

Being successful in school: A case study of the *Orang Asli* (Aboriginal People) of Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The *Orang Asli* have been marginalized in many aspects including education. Despite the various support and assistance provided by the government, their development in the educational process is still lagging. However, there are cases of *Orang Asli* children who have managed to complete their education. The objective of the study is to identify the success factors that help the *Orang Asli* to be successful in their education. The research is exploratory research using qualitative method, with semi structured interviews as the primary data collection. The respondents are *Orang Asli* children who have completed their tertiary education. The study found that motivation and the right environment are the two important factors that contributed to the success of the respondents in the study. Environment factor is inclusive of parental, familial and societal contribution to the development of the *Orang Asli* education. Hence, providing the right motivation and creating the correct environment for the *Orang Asli* children would help them to complete their education. However, the findings are limited to the selected *Orang Asli* tribes and cannot be generalized to the whole *Orang Asli* in the country. Nonetheless, the findings provided relevant insights into the *Orang Asli* education and can serve as a platform for future studies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is important because it will influence the development of the future [1] and increase the productivity and development of a country. However, education among *Orang Asli* in Malaysia is still low [2] [3]. '*Orang Asli*' is a term in Malay language that brings the meaning of 'original people' [4]. They are the first people that inhabited the Malay Peninsula and most of the *Orang Asli* live in rural and remote areas [4], [5]. In Peninsular Malaysia, *Orang Asli* is separated into three main tribal groups which include Semang (Negrito), Senoi, and Proto Malay (Aboriginal Malay) and consists of 19 ethnics [6]. Their tribal groups are divided based on the difference in language and their physicality [2]. According to the records from the Department of *Orang Asli* Affairs (JAKOA), in 2018 there was a total of 178,197 *Orang Asli* or 0.5% of the national population.

They have been many efforts taken by the government since 1957 but still there are many factors contributed to the problems on their education [7]. The education of *Orang Asli* has not changed much even though the government has done many initiatives [8]. *Orang Asli* education is beleaguered with obstacles and problems [9]. Although there have been cases of *Orang Asli* who have made it into universities, the numbers are still small. The number of *Orang Asli* enrolment into universities in 2018 was 229 for degree courses and 288 for diploma courses [10]. In 2017, the number of *Orang Asli* who graduated from tertiary education is 229 [11]. The number is less than 0.01% of the total number of *Orang Asli* population in Malaysia.

An assessment of 17 most related research on secondary-school students' (12–18 years) idea of success and their connotation with various apparatuses of welfare suggested that children rate fundamental accomplishment are “self-actualization, personal satisfaction, and connection and that particular patterns of success beliefs associated with personal development and goal striving relate positively to wellbeing” [12]. It is claimed that this is coherent with satisfying the necessary psychological requirements of self-sufficiency, empathy, and skilled that are correlated with assumed motivation and heightened welfare. These perceptions can manage the components of education curriculums centered on distinguishing living principles and objectives whereas simultaneously encouraging comfort [12]. Flourishing incorporates manifold aspects of triumph, encompasses recurrent activities of development and adjustment, and entails of harmonious capabilities that ought to preferably be reviewed together [13]. In the case of the present study, success carries a much simpler definition as it merely encompasses the ability to be pursue studying at the tertiary level when many of the *Orang Asli* have failed. Hence, success is seen as the completion of secondary school for the *Orang Asli*, regardless of their academic performance.

It is necessary to understand the background of *Orang Asli* or indigenous people of Malaysia whereby they are generally described as ethnic minorities that possess unique languages, knowledge systems, and beliefs. Although it is accepted that most of the *Orang Asli* tribes have begun to understand and accept the importance of education, they are still behind in embracing educational needs of their people [14], [15]. Currently the focus on their education has been on the challenges that they faced in education and not many studies have focused on the success of *Orang Asli* education. As such, this study aimed to look at the factors that contributed to the success of *Orang Asli* in education, so that the government and other relevant agencies can plan for human resources through the improvement of the education system including enhancement on teacher professionalism. In addition, the findings from this study allow a better understanding of the *Orang Asli*'s drive and motivation to succeed, which would in turn help to facilitate and create a better learning environment for them.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous studies have been done to identify the problems of the *Orang Asli* education in the country. There are many factors that contributed to the problems of *Orang Asli* in education, but the current study intends to focus on a few that most commonly attributed to the setbacks in their education [16]. The literature was selected based on research on *Orang Asli* education in Malaysia which focus on problems and solutions to certain issues on *Orang Asli* education. The research papers were sourced through online databases, but selection was based on relevance to the issue being discussed.

