

INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL MOTIVATION AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF THE ORANG ASLI STUDENTS IN CAMERON HIGHLAND

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ABSTRACT

The Orang Asli people live in isolated communities in Malaysia. Their remote living has served many of them to develop misconception that a little benefit will be gained in sending their children to schools. Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify the relationship between parental motivation and academic achievement among the Orang Asli students in Cameron Highlands, Pahang. A self developed questionnaire was used to collect data from four and five of Orang Asli students in three schools. The descriptive analysis was used to describe percentage, mean, and standard deviation of the data collected. Pearson Correlation was used to examine the relationship between parental motivation and academic achievement of the students. The result showed a significant correlation between parental motivation and academic achievement of the respondents, indicating that parental motivation contributes positively to academic achievement of the Orang Asli students.

KEYWORDS: Parental motivation, academic achievement, orang asli

INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, the Orang Asli or Aboriginal communities generally fall into the category of poor communities. In nearly all aspects, they have fallen far behind other races. The Orang Asli lives in isolated and remote clusters away from modern developments. Their remote living has served only to strengthen the misconception that there is a little benefit in sending their children to schools. The Orang Asli children are classified as risk group in the context of modernization and hence face serious problems (MOE, 2006). Realizing this issue, the Malaysian government has launched its policy towards the community, which allocated special help to provide opportunities for equal footing, integration with advanced section of population, and should not be moved from traditional areas. The Ministry of Rural and Regional Development has entrusted JHEOA to oversee the affairs of the Orang Asli. It is the responsibility of JHEOA to ensure that the aboriginal community enters into the mainstream of the national economic development. The focus is to upgrade the quality of life of the aboriginal community through educational programmes, land development, economic and social development, resettlement, provision of infrastructure and public amenities, training and human development (Nicholas, 2005).

Education is the main agenda in the aboriginal development programme and a key mechanism toward the campaign of quality of life (Mohd Tap, 1990). However, the programme is to supplement and not replace the national educational system but to compensate the Orang Asli communities for their lack of familiarity with formal education (Juli, 1991). The Orang asli Affairs Department (JHEOA, 2000) ran a three-tiered educational programme aimed at preparing aboriginal children to enter the national education system; 1) The first three years children went to village schools taught by JHEOA field staff, some Malays and some of the Orang Asli. 2) Students who continued after three years went to central primary schools in larger communities of the Orang Asli where they could continue through to primary six. Most of the teachers were Malays provided by the MOE. 3) Students who passed their exams at the end of sixth grade could go to normal government secondary schools in nearby rural or urban areas. Accordingly, a critical factor that often determines success and failure in learning among the aboriginal communities is parental motivation to study. Therefore, education aspect has been the main focus of Malaysian government in achieving Vision 2020 so that no one will be left behind in the modern development. However, many of Orang Asli students are still left behind to achieve the mission of “no left behind” in the pursuit of education (Colin Nicholas 2007 ; Utusan Malaysia, May 2007).

There are four programs two of which are related to education and services, and health and medical services. These two programmes were incorporated in a larger scheme involving the other programs intended to reduce and subsequently eliminate poverty among the aboriginals to improve their quality of life, to cultivate self-confidence, self-reliance and good ethics, to protect and promote art and culture of the aboriginal, to increase participation of the aboriginal in industry and commerce, and to upgrade the department's organizational credibility, efficiency and effectiveness. As the idea of educating the indigenous began to materialize in Malaysia, other government agencies such as Ministry of Health (KKM), Community Development Department (KEMAS) and Department of Social Welfare (JKM) took a somewhat aloof and distant interest. The implication of providing education for this community has drawn the attention of various non-governmental agencies (NGOs) and voluntary bodies such as Islamic Youth Movement (ABIM), Interfaith Religious Commission (IRC), and Malaysian Christian Association for Relief (Malaysian CARE).

The Ministry of Education is highly committed to providing education to all and in meeting the goal of equal opportunities in education for aboriginal children. Table 1 shows the enrolment in 2000 whereby there were 19,033 aboriginal children enrolled in primary schools and in 2007, the number then rose to 26,124, which is an increase of 21 per cent. Similarly, while there were 4,186 aboriginal students in secondary schools in 2000, by 2007 their number had increased to 9,684 – an increase of 56.9 %.

