

INDIGENOUS PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FORMAL EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA

^{1,2}Muhammad Fuad Abdullah, ^{*2,3}Mohd Iqbal Mohd Noor ⁴Peter Aning Tedong, ³Azniza Ahmad Zaini, ³Nor Aziah Abd Kadir & ⁵Mohd Tajuddin Abdullah

¹ Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM),
Puncak Alam Campus, 42300 Selangor, Malaysia.

² Institute of Biodiversity and Sustainable Development, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450
Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia.

³ Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Pahang
Kampus, 27600 Raub, Pahang, Malaysia.

⁴ Institute Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Faculty of Built Environment,
Universiti Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

⁵ Faculty of Fishery and Food Science, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu,
21300 Terengganu, Malaysia.

*Corresponding author: mohdiqbalmn@uitm.edu.my

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ABSTRACT

Background and Purpose: Parents play a crucial role in children's educational attainment, as their perceptions influence their actions in providing formal education. However, among the Indigenous community in Malaysia, formal education is often deprioritized, leading to a significant gap in educational attainment. This study aims to elucidate Indigenous parents' perceptions of formal education effectiveness in Terengganu, Malaysia, while also integrating perspectives from educators and government officers to provide a holistic understanding of the issue.

Methodology: Using qualitative methods, data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and observations in three Indigenous villages in Terengganu. The informants included Indigenous parents, teachers, and officers from the Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA).

Including teachers and officers helped validate parental perspectives, highlight systemic challenges, and assess the broader impact of parental perceptions on children's education.

Findings: The results indicate that Indigenous parents generally hold stereotyped views on education, which fail to stimulate students' interest. Parental education background, socioeconomic conditions, expectations, marital age, and awareness were key determinants of children's academic engagement. Insights from teachers and JAKOA officers further revealed systemic challenges, including policy implementation gaps, limited parental involvement, and infrastructure-related issues affecting Indigenous students' educational experiences.

Contributions: This study provides a comprehensive insight into Indigenous parents' perceptions of formal education while incorporating institutional perspectives. The findings emphasize the need for increased parental awareness, culturally responsive teaching methods, and stronger collaboration between families, schools, and government agencies to bridge the education gap for Indigenous communities.

Keywords: Orang Asli, formal education, academic attainment, parent's perception, Terengganu.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Education serves as the foundation for a nation's social, economic, and political development. As highlighted by Abdullah, Othman, and Jani (2019), a nation's strength is intrinsically linked to the quality of its education system and the level of education within its society. Malaysia places significant emphasis on enhancing the quality of its education system to develop a highly skilled human capital capable of competing on a global scale (Sin & Salleh, 2003). Additionally, rapid technological advancements and evolving developmental demands have placed increasing pressure on the national education system, necessitating continuous adaptation and improvement (Zal, 2021). According to a UNESCO (2015) report, educational frameworks should be more flexible and provide students—particularly at the primary level—with increased opportunities and space to acquire higher-quality education.

Malaysia has undertaken comprehensive initiatives to ensure equal access to education for all segments of society, including Indigenous communities. Among these communities, the Orang Asli remain one of the most marginalized groups, with many still adhering to their ancestral heritage as a way of life. Since Malaysia's independence, significant efforts have been made to improve Orang Asli educational attainment (Hanafi, Ahmad, & Ali, 2014). The Ministry of Education and the Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA) have collaborated to address the high dropout rates among Indigenous students. The Orang Asli community is often regarded as a socioeconomically disadvantaged minority, particularly in terms of educational attainment, as they remain largely disconnected from the mainstream education system and continue to adhere to traditional lifestyles and beliefs. Wahab et al. (2016) note that Orang Asli communities predominantly reside in remote areas, where access to formal education and healthcare services remains limited. Geographical isolation further exacerbates these challenges, as it discourages older generations from prioritizing formal education for their children (Ahmad & Jelas, 2009).

The Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (KKLW) (2007) defines the Orang Asli as a minority group that remains economically and educationally disadvantaged compared to the mainstream population. Historically, many Orang Asli communities had little to no exposure to formal education, particularly those residing in remote regions (Masron, Masami, & Ismail, 2013). Nevertheless, government initiatives aimed at improving Indigenous education have yielded some positive results. While challenges persist, various policies and programs have been implemented to bridge the educational gap for the Orang Asli, as outlined in the framework of factors influencing their development (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Factors affecting Orang Asli communities' development

Despite the near-universal participation and excellent literacy rates of Malaysia, there are still educational inequalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. Although precise enrolment statistics for Orang Asli children are unclear, other indices of educational access, such as transition and completion rates, continue to be behind the national norm. In 2008, the average national secondary school completion rate was 72%, but just 30% of Orang Asli students completed their education (MOE, 2016). Despite recent improvements, this figure

remains much lower than the national average. According to statistics from 2014, about 59% of Orang Asli students finished secondary school (MOE, 2015). In 2018, the transfer rate for Orang Asli kids from primary to secondary school was just 76.7%, compared to 96.8% for all students in the country (MOE, 2019). The Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013–2025 has prompted the government to develop measures such as the Pensiangan-Salinatan Programme and the Orang Asli Transformation Plan 2013–2018 to address the education gap.