2.1. Geographical locations

Orang Asli villages are located in remote areas and attendance to school has been a perpetual issue because of journey to the school. The Batek children in *Taman Negara* Pahang received free transportation to school via pick-up trucks and this has helped to encourage the children to attend schools despite their village being on the periphery of the *Taman Negara* Forest. There are some *Orang Asli* children who attend schools which are in less remote areas [17]. They also stated that geographical locations play an important factor to make students interested to come to school. Accessibility and distance to school can affect the absenteeism rate among the *Orang Asli* students [18]. Other than that, it has also been emphasized the importance of the government's role in creating awareness in the community about the importance of *Orang Asli* education [19]. It has also been suggested that the school of *Orang Asli* must be located near to their villages. Based on a study in Cameron Highland, Pahang, Malaysia most of the *Orang Asli* are having difficulties because most of their village are far away from the main town [2]. However, government has already introduced learning centers near to their village to give the chances for the *Orang Asli* to receive their education. For the *Orang Asli* families that are too far away from the learning center, the schools will provide the hostel facilities to make them easier to come to school. Hence, it is necessary to increase their access to quality education as they do not get the same opportunities as children from other races [20].

2.2. Infrastructure

One of the crucial reasons that make *Orang Asli* unable to compete with other students in Malaysia is they are lacking in basic needs and live in hardcore poverty [5]. In addition, economic resources of *Orang Asli* have also been threatened by logging and deforestation activities in Malaysia. These activities have led to loss of economy and political autonomy for the indigenous communities. Majority of *Orang Asli* children do not have chance to have their early education as preschool or kindergarten before entering school. This situation is reflected in the slow process of learning, writing, and reading [5]. When the students enter the primary school, they take longer time to adapt. Most of them are not fluent in Malaysian (the medium of instructions) and face lack of educational amenities at home to complete schoolwork. This is because of their location as they do not have access to favorable infrastructure and quality education [7]. *Orang Asli* villages are lacking good and accessible roads which means transport to schools are poor and usually unsafe [17]. In their research, they found that children of *Orang Asli* in Sarawak prefer to go to school because it provides them with space and facilities for activities. Other researchers have also highlighted that the shortage of qualified teachers to teach in the *Orang Asli* schools contributed to this problem [21]. Lack of facilities also is one of the contributors that affects the education for *Orang Asli* [16].

2.3. Parental involvement

Little encouragement from parents because of lack of information and exposure about the education also is one of the main reasons the *Orang Asli* did not focus on their study. Most of their parents did not get their education and they also do not encourage their students that lead to low of engagement in class. Their academic performance cannot be changed and increased because of low of engagement in class. In addition, their parents did not have knowledge and exposure towards the importance of education to persuade their children in education. This problem has led to their parents unable to educate about the learning process and academic performance [18], [20].

Most of the *Orang Asli* parents did not even care if their children go to school and not focusing at all on their performance [1], [16]. They assumed that without education their life is still good and their parents before them also did not have any exposure to education. *Orang Asli* results in school are not good and because the parents would ask their children to help their family by working instead of going to school [2]. When students are absent from school their parents prefer to keep silent as the children would be helping them at home or finding the natural products from the forest [16]. Other than that, parents of *Orang Asli* only hope that their children will have a better basic education ahead from them [16]. However, a study on the awareness of *Orang Asli* towards education, found that the parents are willing to help the children receive better education [14]. In can be seen that, parents of the *Orang Asli* children are beginning to be aware of the importance of education.

