

Social Capital, Cultural Capital, and Inequality Reproduction in Low-Income Families

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Abstract

Education is widely regarded as an important pathway for social mobility among low-income families. Nevertheless, previous studies on poverty and education have often emphasized structural economic constraints while giving less attention to how social and cultural capital operate within everyday family educational practices. This article examines how forms of social and cultural capital shape children's educational experiences within three low-income families in Pasirmae Village, Pandeglang Regency, Indonesia. By focusing on a small number of cases, the study aims not to generalize broadly, but to provide an in-depth understanding of how educational support is negotiated and practiced in disadvantaged household contexts. This study employs a qualitative case study approach involving three low-income families. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and observations of educational practices within the household. The analysis draws primarily on Pierre Bourdieu's framework of habitus, capital, and educational reproduction, while incorporating perspectives on social capital from James Coleman and Robert Lawang. The findings indicate that, within these cases, families demonstrated strong internal social capital through emotional attachment, parental commitment, and moral support for children's schooling. However, limited cultural capital and weak connections with educational institutions constrained parents' ability to navigate school expectations and access broader educational resources. These

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conditions suggest that family educational practices tended to prioritize maintaining school participation rather than enabling upward educational mobility. The study contributes to discussions on educational inequality by illustrating how unequal access to convertible forms of capital may shape educational experiences among poor families in specific local contexts.

Keywords: Social Capital, Cultural Capital, Children's Education, Low-Income Families, Reproduction of Inequality.

INTRODUCTION

Social learning research has increased dramatically in recent years, thanks in part to fruitful encounters between conceptual and empirical strategies. This is combined with a unique emphasis on learning techniques that place the learning process within an approach of decision-making analysis. Recognizing why, when, and how humans learn from others is a major challenge, but it is crucial in many different fields of study (Boyd et al., 2016). The constructivist model suggests that understanding can only occur within the human brain. It does not have to correspond to any fact. Students would be constantly attempting to construct their possible mental aspect of the entire globe based on their perceptions of it. Students will keep updating their thought processes to represent new knowledge as they recognize each novel experience, and will thus build their perception of reality.

This is a fundamental but inadequate prerequisite for knowledge. People must understand what they will be studying, what skills they are acquiring, and how they may showcase how much they have understood. As a result, several scholars are skeptical about the true potential of informal learning activities (Selwyn, 2010). The acquisition of structured and unstructured education aspects is developed in response to the need to change formal training. It is even more important in light of the ever-changing environment of educational technological innovations (Kamenetz, 2010; Sangrà & Wheeler, 2013) even though there have been claims arguing such usage of digital knowledge and social networking does not always translate into knowledge (Williams et al., 2011). To illustrate, Wiley and Hilton (2009) state that individuals may be browsing through fascinating and meaningful learning content, but the resources they are utilizing to study may not provide them with the specific information they want. Top institutions like MIT and Harvard which have collaboratively worked with Coursera, a service that supplies a forum for MOOCs to be provided to everyone at anyplace using a conventional method (such as Udacity and Udemy) have even founded new organizations to provide lessons (Bates, 2012). However, despite



being regarded the buzzword in 2012, MOOC programs have become a serious problem for most college students in the United States and in other parts of the world, for they are unsure how to respond meaningfully to those resources (Daniel, 2012). Therefore, it is vital for the management officers, teachers, and students to know the concepts of connectivism and constructivism in social learning. Addressing such matter, this paper looks into Social Learning Theory in terms of the two widely recognized research approaches-connectivism and constructivism. The paper provides a brief overview of both approaches prior to the theoretical insights of Social Learning Theory with primary and higher education in mind. The remaining parts of the paper cover the authors' discussion and conclusion.

METHOD

A. Research Approach and Design

This study employed a qualitative multiple-case study design to examine how social and cultural capital shape educational practices among low-income families. The research was conducted in Pasirmae Village, Pandeglang Regency, Indonesia, involving three purposively selected low-income families with school-age children. Data were collected over approximately three months through participant observation, repeated family visits, informal interactions, and detailed field notes. The data focused on family educational routines, parent-child interactions, social relationships, educational values, and access to educational resources within the households.

B. Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies using a complementary triangulation approach. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents and three school-age children, focusing on educational experiences, parenting practices, social relations, economic constraints, and school interactions. Participant observations during home visits documented parent-child interactions, study routines, learning conditions, and the use of social networks in supporting education. Supporting documents, field notes, and photographs were also examined, with informed consent, parental consent, child assent, and participant anonymity maintained throughout the research process.

C. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed interpretively through thematic analysis informed by Bourdieu's

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concepts of habitus, social and cultural capital, and social reproduction, complemented by Coleman's social capital and Lawang's socially embedded relations. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were repeatedly reviewed and coded inductively and theoretically to identify patterns in educational aspirations, parenting practices, social networks, institutional access, and resource constraints. The codes were organized into broader themes and compared across cases to examine how families mobilized available capital and negotiated educational participation under limited resources. Trustworthiness was strengthened through data triangulation, member checking, an audit trail, and reflexive notes to support transparency, consistency, and critical interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the empirical findings concerning how social capital and cultural capital shape children's educational practices within three low-income families in Pasirmae Village. The findings are organized thematically to distinguish descriptive evidence from theoretical interpretation. Rather than evaluating parenting practices normatively, the analysis focuses on how educational participation is negotiated within conditions of limited economic resources, restricted institutional access, and unequal capital ownership.

A. Participant Profiles

To protect participant confidentiality, all family names used in this study are pseudonyms. The families were selected because they met the criteria of low-income households based on village administrative information, unstable informal employment, and limited educational resources within the household

Table 1. Participant Profiles

Family	Parents' Age Range	Main Occupation	Parents' Educational Background	Child's School Level	Characteristics of Low-Income Condition
Family A	Late 30s-early 40s	Agricultural day laborer	Elementary school graduate	Junior high school	Irregular daily income, limited educational facilities, dependence on seasonal work



Family B	Early-mid 40s	Informal construction worker	Elementary school dropout	Elementary school	Unstable income, no smartphone access, limited literacy
Family C	Mid 30s-early 40s	Motorcycle taxi driver and casual labor	Junior high school graduate	Senior high school	Low but relatively stable income, limited economic resources, partial digital access

The findings indicate that all families placed high value on education despite their economic limitations. Parents consistently expressed aspirations for their children to attain higher educational achievement than previous generations. However, the forms of support available to children differed substantially depending on the families' access to institutional networks, educational knowledge, and communication resources.

B. Internal Social Capital and Everyday Educational Support

Across all three families, strong internal social capital was reflected in emotional attachment, parental supervision, moral encouragement, and the daily efforts undertaken by parents to sustain their children's educational participation. Although the families possessed limited economic and cultural resources, parents consistently emphasized the importance of schooling and attempted to establish routines that supported learning activities at home. A mother from Family A explained: *"I always remind my child to study at night, even if I cannot help with the lessons because I did not go to school for long"*. She further described her daily practice: *"After finishing household work, I usually sit beside my child while studying. I cannot answer the questions, but I want my child to know that I care about school."*

Field observations in Family A indicated that evening study sessions were regularly conducted in a shared living area. Household activities such as watching television or social visits were often postponed until the child had completed homework. Despite the limited physical learning environment, parents actively monitored attendance and encouraged discipline regarding school schedules. In Family B, parental support was also evident, although constrained by lower literacy and limited access to educational resources. One parent stated *"I cannot help much with school assignments because I do not understand the lessons, but I always tell my child not to skip school"*. Another interview excerpt revealed: *"If there is homework that we do not understand, I usually ask an older relative or neighbor to help. The important thing is that my child*



continues learning". Observations showed that educational responsibilities were sometimes shared with older siblings or relatives, who acted as informal learning supporters. Parents regularly checked whether children attended school and completed assignments, even when they were unable to provide direct academic assistance.

Family C demonstrated relatively stronger educational routines supported by more consistent parent-child interaction. One parent explained: *"Every evening I ask about what happened at school and whether there are assignments that need to be completed"*. The parent further noted: *"If I receive information from teachers, I immediately tell my child so that nothing is missed"*. During home visits, the researcher observed frequent discussions between parents and children regarding school activities, examination schedules, and future educational plans. Although economic limitations remained evident, educational matters occupied a visible place in daily family conversations and routines.