The capacity of parents to be active in their children's education is determined by their educational level. In 2008, the literacy percentage of the Orang Asli was just 51%, compared to a national literacy rate of 93.1% in 2010 (Renganathan, 2016). Uneducated parents cannot assist their children with their schoolwork (Wong & Abdillah, 2018). In a study conducted in the Semai village in the state of Perak by Renganathan and Kral (2018), it was discovered that the Orang Asli parents lacked basic reading and numeracy abilities to assist their children with their homework. Most of the Orang Asli parents said they were unaware of what was happening at school. The parents also realised that their lack of education had handicapped them, and they described their experiences as students, including difficulties getting to school, a lack of basic facilities and low academic performance.

On the other hand, parents believed that their children's present educational experience was simpler at the time. The impact of Orang Asli parents is one of the elements that contribute to Orang Asli children's poor educational achievement. Most Orang Asli people, particularly parents, are unaware of the value of education in improving their and their children's lives. This is because most of them have never gotten any formal education, and only a tiny percentage of those who continue their studies till elementary school do not complete it. Many of them drop out of school due to early marriage, when they must begin working for their families at a young age. With this circumstance, these parents are labelled uneducated individuals who cannot provide a good example for their children regarding the value of education.

Parents' sentiments toward their children play a significant role in their children's educational development. Most Indigenous parents do not devote their time to their children's education due to a lack of time. Because they are unfamiliar with education, they do not chastise or nag their children for being absent during school hours, inquire about their children's homework or provide them with appropriate reading materials. The poor educational outcomes of Orang Asli have been attributed to the parents' neglect and lack of expertise in teaching their children (Wan, 2020). Therefore, this study examines the parents' perception of formal education that moulds their children.

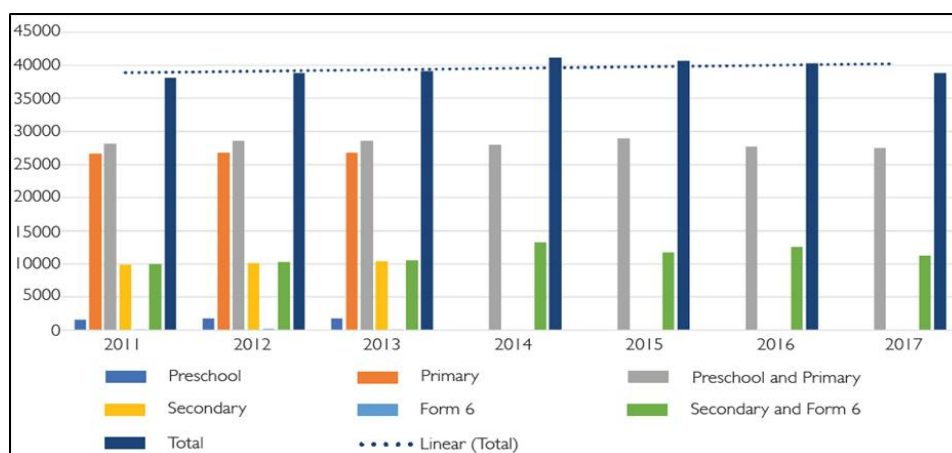
2.0 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES FOR ORANG ASLI EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

Enhancing education attainment among Orang Asli is the topmost priority for the Malaysian government. Establishing a comprehensive education strategy in each Malaysian Five-Year Development Plan and Long-Term Development Plan (EPU, 2011) reflects this obligation. Overall, the government deliberately intended to grow human resources by strengthening the education system and learning facilities, including strengthening teaching quality in every five-year plan. The Orang Asli youngsters must not be excluded from the national education development agenda. Since gaining independence in 1957, enormous efforts have been undertaken to enhance the status of formal education for individuals who reside mostly in rural regions. JAKOA is the government's development agency tasked with putting the government's short- and long-term development objectives into action. Specific strategies and incentives, such as the Education Assistance Scheme, the 2010 Educational Development Action Plan for the Orang Asli Community, Friendly Teaching Programmes, motivational programmes, Mini Hostels Programmes, and special awareness programmes for Orang Asli parents, are among the programmes.