2.4. Local culture

Their local culture also is one of the challenges for their education. Most of the *Orang Asli* is still focusing on the natural environment as their financial sources and they are comfortable with their surroundings. Most of *Orang Asli* children are absent from school because they must take care of their younger siblings when their parents go to find their foods. Some of the children are also working in the forest to make a living by helping their parents is one of the problems that lead to absenteeism in school. *Orang Asli* has invaluable knowledge of practices for the sustainable management of natural resources, and this has been recognized by the Government [6]. It is suggested that JAKOA must be headed by *Orang Asli* and staffed by a majority of *Orang Asli* community [5]. They will manage their customs, culture and issues effectively than other people. When other people lead the *Orang Asli*, they will not know the root of the issue and the way to solve the issue. Most of *Orang Asli* families are depending on the natural resources as the main income and their hope is their children are more focusing on helping them rather than pursuing their study in school. *Orang Asli* income is still low but they are comfortable to have that income by selling all the products that they gain from their surroundings [2]. Due to their culture which do not focus on the importance of education then the students do not feel motivated to willingly support the initiatives created by others [16]. They are comfortable because they feel that they are already in the 'comfort zone'.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This was qualitative study that employed the exploratory approach. The exploratory approach is used when the researcher is trying to find something new or limited research has been done on a particular subject [22]. Although research on *Orang Asli* education is numerous, research focusing on their success is limited. In addition, qualitative approach is seen as the appropriate method as the researchers intend to find in depth understanding the factors that made the *Orang Asli* learners successful. Qualitative approach would help produce finding that could not be achieved through other research methods [23]. The research employed

semi structured interviews in obtaining its data as interviews are considered to be useful source of evidence, but the line of inquiry has to be consistent [24].

The interviews were conducted with three respondents who are pursuing their bachelor's degree in the local universities after completing their diploma. Purposive sampling was used in choosing the participants for the study, as purposive sampling is a prominent strategy in qualitative research as it seeks information-rich cases [25]. This in turn would result in an in-depth analysis of the subject studied [25]. This is done due to the current pandemic situation where most of the university students are having online classes and are staying at home rather than on campus.

The interview questions were arranged according to themes: geographical locations, parental and family support and local culture. These themes are chosen as they are often discussed in studies pertaining to *Orang Asli* education and are seen as important factors to the development of *Orang Asli* education [1], [14], [16]. The questions include the distance from school, mode of transportation to school and commitment and support from parents and the society around the respondents. However, the questions are semi structured to allow the researchers to probe and delve deeper into matters brought up by the respondents which needed more elaboration and clarification. The three respondents were contacted earlier and agreed to be interviewed. Interviews were conducted via Google Meet and the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcription was later given to the respondents for verification of what they have said during the interview. The data received was analyzed according to the pre-determined themes identified earlier-geographical locations, parental and family support and local culture and arranged accordingly. This was done until all the data have been exhaustively analyzed. This is to ensure that all the details and relevant episodes have been taken into consideration. The findings were then compared to the relevant review from literature in the discussion section. However, if other themes emerged from the interviews, they would be included in the discussion and treated accordingly. The research flow is presented in Figure 1.