These interview and observational findings indicate that internal social capital was consistently present across all cases through emotional support, parental supervision, and strong educational aspirations. However, the effectiveness of this internal social capital remained constrained within the broader educational field. Emotional commitment and family cohesion could not fully compensate for limited cultural capital, restricted academic knowledge, low literacy, and insufficient familiarity with institutional educational expectations. Consequently, educational practices within these households were primarily oriented toward sustaining school participation and educational continuity rather than actively facilitating academic advancement or upward educational mobility.

C. Institutional Social Capital and Unequal School Relations

Differences among families became more visible in their relationships with educational institutions. Families possessing better communication access and stronger confidence in interacting with teachers tended to maintain more stable school relations. Family C, for instance, actively communicated with teachers through messaging applications and regularly monitored school information. In contrast, Family B experienced considerable difficulties participating in school communication systems because the household lacked stable internet access and digital devices. One parent stated: *"Sometimes information from school arrives late because we do not always have access to a phone."*

Observational data further indicated that some parents avoided direct communication with teachers because they felt uncomfortable or lacked confidence discussing academic matters.



These conditions did not formally exclude families from education, but they created forms of relational exclusion in which parents occupied weaker positions within institutional communication networks. The findings suggest that institutional social capital was unevenly distributed among families. Families with stronger institutional access were better positioned to navigate administrative procedures, school expectations, and communication systems. Conversely, limited institutional literacy reduced families' participation in educational decision-making processes.

D. Cultural Capital and Educational Constraints

The study also found that cultural capital significantly influenced children's educational experiences. Parents with limited educational backgrounds frequently encountered difficulties assisting children with assignments, understanding curricular language, or supporting long-term educational planning. One parent from Family B explained: *"When my child asks about schoolwork, I often cannot explain because I do not understand the material."*

Field observations confirmed that educational resources within the household were minimal. Most families possessed very few books, limited learning facilities, and restricted access to supplementary educational materials. Children therefore relied heavily on independent learning strategies, peer support, or assistance from older siblings. The mismatch between the family habitus and the dominant expectations of the educational field created adaptive but fragile educational practices. Although parents valued schooling, the forms of cultural capital recognized by schools such as academic language, digital literacy, and institutional familiarity remained unevenly distributed. Consequently, children from these households often struggled to meet educational expectations despite sustained parental encouragement.

E. Typology of Educational Practices among Three Families

To deepen the analysis, this study developed a qualitative typology of educational practices derived from recurring thematic patterns across the three cases. Unlike quantitative classification, the typology was constructed interpretively through comparative coding of interview data, field observations, and patterns of interaction between habitus, social capital, cultural capital, and institutional access.

The categories were generated from three analytical dimensions:

1. the consistency of educational habitus within family life;
2. the family's ability to mobilize internal and institutional social capital; and



3. the extent to which available capital could support children's educational participation within the educational field.

The typological labels were generated through an iterative thematic coding process that integrated interview transcripts, observation notes, and cross-case comparisons. Initial codes were developed from recurring patterns related to educational habitus, parental involvement, institutional engagement, cultural capital, and access to educational resources. These codes were subsequently clustered into broader analytical categories reflecting the families' capacities to mobilize and convert social and cultural capital within the educational field. Family A was categorized as Adaptive-Vulnerable because the coding revealed consistent parental commitment to schooling and daily educational supervision, yet observations indicated limited institutional engagement and low educational literacy. This pattern was reflected in the mother's statement, *"I always remind my child to study at night, even if I cannot help with the lessons because I did not go to school for long,"* and was further supported by observations showing regular study routines despite scarce educational resources. Family B was classified as Delegative-Marginalized because the data showed weak institutional connectivity, limited literacy, and a tendency to rely on intermediary support from siblings or others in educational matters. This interpretation was supported by the parent's statement, *"Sometimes information from school arrives late because we do not always have access to a phone,"* as well as observations indicating restricted participation in school communication networks. Family C was identified as Resilient-Limited because coding highlighted relatively stronger institutional engagement, partial digital literacy, and more stable educational routines despite continuing economic constraints. Observational evidence demonstrated regular communication with teachers and active monitoring of school information, while interviews indicated sustained parental efforts to support educational participation. Accordingly, the typology should be understood as an interpretive analytical construct grounded in recurring empirical patterns rather than a quantitative classification or measurement instrument.