The Department of Orang Asli Affairs (JHEOA) has been entrusted by the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development to handle the Orang Asli's activities. The JHEOA is committed to ensuring that the Orang Asli community has been included in national economic development, with a concentration on developing the Orang Asli community's quality of life through educational programmes and other programmes such as land development, economic and social development, resettlement, infrastructure, public amenities, human development and training (Nicholas, 2010). Education is a key component of the Orang Asli development strategy and a key mechanism in the campaign for better living standards (Gamaliel, 2020). The initiative, however, was designed to complement rather than replace the national educational system, to compensate for the Orang Asli's isolation from government schools and lack of familiarity with formal education. According to JAKOA (2011), the department implemented a three-tiered educational programme to prepare Orang Asli youngsters for entry into the national school system: (i) For the first three years, students attended village schools where they were taught by JHEOA field employees, some of whom were Malays and others were Orang Asli; (ii) After three years, pupils who want to continue proceeded to central primary schools in bigger Orang Asli settlements, where they might complete primary six. The Ministry of Education (MOE) provided the majority of the instructors, who were Malays; and

(iii) Students who finished sixth grade and passed their tests might attend regular government secondary schools in surrounding rural or metropolitan locations.

MOE is aimed at providing education to all and attaining the purpose of optimum care for Orang Asli children. Education is also one of the key national priorities or National Key Results Areas (NKRAs) established in 2009. In terms of the NKRA, the Malaysian government aimed for all pupils to have basic reading and writing abilities after three years of schooling by 2012 (EPU, 2011). The Malaysian government intends all children to receive at least a primary education by 2015. In 2015, Orang Asli students made up 4% of the total student population in Malaysia (MOE, 2016). From 2011 to 2017, the number of Orang Asli students enrolled remained stable at roughly 38,000 to 41,000, as illustrated in Figure 2. However, since enrolment statistics are not disclosed in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) Annual Reports, it is impossible to estimate the proportion of Orang Asli children who do not attend school. Enrolment rates would have dropped if the population rate had been increasing during these years, particularly as there was a minor decrease in enrolment numbers from 2015 to 2017.

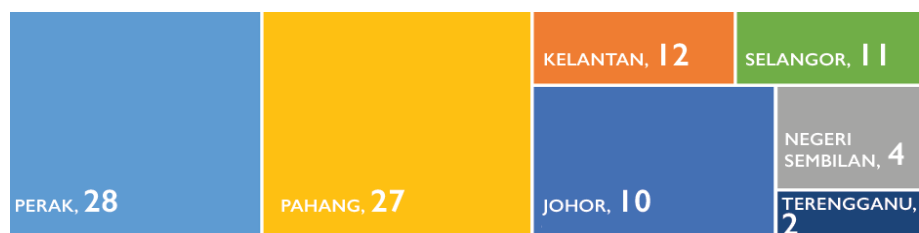


Source: Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE, 2017)

Figure 2: Number of Orang Asli students enrolled in national school, 2011–2017

The total number of Orang Asli elementary schools in Malaysia as of 2018 is 94. Most of these schools are in Perak, Pahang, Kelantan, Selangor, and Johor, all of which have a large Orang Asli population (Figure 3). The MOE's recent eagerness to offer education for Orang Asli children culminated in the Comprehensive Special Model School idea, often known as K-9. Orang Asli kids attend a K-9 school which offers education from preschool to Form Three. For Orang Asli children, there are five Special Model K-9 schools, which are residential schools with elementary and lower secondary levels (MOE, 2015). In 2018, the K-9 schools enrolled

2,074 kids in primary school and 1,083 pupils in lower secondary school. For instance, SK Bandar 2 in Paloh Hinai, Pekan, is now the only K-9 school in operation, serving primarily Orang Asli kids from the Jakun tribe. There are 151 of them at the school out of 322. The government has erected 47 hostels and 92 primary schools to meet the community's requirements. This initiative is under KEMAS's early childhood education agenda. As such, KEMAS established 179 kindergartens (TABIKA) in new settlements, benefiting about 1,229 Orang Asli children (Pendidikan Literasi Fungsian or PLF). 1,274 Orang Asli adults have benefited from both programmes (Educational Planning and Research Division, 2018).