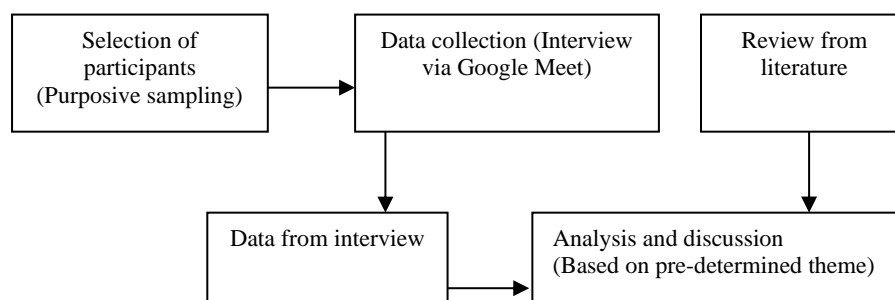


Figure 1. Research design and data collection

The following are brief descriptions of the respondents: i) Respondent 1 (R1) is currently pursuing his bachelor's degree after completing his diploma in one of the public universities. He is from the Jahut tribe, but he is half Jahut as his father is a Malay and his mother is a Jahut woman and in his early twenties. He has an older brother and an older sister who both are working. His younger sister is about to take the national examination for secondary school. His retired father runs a small grocery shop while his mother attends to their roadside food stall; ii) Respondent 2 (R2) is in his mid-twenties and currently pursuing his bachelor's degree after completing his diploma. He is also from the Jahut tribe and lives not far from R1. His father now takes care of their orchard after his retirement as a janitor in a local school. His mother is a full-time housewife; iii) Respondent 3 (R3) is also pursuing her bachelor's degree and in her early twenties. She is from the Semelai tribe and lives in a different district from R1 and R2. Her father is a sole proprietor, and her mother works in the local kindergarten as an assistant to the teachers.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Geographical locations

Geographical location of the villages of the *Orang Asli* has always been cited as the reasons for the absenteeism in school among *Orang Asli* children [18]. In addition, lack of transportation to school or the scarcity of public transport have also been described as one the reasons for the children to miss school. Most of the *Orang Asli* villages in Pahang are in the remote areas and access to the villages can be difficult and challenging. However, there are certain schools which are dedicated to serve the *Orang Asli* community in the rural areas, but most are ill-equipped.

R1 and R2 went to the same primary and secondary schools. R1 mentioned that he used the transport provided by the JAKOA (Department of Aboriginal Affairs) in the form of school bus. This bus service is similar to what has been provided by JAKOA to other *Orang Asli* villages [14]. Their primary school is the normal *Sekolah Kebangsaan* (government school attended by everyone). During his primary school, R1 would go to school using the bus provided by the JAKOA. However, for R2, the school is very near to his house so he would walk to school during his primary school years. During their primary school years, they were placed in the normal classroom with other school children from other races. Nevertheless, during the first year of school, they were placed in a classroom with only *Orang Asli* children with a few Malay children who lived close to their village. This could be seen as an induction strategy by the school to sustain their interest and to ease the children into school life. Table 1 shows an excerpt from R2.

Table 1. Geographical location

Theme	R1	R2	R3
Geographical locations	-	My class was for <i>Orang Asli</i> children only during Standard 1 (primary 1/first year in school). However, there are a few Malay children from nearby villages. After that we were put in the normal class.	-

The distance to their secondary school is about 13 km for R1 and around 8 to 10 km for R2. Both would use the bus service provided by the JAKOA and attended the *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan* (government school attended by everyone) for their secondary school. R3 also lives near her primary school, hence she only walked to her school every day. The primary school in R3's village is attended only by the *Orang Asli* of her village. According to R3, there was only one Malay student in her school and that he was the school's teacher's son. However, for R3 she attended a boarding school for her secondary education. The school is around one hour from her school. However, there is a secondary school close to her home and the local *Orang Asli* children would attend the school using transport provided by JAKOA.

It appears that these three respondents do not have much difficulty in getting to the school. Despite the distance, R1 and R2 still managed to go to school with bus service provided by JAKOA. On the other hand, R3 stayed at school's hostel to ensure that she received secondary education. The distance to the school did not really affect the respondents and they managed to complete their primary and secondary education and pursued their tertiary education after that. These findings from the study showed that short distance to school and transportation assistance played an important role in ensuring that the respondents attended school. It can be assumed that the *Orang Asli* children would attend school if the schools were closer to their community, and they have easy access to attending schools as suggested by previous study [18].