Table 2. Typology of Educational Practices in Three Low-Income Families

Analytical Aspect	Family A	Family B	Family C
Typology	Adaptive-Vulnerable	Delegative-Marginalized	Resilient-Limited



Educational Habitus	Education valued through discipline and school attendance	Educational aspirations present but inconsistently practiced	Education integrated consistently into daily routines
Internal Social Capital	Strong emotional support and parental supervision	Moral support present but parenting role partially delegated	Collaborative parent-child learning support
Institutional Social Capital	Limited communication with school institutions	Weak institutional engagement and low communication access	More active communication with teachers and school networks
Cultural Capital	Low parental educational literacy	Very limited literacy and educational familiarity	Limited but supported by partial digital literacy
Educational Practices	Maintaining school participation under constraints	Dependence on intermediary support from siblings or others	Stable participation despite structural limitations
Risk of Educational Inequality	High when academic demands increase	High due to institutional marginalization	Still present despite stronger adaptation strategies

The typological comparison demonstrates that variations in educational practices were shaped less by parental motivation than by unequal capacities to mobilize and convert available forms of capital within the educational field. Family A demonstrated strong emotional commitment to education but lacked institutional and cultural resources to support long-term educational advancement. Family B experienced the greatest vulnerability because weak institutional access combined with limited literacy reduced parental involvement in school-related processes. In contrast, Family C exhibited relatively stronger adaptive capacities through more effective engagement with institutional resources. Observations revealed that parents in Family C regularly accessed school information through smartphone-based messaging applications and maintained communication with teachers regarding attendance, assignments, and academic progress. During interviews, one parent explained, *"We usually receive information from the teacher through WhatsApp, so I can remind my child about assignments and school activities."* In addition, home observations indicated the existence of a more consistent evening study routine, during which parents monitored homework completion and assisted children in accessing digital learning materials when required. Although the family possessed only limited technological



resources and modest educational backgrounds, these forms of institutional communication and partial digital literacy enabled more stable educational participation compared to Families A and B. Nevertheless, structural limitations associated with low income and restricted cultural capital continued to constrain opportunities for broader educational mobility.

From a Bourdieusian perspective, these findings indicate that educational inequality operates not only through economic deprivation but also through unequal recognition of capital within institutional settings. Schools implicitly reward forms of cultural competence and institutional literacy that are more accessible to socially advantaged families. Consequently, the educational practices observed among these low-income households tended to remain adaptive and survival-oriented rather than transformative in terms of social mobility.

DISCUSSION

This study contributes to contemporary debates on educational inequality by demonstrating that children's educational practices in low-income families are shaped not simply by deficits in parental motivation, but by the relational interaction between habitus, capital ownership, and the institutional logic of schooling. While previous scholarship on educational inequality has consistently emphasized the importance of economic disadvantage, the present study refines this discussion by showing how inequalities are reproduced through uneven capacities to convert existing resources into forms of capital recognized within the educational field. In this regard, the findings support Bourdieu's argument that educational institutions privilege forms of capital associated with dominant social groups, while also extending recent studies on educational reproduction by illustrating how these mechanisms operate in everyday family-school interactions within poor communities.

1. Educational Aspirations and the Limits of Structural Conversion

The findings confirm prior research indicating that low-income families frequently maintain strong educational aspirations despite severe economic constraints (Archer-Kuhn et al., 2020; Hill & Tyson, 2021). However, this study adds a more relational interpretation to these discussions by demonstrating that aspirations function primarily as moral commitments rather than as convertible institutional resources. In the observed families, aspirations were consistently articulated through encouragement, emotional support, and the symbolic positioning of education as a pathway toward a better future. Nevertheless, these aspirations could not easily be translated into sustained academic advantages because families lacked access to institutional



knowledge, educational networks, and procedural literacy required within the educational field.

This finding reinforces the broader argument of social reproduction theory that inequality persists not because disadvantaged families devalue education, but because educational institutions reward forms of capital unevenly distributed across social classes. At the same time, the present study nuances previous explanations that frame poor families primarily through the lens of deprivation. Rather than depicting low-income households as passive victims of structural inequality, the cases reveal active adaptive strategies through which parents attempt to maintain children's educational participation despite limited resources. In this sense, the study aligns with recent critiques of deficit-oriented interpretations of poor families that overlook agency and relational resilience (Goudeau et al., 2021; Lee, 2024).