Source: Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE, 2018)

Figure 3: Number of Orang Asli's school by state, 2018

Malaysia's Ministry of Higher Education was established in 2004 to administer the country's post-secondary education. Students can continue their education in polytechnics and colleges that provide diploma-level courses in addition to university degrees. Although post-secondary education at state universities is financed, Orang Asli is not given preferential consideration for admission to these institutions. 384 Orang Asli students successfully finished their studies at public institutes of higher learning (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of Orang Asli students in local and abroad universities, 2010.

Institution	Diploma	Bachelor	Master	PhD	Total
UUM	0	3	0	0	3
UTM	5	10	0	0	15
USM	6	5	0	0	11
UPM	18	28	1	0	47
UM	2	10	0	0	12
UKM	0	9	1	0	10
UiTM	98	15	0	0	113
UIAM	0	1	0	0	1
Polytechnic	10	0	0	0	10
KUiTTHO	2	0	0	0	2
UMS	0	0	0	0	0
UNIMAS	0	0	0	0	0
UPSI	0	0	0	0	0
UMT	0	0	0	0	0
Community college	0	0	0	0	0
Teachers' college	160	0	0	0	160
Total	301	81	2	0	384

Source: Department of Orang Asli Affairs (JAKOA, 2011)

The Orang Asli children are classed as an at-risk population, so they confront major issues (MOE, 2006). Recognising the problem, the Malaysian government implemented a strategy aimed at the community, allocating specific assistance to create possibilities for equal footing, integrating with the advanced population sector and preserving traditional places based on the factors that can influence students' education outcomes (Figure 4). Two programmes are dedicated to education and services, while the other two are dedicated to health and medical services. These two programmes were part of a larger scheme that included other programmes aimed at reducing and eventually eliminating poverty among the Orang Asli, improving the quality of life of the Orang Asli, cultivating self-confidence, self-reliance and good ethics among the Orang Asli, protecting and promoting Orang Asli art and culture, and increasing Orang Asli participation in the industry (Abdullah et al., 2021).

Government transformation efforts to increase the education level of Orang Asli children have shown better results over time. According to the JAKOA under the Strategic Development Plan of Orang Asli People 2011–2015 Report (2011), as many as 880 Orang Asli students from the year 1971 to the year 2010 have already succeeded in furthering their study in higher learning centres in various fields of study. Yet, this achievement ratio is not good enough as compared to the transformation plans proposed by the government.

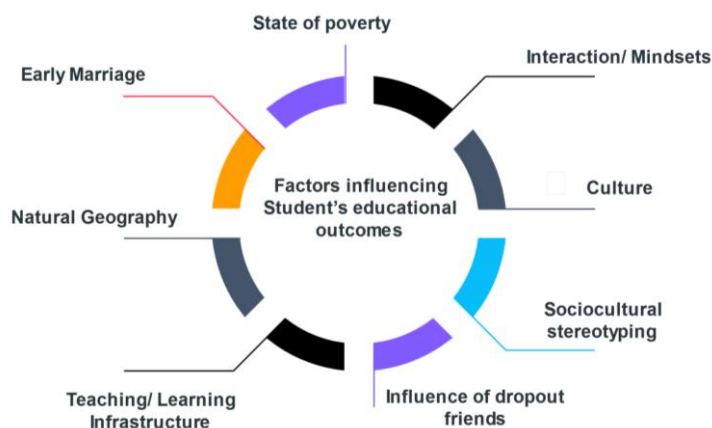


Figure 4: Factors influencing student's educational outcomes

3.0 PARENTHOOD AND CHILDREN EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

Previous studies by Abdullah et al. (2019) found that several factors significantly influenced students' educational outcomes. The state of poverty, interaction, mindsets, sociocultural stereotyping about exterior social ties, the influence of dropout friends, teaching and learning infrastructure available in the school, their culture of not taking education seriously, natural geography and early marriage are the most significant problems (Figure 3).

Notwithstanding, family plays the most significant role in shaping their children's future. Parental attitudes and beliefs in formal education will influence their children's education and aspirations. However, the Orang Asli parents are not interested in formal education. School is just a government intermediate to access monetary aid, free goods and nutritious food (Wahab et al., 2016). According to them, a low level of parental education will cause the highest dropout among Orang Asli children. Generally, Orang Asli parents are still not interested in education; they see school as a place to send their children to play and to have good food (Wahab & Mustapha, 2015). Some Orang Asli parents are cynical toward formal education's role in changing their social mobility. Plus, they are reluctant to accept the fact that formal education can help them improve their living standard (Abdullah et al., 2019).