The respondents share one common similarity, their parents received some form of education or involved in some capacity in the education industry. R1's father received primary education but later he followed his father who moved abroad. However, his mother attended school for a short while but did not complete her primary education. His father currently runs his own grocery shop while his mother manages her own roadside food stall. R1 mentioned that he has his own room in the house for him to study and that both his parents would keep an eye on him to ensure that he finished all his schoolwork. The following transcript shows excerpts taken during the interview with the respondents concerning parental involvement in their education.

"I have my own room to study but my parents always check on me to see if I am doing my work or not." (R1)

"I do not have my own room and did my work in the living room in front of the tv. My parents would keep watch on me to ensure I complete my work. The teachers treat us the same. There was no biasness whatsoever. But there are a few who would give special attention to us and ask about our well-being." (R2)

"I do not have any room for study and would study in front of the tv. About tuition classes, I only attended those provided by the school as my family could not afford to send me to private tuition classes. My parents did help me with schoolwork especially during the lower primary years. When I was in upper primary, they could not really help, and I would ask the teachers. Sometimes, I would ask my sisters to help me. My parents are very supportive of me and told me that it is the only way to succeed. My parents always tell me that outsiders tend to look down on *Orang Asli* and being successful in education is the only way to make them respect us. That is what they keep telling me." (R3)

Similarly, R2 mentioned that his parents would make sure that he completed his schoolwork. However, he did not have any room of his own but did his work in the living room under the supervision of his parents. R2's father completed his secondary school and, but his mother only completed Standard 3 (third year of primary education). His father work as a school gardener and currently attending to his own orchard upon retirement. His mother is a full-time housewife. R3 also did not have any room of her own and would study in front of the television in the living room.

All the respondents did not attend any extra private classes for their education except those provided by the school. However, R1 and R2 said that their parents would ensure that they would attend any extra classes organized by the school. They did not attend extra classes could be due to financial constraints that they may have. Despite all of them having parents who are working and possibly generating sustainable and stable income, the amount may not be sufficient to afford extra private tuition. R1 has four siblings, while R2 has five siblings like R3. All of their siblings received either primary, secondary or tertiary education and would help them with their schoolwork. All of R2's siblings completed their secondary education and one of them completed her diploma from a local university. R3's siblings completed their tertiary education except for the youngest who is still in school. She mentioned that her family could not afford to have extra tuition classes and her home is far from town where all the tuition classes were normally conducted.

Parents of these respondents seemed to put a lot of emphasis on educating their children and very supportive of the children's endeavors. This could be due to the early exposure that the parents have on education as all the respondents' fathers completed their secondary education while their mothers have some form of education. This is in tandem with what [14] found in their studies where parents would help their children in completing their education. In addition, being a school gardener would have exposed R2's father to the school environment and this perhaps would have instilled the idea of the importance of education for his children. This can be seen that all his children completed their education. R1's eldest sister did not finish her school, but the rest of his siblings completed theirs. This would indicate that his family also look at educating the children seriously. R3's parents also completed their secondary education, where her father completed until form five (fifth and final year of upper secondary education) while her mother completed form three (final year of lower secondary). According to R3 there are a number of university graduates in her village, and she has a few aunties who have completed their tertiary education. Her parents would also help her with her schoolwork as much as they can.

Her father currently works in the village doing various jobs while her mother works as an assistant at the local kindergarten. R3 would follow her to the kindergarten and attended the same kindergarten once she reached the permitted age. This would have exposed R3 to the importance of education and how education can elevate their status in the eyes of the non-*Orang Asli*. Parental involvement in all the respondents have resulted in them completing their education to tertiary level.

According to R3, she stayed at her secondary school's hostel as the school was a 90-minute drive from her village, hence, too far to commute. Initially it was difficult for her to survive in the hostel as she was the only *Orang Asli* student in the hostel. Her cousin attended the school along with her but lasted only two weeks and refused to continue. However, R3 said that her parents were very supportive and wanted R3 to complete school, so that she could lead a better life and prove that *Orang Asli* can achieve greater heights. Teachers in their school do not seem to provide any special attention to the *Orang Asli* students. They were treated accordingly and the same as the other races. R2 mentioned that his teachers treat them (*Orang Asli* students) the same as other students but there were a few who were concerned with their well-being.