At the same time, the findings also suggest caution against overly optimistic assumptions regarding the transformative power of aspirations alone. Earlier policy narratives often implied that strengthening parental expectations would substantially improve educational mobility. The present study instead supports emerging evidence showing that aspirations without institutional support may produce limited mobility outcomes and, in some cases, additional emotional burdens for children (Bach, 2025; Dimakos, 2022). Thus, this study extends existing debates by showing that the problem lies less in the absence of aspirations and more in the unequal institutional conditions under which aspirations must operate.

Nevertheless, these conclusions should be interpreted carefully. Because the study focuses on a small number of families within a specific social context, the findings cannot be generalized as representative of all low-income households. Rather than claiming universal patterns, the study provides an analytically grounded illustration of how aspirations interact with structural constraints in particular relational settings.

2. Internal Social Capital and Unequal Capital Conversion

A central contribution of this study lies in its analysis of the limits of internal social capital conversion. Existing literature has frequently emphasized the positive role of close family relationships in supporting children's educational persistence (Benner et al., 2022; Dufur, 2024). The findings of this study confirm that strong emotional ties within families help sustain children's motivation and continuity in schooling. However, the cases also demonstrate that emotionally cohesive family relationships do not automatically generate institutional advantages.

This finding extends previous discussions by distinguishing between supportive social relations and convertible institutional capital. In the observed families, social capital operated



primarily as bonding capital characterized by emotional closeness, supervision, and shared educational values. Yet this form of capital rarely translated into institutional recognition because it was not accompanied by cultural capital aligned with school expectations. As a result, family cohesion functioned more as a mechanism of endurance than as a pathway toward competitive educational positioning.

This observation refines Bourdieu's theory of capital conversion by illustrating that conversion failures are not merely economic in nature but also relational and institutional. The findings support recent studies suggesting that social capital becomes educationally effective only when connected to institutional networks and dominant cultural codes (Jin, 2026; Lessky, 2025; Tan, 2023). However, the present study adds empirical depth by showing how these conversion limits are experienced in routine educational practices, including communication with schools, monitoring assignments, and navigating academic procedures.

Importantly, the findings also complicate romanticized assumptions regarding family solidarity in poor communities. While strong internal ties provided emotional protection, they occasionally intensified dependence on intra-family arrangements that lacked broader institutional reach. This observation partially supports arguments by Dufur et al. (2022) and Liu (2026) that dense internal social relations may become restrictive when families possess limited bridging opportunities. Nevertheless, the present study does not suggest that internal social capital is detrimental; rather, it demonstrates that its educational effectiveness remains structurally conditioned.

3. Relational Exclusion and School-Family Inequality

The study further contributes to debates on school-family relations by conceptualizing inequality as a form of relational exclusion rather than solely material deprivation. Previous research on digital inequality has largely focused on technological access gaps (Pham et al., 2021; Selwyn, 2021). The findings here confirm that unequal access to communication technologies remains important, but they also demonstrate that exclusion operates through subtler institutional expectations regarding participation, responsiveness, and procedural literacy.

In the cases examined, schools implicitly assumed that all parents possessed adequate digital competencies and communication capacities. Families unable to meet these expectations appeared institutionally "inactive," even when they remained deeply committed to their children's education. This finding extends Budde (2024) argument concerning unequal participation spaces by showing how institutional norms of engagement may unintentionally



marginalize low-income parents. Exclusion therefore occurred less through direct rejection than through the normalization of middle-class participation standards embedded in school communication systems.

The study also refines contemporary discussions of the digital divide by emphasizing the importance of institutional mediation. The findings suggest that digital inequality cannot be reduced simply to device ownership or internet access, as highlighted by Pierce (2024) and Yajie (2023). Instead, educational participation increasingly depends on the capacity to navigate institutional communication structures that presuppose familiarity with bureaucratic and technological practices. In this context, digitalization may intensify inequality when institutional systems fail to account for heterogeneous forms of capital among families.

At the same time, the present study does not claim that digitalization inherently produces exclusion. The evidence instead suggests that exclusion emerges when technological systems are implemented without adequate relational accommodation. Because the analysis is based on a limited number of cases, broader claims regarding digital transformation across educational systems would require comparative investigation across different school and community settings.