Parents are busy with their forest work and looking for income instead of paying attention to education. Sometimes, they bring their children into the forest and ask for their hands. Efficiency and skill to survive in the forest are more important than other formal classroom education (Ahmad & Jelas, 2009). This kind of perception and demotivated action will encourage children to skip school and contribute to the high level of dropout cases in the worst-case scenario. This attitude is caused by their negative experience in school earlier (Vitaro et al., 2001). Therefore, the educational affair is not their concern, and this has affected

any attempt to overcome Orang Asli pupils' education problems. The government makes continuous efforts to ensure the serious involvement of Orang Asli in mainstream education. In the meantime, Orang Asli children must be educated from the time they are young because they are the barer in the teaching and learning process. This is what UNESCO had suggested in the UNESCO's Division of Basic Education Early Childhood Programme. The programme emphasises education for Orang Asli children without compromising their cultural identity (UIS, 2020). This can also be achieved with high awareness and support from parents.

Parents' perception of formal education is important because it relates to their involvement in their children's schooling. According to Christenson, Rounds, and Gorney (1992), parental involvement has a positive relationship with student attainment and performance in the classroom. Normally, when the parent is highly engaged in school and their children's activities, they will be concerned and encouraging at home (Dauber & Esstein, 1989). However, in the Orang Asli circumstances, although parents recognised the importance of formal education, they still have low expectations and inspiration for their children, reflected in their low education level. According to Hanafi et al. (2014), Orang Asli people have never seen the bright future of their children in becoming somebody at the professional level. A school is a place that can teach their children basic knowledge like reading, writing and counting. Yet, they are still satisfied with their lives and what they have now. Therefore, any new changes need time to be accepted and adopted. Parents' attitudes also contribute to the low academic performance of children in school. Parent with no understanding of the importance of education will not inspire their child to achieve higher education levels (Edo, 2012). Geographical factors also contributed to the disturbance of Orang Asli's attainment of a good education. This hardship of gaining a good education motivates parents not to send their children to school (Ahmad & Jelas, 2009). That is why the Orang Asli community is frequently linked to low academic performance (Kamarudin & Ngah, 2007).

4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The GPILSEO education development model is being referred to in this research which considers pedagogy, institutions, leadership, spread, proof and ownership as the aspects (Table 2) to improve the educational attainment of the Maori in New Zealand (Bishop, 2008). The GPILSEO model is based on the Te Kotahitanga model, implemented in 33 secondary schools in New Zealand between 2004 and 2007 to develop culturally responsive pedagogy (Jarud Romadan & Tan, 2020). Based on an effective teaching approach, this strategy was initially intended to increase the success of Maori pupils. The concept was created through strategic

execution and culturally mindful methods in each Maori tribe. Several factors were considered, including participant engagement, instructional content and the pedagogical process. The Te Kotahitanga model was created in response to recommendations and opinions expressed by Maori pupils who communicated their specific requirements at school.

This research, on the other hand, is only concerned with the goals and ownership element. These factors have a considerable association with students' success improvement from the perspective of Orang Asli parents.

Table 2: The GPILSEO model approach

No.	Element	Description	From the perspective of
1.	Goal	Set the goals of the school and parents as well as student	Teacher, Parents, Student
2.	Pedagogy	Developing a new pedagogy of relations to depth	Teacher, Student
3.	Institution	Developing new institutions and structures	School, JAKOA
4.	Leadership	Developing leadership that is responsive and proactive	Headmaster, Teacher, Local Authority
5.	Spread	Spreading the reform to include others	Headmaster, Teacher, JAKOA
6.	Evidence	Developing appropriate measurements to assess student achievement	Teacher, Student
7.	Ownership	Create opportunities and awareness for all to participate in educational reform.	Teacher, Parent, Student

Source: Bishop (2008)

This exploratory research was conducted at three Orang Asli resettlement villages in different districts of Terengganu, Malaysia (East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia). This study was carried out among the *Semaq Beri* and *Bateq* tribes in Sungai Berua village, Hulu Terengganu (5° 04'08.5" N 102°52'19.2" E); Sungai Pergam village, Kemaman (4.0471° N 103.2859° E); and Sungai Sayap village, Besut (5° 27'22.4" N 102° 31'17.3 E) (Figure 5). They were selected as they lived in a resettlement area where the villages were built with all the facilities, including a primary school. Besides, most villages still rely on the forest as their main socioeconomic activity.