All three of the respondents received parental support in their schooling years as well as during their tertiary education. R3's parents would help by buying relevant reference books for her to study and helped her with her schoolwork whenever possible. R2's parents would ensure that he completed his work once he arrived home. R1's parents provide him with his own room to make it easier for him to study. All their siblings completed their education, either until tertiary or secondary and the least at primary level. Their parents made sure that all of them completed their schooling.

As such, parents' exposure to education would help to create awareness to the needs of education for the *Orang Asli* children. Lack of awareness and perhaps understanding of the importance of education and school have led to the parents' poor perception of education and putting survival of the family as priority [1], [5], [16]. This study showed that parental involvement in the respondents' education journey have helped them to complete their education. Hence, it can be said that parental involvement played an essential role in ensuring the success of the respondents in their pursuit of education.

4.2. Local culture

The people in R1's village is quite supportive of the school going children. According to R1, he did not attend any extra classes except those conducted by the school and this could be due to financial constraints. However, the head of the village at times would organize extra classes for the school going

children in the village. He would set up a place for the children to have extra classes or study groups. This is also shared by R2 who said that the management of his village put emphasis on the children and youth to attend schools. They both agree that the management of their village was very supportive of them and other youth in the village in ensuring that they receive proper education. The interview reveals excerpts from the interview conducted with the respondents concerning local culture.

R2 mentioned that his uncles are very supportive of him continuing his studies and often gave him encouragement to study. This is also shared by R1 who said his villagers would normally tell him to finish his studies and not stop halfway. According to R3, she would sort the help of the parents at first but after that, as she progressed, she would turn to her siblings who were in the university to help her with her schoolwork.

According to R2, all the children in the village attended schooling and some of them made it to universities. R1 also said that in his village, he is not the only one who has managed to continue his studies. There are also others who have made it to universities. R3 also shared similar thoughts about the involvement of her community. According to her, some of them are very supportive of her continuing her studies. However, there are also some of the villagers who said that finishing her secondary education is good enough and there is no need for her to pursue tertiary education. However, the villagers who have completed their degrees would occasionally conduct extra classes in the local church for students who are going to sit for national exams. According to R3, these villagers are elderly women have finished their studies in the nineties and currently residing in the village. The Semelai, according to R3 are open to the idea of continuing their education, however, sometimes other factors such as financial constraints and family instabilities deter them from pursuing higher education. Generally, R3 feels that the people in her village, and the Semelai in general accept the idea of the importance of education.

All three respondents agreed that their community are very supportive of their education. They would help whenever it was necessary to ensure that the children would go to school and received their education. The Semelai and Jahut in this case appeared to be supportive of their children continuing their education. This is in contrast with [16] who stated that the culture of *Orang Asli* do not focus on the importance of education. R3 did mention that ‘some tribes’ do not welcome education, but the situation is rather different in her community as well as R1 and R2’s. Their community seems to embrace the culture of education and supported the notion put forth by [14] in their study on the awareness of *Orang Asli* towards education, that *Orang Asli* parents are prepared to improve their children’s education.

“At times the management of the village would set up a place for us to study or have some group discussions. My villagers would tell me that it is good of me to further my studies and always tell me to make sure that I finish my studies. “Orang Asli” sometimes are interested to learn but they do not have the courage to proceed. This is my observation of the Orang Asli in general. That is the reason why not many “Orang Asli” are in the local higher institution. So that is why I want to show to them that I am here and my experience in higher institution would perhaps help them see the importance of education and take the necessary steps towards it.” (R1)

“The management of my village would ensure that all the children and youth in the village would go to school. My uncles always emphasized the need for me to study and always gave me encouragement to continue my studies. I can say that the people in my village are very helpful and supportive of us going to school.” (R2)

“I normally would ask my parents but as I progressed, I turn to my siblings. My parents can only help with the lower primary work (Year 1-3) because they themselves were not highly educated. In my village, some of them are supportive on continuing education but there are also some who says there is no need to continue until university. There is no point to that.” (R3)