4. Cultural Capital and the Institutional Logic of Schooling

The findings also reinforce longstanding arguments regarding the centrality of cultural capital in educational reproduction (Lareau & Weininger, 2021; Reay, 2022). Parents with limited formal education encountered difficulties in interpreting pedagogical expectations, assisting with academic tasks, and engaging confidently with institutional procedures. However, rather than merely confirming earlier theories, the study extends them by demonstrating how cultural capital deficits operate through everyday interactional processes within school-family relationships.

The observed mismatch between family habitus and institutional expectations did not produce outright rejection of schooling. Instead, it generated adaptive educational practices characterized by partial participation, dependence on intermediaries, and pragmatic accommodation to institutional demands. This finding complicates deterministic interpretations of reproduction theory that portray disadvantaged families as entirely disconnected from educational institutions. The families in this study remained strongly oriented toward educational participation, yet their participation occurred within structurally unequal conditions that limited recognition of their existing resources. This observation contributes to ongoing debates concerning the flexibility of habitus under conditions of inequality. While Bourdieu's framework is often criticized for emphasizing structural continuity, the present cases reveal that families



actively negotiate institutional constraints, even when such negotiations remain limited in transformative capacity. Thus, the study supports more relational interpretations of habitus as adaptive and contextually negotiated rather than entirely fixed.

5. Typologies of Educational Practice and Variations Within Poverty

Another contribution of the study lies in showing heterogeneity among low-income families. Existing literature sometimes treats poor households as socially homogeneous categories. In contrast, the typological analysis developed here demonstrates that educational practices vary according to different configurations of habitus and capital ownership.

The first family illustrates how a strong pro-education habitus may sustain adaptive educational practices despite limited cultural capital. The second family demonstrates delegative educational practices shaped by restricted technological resources and weak institutional engagement, where educational mediation relies heavily on siblings or other intermediary actors. In contrast, the third family exhibits relatively more stable school relationships due to stronger institutional social capital, more active communication with teachers, and partial digital literacy. These resources enabled the family to navigate school communication and educational requirements more effectively than the other cases, although their educational opportunities remained constrained by limited formal cultural capital and broader structural disadvantages.

These variations extend previous discussions on educational inequality by indicating that poverty does not generate a single educational trajectory. Rather, different combinations of capital produce distinct modes of educational adaptation. This finding is important because it challenges simplified assumptions that attribute educational disadvantage solely to economic scarcity. Instead, the study demonstrates that relational access to institutional resources significantly shapes educational practices within poor communities. Nevertheless, the typology proposed here should be understood as analytically illustrative rather than universally representative. The limited number of cases does not permit broad categorical generalization. Future comparative studies involving wider socioeconomic and institutional contexts would be necessary to evaluate the broader applicability of these typologies.

6. Education and the Reproduction of Social Inequality

Overall, this study suggests that education operates as a socially differentiated field rather than a fully neutral mechanism of mobility. Consistent with Reay (2022) and Goudeau et al. (2021), the findings indicate that institutional expectations surrounding communication, parental



involvement, and academic participation tend to align more closely with middle-class forms of capital. Recent studies similarly demonstrate that educational success is strongly shaped by the unequal distribution of cultural and institutional resources embedded within family practices and school structures (Sari, 2026). However, the present study adds a more relational and context-specific perspective by illustrating how educational reproduction occurs not only through formal institutional arrangements, but also through subtle everyday interactions between families and schools. In this regard, the findings support emerging arguments that inequalities are increasingly reproduced through relational and digital mechanisms that shape access to institutional participation (Wang et al., 2026).

Importantly, the study does not suggest that social reproduction is absolute or unavoidable. The three cases reveal persistent efforts by low-income families to sustain children's educational participation despite significant structural constraints. Nevertheless, these efforts were largely oriented toward maintaining continuity in schooling rather than generating transformative educational mobility. This finding refines reproduction theory by showing that resilience and inequality can coexist simultaneously within educational practices among poor families. In line with Lessky (2025), the study indicates that disadvantaged families actively negotiate institutional barriers, even when their opportunities for capital conversion remain structurally limited.