Figure 5: Location of Indigenous resettlement villages in Terengganu

This study applied a qualitative research approach by in-depth interviews and participant observations during fieldwork. Through this method, 12 informants were interviewed. The interviews began with a brief introduction of the researcher team. The purpose was to gain trust and build a good relationship between the researcher and villagers, especially the elderly. Thus, they give the information freely and openly as outlined without any barrier. The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) approach was used to gain brief information about their traditional knowledge of the natural environment and identify key informants. Three FGDs were done with one per village. The first FGD was at Kampung Sungai Berua, Hulu Terengganu, attended by five Orang Asli's parents; the second FGD was at Kampung Sungai Pergam, Kemaman, attended by five Orang Asli's parents; and the last FGD was at Kampung Sungai Sayap, Besut, attended by three Orang Asli' parents.

Then, the informant was selected as required by the purposive sampling technique and interview procedure. The informants were required to belong to any one of the following categories: (i) Orang Asli's parents, (ii) a school teacher who teaches the Orang Asli resettlement school, or (iii) JAKOA officers (Table 3). Besides that, the snowball approach has also been used during the preliminary study to gather more information from the informants. The sampling technique requires one informant, suggested by the others, to become the informant whom he/she believes the next person could give information regarding the children's educational attainment in the Orang Asli community. The informants gave the information needed verbally and through fieldwork study. They were questioned individually through a set of semi-structured interviews with the assistance of an officer from the Department of Orang Asli Affairs. In addition, it is easier for the researcher to get clear information and verify the facts instantly with the existence of local authorities because some

of the informants used the Orang Asli language and their accents to give the information needed besides the Malay language, which is used as an intermediate language. On top of that, the direct observation technique and the fieldwork study were also used to verify the information given.

Table 3: List of informants

No.	Informant	Organisation/ Place	District	Number of informants	Code
1.	Orang Asli's parent	Kg. Sg. Berua	Hulu Terengganu	2	OA1 OA2
		Kg. Sg. Pergam	Kemaman	2	OA3 OA4
		Kg. Sg. Sayap	Besut	2	OA5 OA6
		SK Berua	Hulu Terengganu	1	SOA7
		SMK Jenagor	Kemaman	1	SOA8
		SK Pergam	Kemaman	1	SOA9
3.	JAKOA officer	Kg. Sg. Berua	Hulu Terengganu	1	JOA10
		Kg. Sg. Pergam	Kemaman	1	JOA11
		Kuala Terengganu	Kuala Terengganu	1	JOA12
Total				12	

The interviews were recorded using digital devices and transcribed into text forms. Then, the transcribed data was uploaded to NVivo software. The data were analysed using open coding, categorising, and thematic techniques. Finally, the findings are compiled into each theme and described using the descriptive method.

All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim by an external transcription service. Each transcription was checked for accuracy and was anonymised by the research team. The data were transcribed manually, organised, coded and recoded. The clustered codes were elicited as common themes based on the GPILSEO education development model by the team comprising investigators and research assistants.

From an ethical standpoint, all research participants were informed of the purpose of the research and their role in it, both verbally and in writing. Interviewees were encouraged to respond from the perspective of the population group or setting they represented. To reduce social desirability bias, interviewees were assured that there were no right or wrong answers before the interview. Interviewees were advised that their participation was voluntary; written informed consent was obtained in each case, and no compensation was provided. At the

institutional level, the data collections were approved by JAKOA and the District Education Office to verify that they were legal and ethical in operation. This clearance is required to research the Orang Asli community in Malaysia.

5.0 FINDING AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Parent's Education Background

Various factors, including parental education levels and low socioeconomic beginnings, impact these sentiments. According to research, Orang Asli parents are also less enthusiastic about education. Based on observation and interviews, parent education level was the crucial factor that most influenced their children's academic achievement. The capacity of parents to be active in their children's education is determined by their educational level. Uneducated parents are less able to assist their children with their schoolwork. Even though parents know homework is important, they cannot help their children because they are illiterate. Parents normally just let their children play all day long without taking a look at the book and handing over all of the duties to school. Most of the parents were never enrolled in schools, and those who were, have never finished their primary school education. These circumstances will discourage their children and make them lag more from mainstream education. Informant OA1 said: 'I never went to school, and that's why I am illiterate. Thus, I cannot help my child with their homework.' The Orang Asli parents in this research lacked fundamental reading and numeracy abilities, making it difficult for them to assist their children with their homework. Despite their knowledge of the significance of education, the parents said they were unaware of what was happening at school. The parents also realised that their lack of education had handicapped them, and they described their experiences as students, including difficulties getting to school, a lack of basic facilities and low academic performance. Information OA2 said, 'I had not finished school and cannot read. I don't know how to assist my children with their homework. Thus, I fully rely on teachers at school to help me on this matter.'

