconditional acceptance and love, facilitates conflict resolution and proactive responses to members' requests for assistance (Kalmijn & Uunk, 2007).

Parents manifest their attitudes towards their offspring by crafting environments tailored to the specific needs of scavenger families, prioritizing child safety. The prohibition of scavenging activities by some parents reflects a concerted effort to motivate their children to attend school, thus aligning with parental expectations. Tatlah's assertion (2019) that parental expectations serve as motivational sources for academic achievement resonates, acknowledging that such expectations are pivotal in motivating scavenger children to pursue education. Nonetheless, the study underscores the negative impact of family socio-economic status on a child's learning spirit, postulating an inverse relationship.

The potent driving force behind parental involvement is identified as high expectations for their children's future, permeating the competitive landscape of the professional realm. This perspective, as posited by Zou et al., asserts that high expectations play a dual role, influencing both academic achievement and overall well-being (Zou et al., 2013). Parents maintain an optimistic outlook on their children's education and future employment prospects, anchored in the understanding that adequate education is the panacea for ceasing scavenging and transcending poverty. Contrary to the conventional belief that high parental expectations may burden children, the study indicates that these expectations serve as motivational impetuses. Children not only abstain from protesting parental wishes but also exhibit affirmative responses, contributing to a positive academic atmosphere.

The influence of *adultarapan*, defined as the collective influence of adults, is deemed significant in shaping adolescent academic competence and performance. The collaborative impact of maternal and teacher expectations is acknowledged, with high expectations yielding positive outcomes and low expectations incurring disruptive effects. Early interventions, such as home literacy and the cultivation of a strong expectation for collegiate success, are highlighted as avenues through which parents can positively impact academic achievement. The communication of parental values, expressed as hope, serves as a conduit for internalizing standards that students aspire to achieve (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010).

The study posits a convergence of attitudes and expectations between parents and children, underscoring the parallel nature of their aspirations. LiNdberg et al.'s research is invoked to support the contention that the expectations and aspirations of parents align harmoniously with those of their children (LiNdberg et al., 2019). The overarching priority assigned to education persists, even in cases where parents curtail scavenging activities to prioritize schooling and securing better employment opportunities. The study recognizes the variegated outcomes witnessed in individuals, acknowledging instances where individuals surmount adverse family circumstances to achieve success and conversely, where ostensibly supportive families fail to facilitate their potential realization (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2008).

## 5. Conclusion

The exploration of expectation within scavenger families unravels a profound narrative, where the offspring aspire to liberate themselves from scavenging, envisioning improved employment opportunities and higher education to break the shackles of generational poverty. The familial structure emerges as a pivotal influence on child development, permeating attitudes, beliefs, and opportunities within the offspring. The family unit, delineated by educational theories, becomes a fundamental institution, shaping the ethos of scavenger children. Amidst socio-economic challenges, the unwavering desire to attend school becomes a testament to the conviction that education is the gateway to emancipation. Parental expectations, explored in light of high aspirations for children's education, challenge the conventional notion that stress accompanies such expectations, revealing remarkable resilience and



affirmative responses among scavenger children. The parent-child relationship is depicted as a psychological bond with short- and long-term implications for positive mental well-being, showcasing adaptive capabilities in recalibrating relationships. The operational efficiency of the family becomes a collaborative endeavor, featuring emotional interconnectedness and an encouragement for individual identity expansion. Parental attitudes are manifested in crafted environments prioritizing child safety and education, aligning with expectations. The study identifies high expectations as a potent driving force behind parental involvement, influencing both academic achievement and overall well-being. A convergence of attitudes and expectations between parents and children is posited, underscoring the parallel nature of their aspirations. The study recognizes variegated outcomes, acknowledging instances of overcoming adversity for success and, conversely, ostensibly supportive families failing to facilitate potential realization. In conclusion, this narrative paints a tapestry of resilience, hope, and determination within scavenger families, urging for nuanced interventions and empathetic support to nurture aspirations and contribute to building a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape.

The expectation and struggles of scavenger families highlight the importance of education as a catalyst for change. Efforts should be directed towards improving the trust of scavenger children in the education system through targeted mentoring programs. Additionally, policies that support educational access, scholarships, and parental involvement can contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty in scavenger families. Recognizing the significance of the family unit in shaping educational values, interventions should aim to empower parents as partners in fostering their children's academic success.

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