Table 1 Enrolment of Indigenous Students, 2000 – 2007

Year	Preschool	Secondary	Primary	Total
2000	56	4,186	19,033	
2001	122	4,653	21,131	
2002	237	5,971	21,704	
2003	595	5,239	20,871	
2004	531	6,219	22,098	
2005	706	6,675	23,607	
2006	1027	7,559	25,354	
2007	1229	9,684	26,124	

(Source: Aboriginal Affairs Department (JHEOA, 2007)

However, the actual number of aboriginal students leaves the schools is high to be considered worry. Studies done by the JHEOA (2006) and by independent consultants revealed that the dropout rate among the Orang Asli children, at all levels, is disproportionately high compared to the national average. It is found that for every 100 of the Orang Asli children entering standard one, only about six will be expected to reach Form five eleven years later. That is, 94% would have dropped out by then. The dropout rate is also high between the transition periods, from standard six to form one.

In 2003, out of the 3,333 aboriginal students who finished the Standard 6, only 1,869 of them continued into Form 1. Accordingly, the Orang Asli children have resulted in the Comprehensive Special Model School concept, known as K-9. A K-9 school hosts students and provides education from preschool up to Form 3. Presently, the only operating K-9 school is SK Bandar 2 in Paloh Hinai, Pekan, which caters mainly to the Orang Asli students from the Jakun tribe. The school hosts 151 of them, out of a total enrolment of 322. The government has built 47 hostels and 92 primary schools to cater for the needs of the community. This effort is in line with the early childhood education

programme undertaken by KEMAS. Prior to this, KEMAS has established 179 kindergartens (TABIKA) at new settlements and it has benefited approximately 1229 the Orang Asli children.

According to statistics from a study conducted by Nicholas (2006), there are an increasing number of the Orang Asli children being enrolled in schools. In 1994, a total of 13,200 the Orang Asli children enrolled in primary school and in 2003, the number rose to 23,807, an increase of 45%. This clearly shows that the Orang Asli community is now aware of the importance of education for their children. Life devoted to self-sufficiency can be changed with the advent of formal education. By having regular education, they are able to compete with other groups. In 2004, the government formed the Ministry of Higher Education to oversee tertiary education in Malaysia. Besides the university degrees, students also have the option of continuing their education in polytechnics and colleges, which provide diploma courses.

There is new meaning in the life of aboriginals when government agencies such as KEMAS, Ministry of Education and Department of Social Welfare (JKM) incorporated with Aboriginal Affairs Department offer community educational support and facilities. The Ministry of Education has allocated RM13 million to implement an Adult Education Programme for the indigenous community in Malaysia. The main objective of the programme is to eradicate illiteracy and poverty in the community. For this purpose, the Ministry of Education has opened 102 classes, which benefited all tribes, an estimated 1,105 adults. Classes were arranged, 3 days a week, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. this is considered as a suitable time for the Orang Asli parents. Amran (2008) reported that the education for adults has drawn the attention of Community Development Department and presently there are 74 classes under the Wellbeing Family Program (Kelas Pendidikan Kesejahteraan Keluarga or PKK) and Literacy Education Programme (Pendidikan Literasi Fungsian or PLF). Both programmes have benefited 1,274 of the Orang Asli adults.

With the national education policy that supports the development of Aboriginal communities, providing them with positive attitudes towards education. Several studies have focused on education among Aboriginal communities (Johari, Nik Selma, 2007; Mohamad Johdi&Abdul Razak, 2009; Aziz et al., 2010), however research related to motivation among them is still finite. This study was conducted to investigate the relationship between parental motivation and academic achievement of Orang Asli students in Cameron Highland.

Despite the research support for the impacts of parental involvement on academic success, research addressing the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement motivation has been conducted less frequently. Generally, research has indicated a positive link between parental involvement and students' achievement motivation and attitudes (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005). However, evidence also suggests that different aspects of parental involvement have different effects on student achievement motivation. For example, students were found to be more engaged with school activities when their parents participated more frequently in school functions; however, they reported less engagement in school when parents initiated contact with school authorities more frequently (Izzo et al., 1999).

Grolnick and Slowiaczek(1994) discovered that not all aspects of parental involvement predicted student achievement motivation and called for further studies investigating various aspects of parental involvement and different elements of students' achievement motivation. Similarly, Marchant et al. (2001) raised the point that parental involvement at home and at school differentially related to student motivation and suggested investigations of more relational aspects such as parental involvement in academic and nonacademic activities. Gonzalez-DeHass et al. (2005) also suggested in their review that a wider range of parental involvement practices on students' motivation should be investigated.