5.2 Socioeconomic Background

Education may assist children from low-income homes to uplift their social status and help them out of poverty. On the other hand, poverty is one of the most significant hurdles to education. Providing excellent education that can level the playing field for children from all socioeconomic backgrounds is vital for education to operate as an enabler to empower children from low-income households. Failure to do so will result in an intergenerational cycle of poverty. Low socioeconomic factors also affect children's achievement. Informant JOA11 said:

Most of the Orang Asli depend on forest yields for their income. They normally seek forest yield with high market value, such as woods, rattans, and herbs. Instead, they also hunt for their protein, such as deer, porcupines, birds, fowl, and fish. All of these need their full commitment because the sustainability of nearby forests does not promise a good catch every day.

Orang Asli youngsters encounter more problems and hurdles in schooling and learning than their more fortunate counterparts. To begin with, going to school necessitates financial means. Although Malaysian public schools are free at the primary and secondary levels, other things such as transportation, uniforms, meals and other school-related charges exist. Because the school year begins in January, parents must budget for school costs in November and December. The wettest months are November and December, when forest produce collecting is hazardous and rubber output is low. As a result, it is more difficult for parents to save enough money for school expenditures during this time of year. Furthermore, if they have several children—Orang Asli families are often larger—the situation can become extremely difficult for the parents to save enough money for their children's education. Furthermore, going to school requires them to trade time with their parents to earn a living. School time might be spent assisting their parents in gathering supplies from the wild or working on the crops. According to the study, teachers with Orang Asli kids said that attendance decreased during the fruit season because they would help their parents pick fruits. SOA7 mentioned:

Therefore, they need to explore new spots further to get better yields. However, seeking forest yields makes them lose their path to children's education. They prefer to bring their children to the forest for help. Furthermore, bringing children together will make them more skilful in forest work. This action not only discourages children from being in school but will also make them drop out. For them, being skilful in the forest will guarantee a bright future for their children instead of formal education. They never set high standards for their children in school.

5.3 Parent's Expectation

The study highlighted that almost all respondents were sceptical about seeing their children succeed in education or having a bright future. They do not place high expectations on their children because they only require basic knowledge such as reading, counting and writing. OA6 study participants gave the following explanation:

... I care about my children's education. I send them to school every day as asked by JAKOA officers. Yet, I can't force them to go to school if they won't or even quit. It is their choice whether to study or work. My eldest daughter dropped out of school after finishing her UPSR examination. On the other hand, my second son recently completed his SPM examination and is eager to continue his education. I don't expect him to study as high as now or further, but I am grateful he is doing well.

Meanwhile, the OA3 informant said she is not encouraging her children to be in school because none of her family members succeeded: 'I tell my children that they don't have to go to school if they won't. They should help me in the jungle to get some rattan and agarwood to earn money or even wildlife for food.'

Observations also revealed that parents not interested in their children's education have less knowledge about the importance of education for their children. This is because they rarely get involved in school programmes and do not attend meetings with teachers about their children's progress. Orang Asli parents should be exposed to information related to education and career direction so that the parents are more motivated to ensure that their children get proper education after school.

Orang Asli parents' goals are made based on their observations and knowledge of the importance of education. Awareness of the importance of education exists when parents are often exposed to the knowledge about education when they attend programmes organised by the schools. This was stated by informant OA4: 'We are concerned about our children's education. That's why we always need to meet the teachers to discuss things, and when we are at home, we must make sure he learns.' This research also showed consistent findings that confirm that the expectations and the goals of parents are identified as one of the most important aspects of the educational attainment of their children.

5.4 Marital Age

Getting married at a young age is another factor that also contributes to the Orang Asli children's attrition. Getting married means that they will end their education. They need to focus on the family. Moreover, early marriage will extend a woman's potential for childbearing at a young age. Informant JOA10 mentioned that:

Most of the Orang Asli here get married at a young age, as young as 13 years old, especially women. They tend to have more than five children from their marriage. Thus, they need to quit school and focus on raising their families. This scenario seems like their culture because it occurred decades ago and was passed down by generations.

It causes psychological and physical health problems for mother and child because their body is not mature enough to be a mother. Furthermore, young parents are normally not ready to handle a family. They have a big responsibility put on their shoulders to carry on in their lives. Informant SOA8 said that:

The couple has to work hard at a young age to earn more income to support their family and babysit their children. Therefore, they tend to neglect their children's affairs, including enough food, education, and care. Most of them will send children to their relatives while working.