At the same time, the analytical contribution of this study should be understood within the limits of its qualitative case-based design. Because the research focuses on three families within one village context, the findings are not intended to provide universal or statistically generalizable claims regarding all low-income communities. Rather, the study offers an analytically grounded illustration of how habitus, capital, and educational structures interact within a specific social setting. The value of the study therefore lies in extending theoretical discussions on social reproduction and capital conversion through empirically situated analysis rather than broad representational coverage.

The policy implications emerging from this analysis should consequently be interpreted cautiously. Nevertheless, several practical implications can be identified for key educational stakeholders. First, schools should strengthen inclusive communication strategies by providing multiple channels of information delivery that do not rely exclusively on digital platforms, thereby accommodating parents with limited technological access and institutional literacy. Schools may also develop parental educational literacy programs, including workshops or mentoring activities that help parents understand curriculum expectations, learning support strategies, and school



procedures. Second, village governments can play an intermediary role by facilitating community-based educational support networks, expanding bridging social capital among families, schools, and local organizations, and providing accessible learning resources for children from low-income households. Third, local education offices should support policies that enhance institutional accessibility, reduce bureaucratic barriers to parental engagement, and provide targeted assistance for disadvantaged families through outreach programs and school-community partnerships. Such interventions may help address the relational barriers identified in this study and strengthen families' capacity to participate more effectively in the educational field (Espinoza et al., 2026).

Future research should be distinguished from these practical implications. Given the limited scope of evidence derived from three families in a single rural context, broader comparative studies are needed to examine whether similar patterns of capital conversion, relational exclusion, and educational inequality emerge across different educational, geographic, and socioeconomic settings. Longitudinal research would also be valuable for assessing how family educational practices evolve over time and for evaluating the long-term effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving parental educational literacy, institutional accessibility, and school-community collaboration (MacKenzie et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study provides an analytically bounded contribution to discussions on educational inequality by examining how children's educational practices are shaped within three low-income families in a rural Indonesian context. The findings suggest that educational practices among economically disadvantaged families cannot be understood solely through parental motivation or concern for schooling. Rather, the cases illustrate how educational practices emerge through the interaction between family habitus, the ownership and structure of capital, and the unequal institutional logic operating within the educational field. Using Pierre Bourdieu's relational framework, the study demonstrates that social capital particularly in the form of close family relationships and community-based support plays an important role in sustaining children's school participation. However, the cases also indicate that social capital alone does not automatically generate transformative educational outcomes when families possess limited cultural capital and weak capacities to convert resources into forms recognized within formal educational institutions.

Through the development of a typology of children's educational practices, this study further shows that variations among low-income families are associated not primarily with



differences in aspirations or parental commitment, but with differences in families' structural positions in accessing, understanding, and utilizing educational resources. In this respect, the study supports and extends previous critiques of normative explanations of poverty that reduce educational disadvantage to individual attitudes or family negligence. At the same time, the findings refine debates on social capital by illustrating the limits of the functionalist perspective associated with James Coleman, which tends to conceptualize social capital as a relatively neutral resource that directly contributes to educational success. The present cases instead suggest that the effectiveness of social capital is contingent upon its relationship with other forms of capital and with the institutional structure of the educational field itself. Consequently, social capital cannot be separated from broader relations of power, unequal institutional expectations, and mechanisms of symbolic exclusion within education systems.

Nevertheless, the conclusions of this study should be interpreted within the limits of its qualitative and case-based design. Because the research is based on three families within one village context, the findings are not intended to produce broad statistical generalizations about all low-income families. Rather, the contribution of the study lies in providing a contextual and relational illustration of how habitus, capital, and educational structures interact in everyday educational practices. Future research could strengthen these findings through comparative studies across different regions, school contexts, and socioeconomic settings, as well as through longitudinal approaches examining how educational practices and capital conversion evolve over time. The study also offers several cautious implications for local educational policy. The findings suggest that interventions directed toward low-income families should not rely exclusively on increasing parental participation or strengthening informal social networks. More inclusive educational strategies may require institutional efforts to expand access to cultural capital, improve parental educational literacy, simplify school communication systems, and reduce relational barriers that constrain participation in the educational field. However, these implications should be understood as analytical suggestions derived from limited case evidence rather than as universally applicable policy prescriptions. Overall, the habitus-capital-field framework remains valuable for understanding educational inequality because it situates children's educational experiences within broader structural and relational processes rather than reducing them to matters of individual choice alone.



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