METHODOLOGY

This study chose the survey method. Using a questionnaire as a research tool to collect data from the respondents is specific and scientific. A self developed questionnaire by the researchers was used to collect information from the respondents. The questionnaire is generally divided into four parts; A) students' information. B) family background, C) parental motivation which consists of 10 items, D) students' academic achievement (PMR). The data collection process begins with the preparation of the required copies of the questionnaire and distributed to selected schools in collaboration with schools' counsellors, providing them a little briefing about the questionnaire and purpose of the

research. Since the counsellors were not paid for the services provided and they were engaged with school activities, the researchers give them sufficient time to collect the data at the date and time agreed open. Accordingly, a total number of 90 students of the Orang Asli, Cameron Highlands fully participated in this study. The descriptive analysis was used to describe percentage, mean and standard deviation of the data collected while Pearson Correlation was used to examine the relationship between parental motivation and academic achievement among Orang Asli students in Cameron Highlands, Pahang.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The finding shows that the number of male respondents was similar to that of female (Female =60%, Male =40%). Referring to the type of schools, rural schools consisted of 58 students (64.4%) whereas urban schools consisted of 32 students (35.6%) who responded to this study. From this study, a total of 45 respondents have family members numbering more than 6 people, 38 respondents (42.2%) had 4-6 family members, and the remaining 7 respondents (7.8%) had 1-3 family members.

From the surveyed, 86 respondents lived with their parents (95.6%) and only 4 (4.4%) did not live with their parents. Among the respondents who did not live with their parents (2), 1 (25%) lived with his grandmother and 1 (25%) lived with care givers. Among the reasons for not living with their parents is the distance to school (2,50%), parents worked in different places (1, 25%) and others (1, 25%).

The study found that there is a positive and moderate relationship between academic achievement and parental Motivation of Orang Asli students in Cameron Highlands. Pearson correlation coefficient (table 2) shows that there is a significant relationship between academic achievement and the parental motivation $r = .35$ ($p < .01$), proving that the parental motivation contributes positively to academic achievement of the Orang Asli students in Cameron Highlands.

Table 2 Parental motivation and academic achievement

Variables	Dependent Variables <i>Academic achievement</i>
Parent motivation	0.356**

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study shows a considerable positive relationship between academic achievement and parental motivation. Parents who motivate their children are actually assisting them to actively engage in learning activities. Indeed, family plays an important role in influencing the learning process of their children. The family institution was the earliest and most important and responsible institution in the formation of the individuals. The more the family motivated their children, the more they engage in spiritual, social, and academic activities (Mustafa Haji Daud, 1989).

Based on the findings of this study, we may conclude here that the government, teachers and society in general must work together in improving the knowledge and positive attitudes of the indigenous parents in raising their awareness of the importance of their children's education. This is because parental motivation for academic achievement of the Orang Asli children remains weak. Parents are responsible to ensure proper education for their children. Sa'ibah (2000) indicates that attitudes, interests, educational background, upbringing, and economic status influence the children's performance academically; the children who were motivated by their parents tend to try and find a way to meet the learning requirements and later improve the educational status of the family. Furthermore, most of the parents who do not have higher education, as such; they only have little knowledge about the importance of motivating their children to learn. These findings contradicts the research of Gonzalez-DeHass et al (2005), wherein parental involvement was found to have contributed significantly to only either of the gender and not both. More so, family separation, Clash of cultures in the family and the education curriculum implemented in schools were also found to have escalated the disparity in parental motivation for the child (Rozumah Baharudin 2001).

This study clearly showed no significant relationship between family income and academic achievement of students. This is because even though most of the families have incomes below RM1500, the government has provided a variety of facilities and financial support. Through Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKAO), facilities include free freight facilities, notebooks, stationery, school uniforms and even scholarships. Therefore, the question of finance is not a big problem to them. This finding contradicts the findings by Zarinah Arshat and Rozumah Baharudin (1999) that children from families with higher socioeconomic status are more advanced in grade school and have higher achievement than children from families with a low socioeconomic status. Socio-economic status in children is mostly governed by a combination of parental education level, employment status and income level (Jeynes, 2002). Students who have a low socioeconomic status scored lower than students with a high socioeconomic status and are more prone to drop out of school. Studies of poverty and rural development often show poor education levels for low socioeconomic children (Eamon, 2005; Chamhuri 1994; Chamhuri 2001).

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