5.5 Surrounding Environment

A comfortable and conducive house environment is another factor that contributes to the educational attainment of Orang Asli children. The Orang Asli people in Terengganu are settled in resettlement villages known as the Poorest Public Housing Project (PPRT). This resettlement is one of the Malaysian transformation plans developed to enhance and shrink the gap between rural communities. Therefore, Orang Asli is one of the focus groups that need help. This PPRT considers houses satisfactory, complacent, and comfortable. They are complemented by two to three bedrooms with a toilet inside and are furnished with basic appliances such as a television and fan. Informant JOA11 stated, 'All of the Orang Asli in Terengganu have been resettled in new villages to uplift their standard of living conditions.' This statement was agreed by informant JOA12 where she also mentions that:

The villages built for them will complete all the basic facilities and infrastructures, including three-bedroom houses, clean water, 24-hour electricity supply, an information centre, a mosque, and most importantly, a clinic and a kindergarten and primary school.

The facilities have given them no excuses to skip or drop out of school. Furthermore, it is supposed to make them even better, especially regarding educational attainment and performance. Even though houses were provided, they still needed to equip the houses with

furniture themselves to live more comfortably. A pleasant house can give such a nice environment for children to study. Yet, the situation is different from what was expected. A few houses were equipped with furniture and other sophisticated appliances. Therefore, children did not have a table, chair, or other equipment for the learning process. The house was dirty and scattered, making the residence not conducive to their children's learning. This was mentioned by informant SOA9:

Sometimes, we mingle around the villages to ensure everything is under control and the community lives in peace and harmony. However, we found out that most of the houses were not furnished even though there are beds, chairs, tables and other basic furniture which can make them more comfortable.

This uncomfortable house does not provide an educational environment for children to study and build their good self-character. In the end, they might lose interest in formal education and drop out of school.

5.6 Awareness

According to the findings, Orang Asli parents also help their children with their schooling. Examples are providing stationery, books, school apparel, and some pocket money. This indicates Orang Asli parents' commitment to improving their children's academic achievement. Informant OA4 stated, 'If I have the money, I purchase whatever she needs for her lessons, such as clothes, pencils, workbooks, and bags.' The results indicate that Orang Asli parents are willing to sacrifice to offer their children equipment, regardless of cost, as long as they want to study. Informant OA5, a parent who oversees their children's education at home by ensuring they accomplish their homework: 'Every night I will question my children if they have done their homework, or have you read the book yet?' On the other hand, parents cannot provide pocket money for their children and must depend on the school to feed them. Informant OA2 said that:

If there's a lot, I'll give it a dollar. Yet, there are times when he refuses to accept anything. But it doesn't concern me since RMT pupils are provided with lunch at his school. In the first place, these kids aren't going to learn anything. He'd rather help out on the farm with his father.

Orang Asli parents believe that sending their children to boarding school would help them achieve better educational achievements than keeping them at home with their relatives. Orang Asli students are provided with food and drink in the dormitory and a school-determined study schedule. Informant OA4 had also sent his children to boarding school:

Because my house is remote from the school, I had to send my children to the hostel. Being apart from my kid is something I detest. He may, however, study better at the hostel than at home.

This shows that, despite their lack of educational understanding, Orang Asli parents' efforts to offer education for their children are admirable.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Malaysia's educational system has progressed greatly throughout the years. It must be distributed to all vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, notably the Orang Asli. The government set up several initiatives under the Orang Asli Transformation Plan that included learning and teaching modules designed specifically for Orang Asli youngsters. Orang Asli youngsters still suffer significant impediments to education. According to earlier studies, Orang Asli students have low educational achievement because of several challenges related to learning processes. It can be said without doubt that youngsters do recognise environmental problems in the areas above. Students' lack of interest in learning is hindering their work quality.

Educational accomplishment is essential for a better future. Orang Asli's views on formal schooling are unknown. For a decade, the government has tried to improve the socioeconomic status of the Orang Asli people. However, the excellent education trend seems to be low when considering the work invested. Concerns about schooling for Orang Asli youngsters in the study were substantial. One of the issues is parents' cynicism about formal education. Most Orang Asli parents have a poor socioeconomic status, which means they are illiterate and underprivileged. For them, the journey does not matter if they can be happy now. In addition, woodworking skills are crucial for their long-term success. Parents depend on schools and teachers to educate their children on something important. Without proper parental devotion, this kind of endeavour will be fruitless. Orang Asli children spend more time at home than at school. A parent should encourage their kid to do whatever is required. The Orang Asli youngsters will learn to handle school life and pass it on to their offspring. Many efforts to

improve the teaching and learning process are necessary to meet the standards of the Orang Asli youngsters. These changes and immediate actions, such as teaching techniques, academic activities, self-learning capability and parental awareness, would boost students' educational motivation.

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