“Sometimes we will have the Makcik-makcik (aunties) who have graduated long time ago to help out the students. They will conduct classes for free in the local church. I think my people (Semelai) are okay with education but sometimes they have problems like financial or family problems. Unlike some tribes which do not welcome education, my tribe is ok with it. Since some of us have managed to finish our studies, it sorts of help the others to have the same desire.” (R3)

“I like to learn. I think that is why I pursued my education. I am like this since I was small...I also believe that since I am an Orang Asli, I have to prove to outsiders that we can also make it in our studies. I want to show that Orang Asli can also have better education and eventually have a better career.” (R3)

4.3. Motivation and environment factors

The findings from the study would suggest two key elements in the success factors for the Semelai and Jahut in their education as can be seen from the respondents-motivation and environment. All three respondents shared similar characteristics that helped them to be successful in their studies. They displayed strong desire to succeed in their studies. This desire stemmed from their own inspirations to be better than the

rest of their society. R1 and R2 both mentioned the need to complete their studies and prove that *Orang Asli* is also capable of finishing their studies. During the interview, the respondents believe that they could eventually become the role model for the children in their respective communities to follow and complete their education. They appeared to understand the current situation of the *Orang Asli* in the education field and feel that the *Orang Asli* should continue to finish their education. Strong motivation is seen as the key factor that drove all the respondents towards completing their education.

Being successful could be seen as a way out of poverty for the *Orang Asli*. The *Orang Asli* is generally placed in either poor or hardcore poor category and most of them are without stable income. Although the income is low, they are often comfortable with what they have [2] and since it is not in their culture to focus on education, the children do not feel motivated [16]. They are comfortable because they feel that they are already in the 'comfort zone'. In contrast to the respondents in the study, they feel that by completing their education would allow them to search for better life, secure stable jobs and provide for the family. All the respondents agree that education would help them to prove to people that they can achieve their dreams and become a better person. R3's parents have instilled in her the need to finish her studies and become a successful person since she was young. This notion has helped her to strive to finish her studies. In addition, the fact that she was the only *Orang Asli* in her school's hostel and that she did not quit like her relative, showed that R3 has a very strong motivation to succeed in her education.

The environment in which the respondents resided is another factor that contributed to their success in education. Their society perceived education as very important and would provide support to ensure that the children in the village received their schooling and the necessary help. This can be seen in R1 and R2 villages where the management of the village would set up space for them to conduct group discussion or extra classes. In R3's village, the elders would conduct classes for free at the local church. This kind of support helped to motivate and encourage the children to learn. It would show to the children the importance of education and that they are not isolated in their pursuit.

In addition, all the other siblings in their family have completed their education, either secondary or tertiary education. This would have created a good environment where the importance of education is emphasized. The support that the respondents received from their parents and siblings also played an important role. The help in completing schoolwork from elder siblings and constant supervision from the parents ensured the respondents that they have strong familial support in the education.

The infrastructure in their villages also played an important role in creating the right environment for them to learn. According to R3, initially when she was younger, the electricity to her village was only at night (twelve hours). Despite the limited supply of electricity, R3 managed to complete her schoolwork at night due to the availability of the electric supply. R1 and R2 villages also have similar infrastructure facilities. Proper infrastructure facilities are vital in ensuring the success of *Orang Asli* children as limited infrastructure, especially electricity would hamper their development. This has helped in creating the right environment for *Orang Asli* to continue their education.

4.4. Success as a concept for the *Orang Asli* in education

This study expands [26] notion of success for the *Orang Asli*. Figure 2 illustrates the amalgamation of two main facets of success in education for these *Orang Asli*. Motivation involving the self is significant. The idea of 'wanting' within the self must be strong and this needs to be aligned with strength, tenacity, and courage. The synergy between one motivation to another is vital. Motivation is challenging for the *Orang Asli* as there are abundant of internal and external hurdles that may dampen their pursuit of education.

This is further aggravated by the need for supporting and well-adjusted environment to ensure success such as logistics issues. The environmental issues include the necessity of transportations, accommodation, and some financial support. Thus, environment factors for *Orang Asli* education success are geographical location, parental involvement, and local culture. This is illustrated in Figure 2.

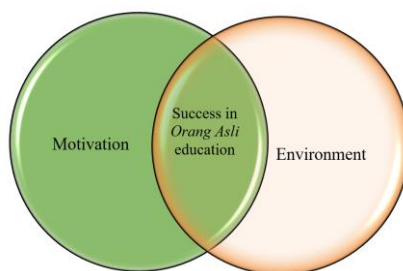


Figure 2. General success factors in education among the *Orang Asli*

There are some shared significance and differences of experiences that have led to the deemed success. The similarity lies in the need for physical support such as finance and logistics including space. The differences are in the received emotional support of societal, cultural change and adaptation alongside the schooling system. These findings may assist many bodies to tap into necessary areas to further assist the OA. The novelty unfold here is the need for not only motivation but also the ability to wrap the drive to succeed and to channel it to the right path. The capability to maintaining the same energy is deemed as a mechanism to achieve greater heights.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings from the study would suggest two key elements in the success factors for the Semelai and Jah Hut in their education as can be seen from the respondents-motivation and environment. Despite the challenges faced by the respondents in the study, they have managed to complete their education. They faced similar challenges that are attributed to the development of education among the *Orang Asli*. However, their success is attributed to the right environment created around them to succeed and the motivation to better themselves. It seems that these two factors (environment and motivation) are crucial in ensuring the success of *Orang Asli* in education. The findings in the study are similar to research conducted by [27] who found that motivational level of the *Orang Asli* students are affected by the motivating factor such as the environment. Elements of environment include climate, commitment and parental. There is a strong link between motivation and environment in ensuring the success of school going children [28]. Motivation to succeed is essential to ensure the success of the *Orang Asli* in education. It was evident in the study that motivation to better oneself is a strong driving force among the respondents. The need to better themselves and eventually afford an improved lifestyle is a vital motivation for them [29]. Internal motivation to succeed and external motivation from parents and society have pushed their respondents into leading learning learners who strive to improve themselves. Similarly, Hassan and Thava [30] also found significant relationship between intrinsic motivation (self-satisfaction) and academic achievement among *Orang Asli* students. They found that the higher the motivation, the better the students perform academically. Strong motivation needs to be developed among the *Orang Asli* children for them to improve themselves. This could be further developed through identifying the right mechanisms for the development of motivational model for the *Orang Asli* students.

Creating the right environment together with the encouragement from the local community as well as the family are essential in providing the right support for the children of *Orang Asli* to thrive in education. The right environment could reduce the feel of isolation and alienation among the children and allow them to concentrate on their studies. The right home environment helped the respondents in the study to finish their education. Parents and siblings provided ample support for them to succeed-moral and financial support. This is line with the findings from [31] that parental commitment to the education of the children would help to increase the students' motivation and academic performance. Their study found that parental support includes financial and constant communication and involvement in the students' education. Parents' commitment would affect the motivation of the learners as the lack of commitment from the *Orang Asli* parents have negatively affected the students [32]. As such, the right environment and familial support are crucial in the development of education for the *Orang Asli* children. Better infrastructure also contributed to their success. The local community also contributed to providing space, time, and extra support to the respondents. All these helps have created a good environment for the respondents to finish their study.

6. CONCLUSION

This study highlighted the role that motivation and the right environment have played in helping the *Orang Asli* to complete their education. Motivation, internal and external through parental and societal support are pertinent in ensuring the success of the *Orang Asli* children in education. The right home environment is essential to push the *Orang Asli* in their educational pursuit. The findings from the study contribute to the pool of literature on *Orang Asli* education. It provides the relevant authorities an opportunity to develop a better model to help the aboriginal people of Malaysia to elevate themselves from the grip of poverty that is synonymous with them.

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