

Teacher's Perception on Primary School Student's Dropout Risk

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Abstract

Slow learners and dropout are the main concern of education system around the world. With the increases of dropout rate among students especially slow learners, the education system such as education and research institute are working to find the explore the factors of increasing dropout cases. The research aimed to find out the indicator of school dropouts among slow learners based on the teachers' perspectives. The research was conducted using qualitative approach, phenomenological design as interview. The interview questions were prepared with protocol. The total 10 primary school teachers meeting the inclusive criteria participated in the research. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the results. The results illustrated that the indicators of school dropout are divided into the categories of emotions, behavioral and social aspects which included the students, family and teachers. The findings of the study were similar to the previous study, in which the researcher found that tendency of school dropout was higher among students who had emotional, behavioral and social problems. Further this study can lead to develop the framework to prepare the intervention plans to reduce school dropout risk among primary students.

Keywords: dropout, primary, school, emotional, social, risk

Introduction:

Ministry of Education Malaysia (2018) revealed that the rate of dropout in primary school is 0.8% and in secondary school is 3.3% which is male 77% is higher than female, 23%. Most of these cases happen in rural areas, yet there are cases in urban areas. The average rate is above 3% annually. This might seem small but the repercussions from this are manifold. Higher dropout from school was mostly recorded as slow learner students, which is major contributing issue. Slow learners were defined as students who have low capability in achieving academic success compared to their peer (Vasudevan, 2017). Normally the slow learners students were placed in the general classroom instead of specific type of education setting that is best suited for the student which can affects the development of student. Nile (2006) quoted that identifying academically weak student could be measured based on the delay in mastery and writing and also the weakness in the skills of writing. This statement was supported by Aisah and her colleagues (2019) which found that the slow learners were usually had problems in sense such as hearing, sight and speaking skills. This was due to the problem in developmental stage during the pregnancy which were insufficient nutrition and

lack of oxygen (Aisah & AB, 2019) Other than that, the slow learners also faced the problem in terms of emotions and social interaction. This issues were largely discussed by the researchers and educators. According to Gayane and Lili (2017), slow learner students were prone to develop anxiety and had low self-image because they had difficulty in reasoning skills which required to master an abstract concepts. This problem can make the slow learner students to feel the gaps in knowledge and basic skills when they are interacting with their friends. As a result the students were started to have low confident level and started to have low motivation to study which can lead to difficulty in social interaction and development of emotional disturbances. Pasha and his colleagues (2021) found that slow learners had emotions problems, lack of motivation and also difficulties to interact with teacher and peers The common result also obtained by Al Zoubi and Youness (2015) which stated students with lack of motivation of success and low enthusiasm were tend to have low academic achievement. There was also stated that the psychological problem such as attention disorder and anxiety affects the students achievement in which the student was more likely to forget and difficult to catch up during class lessons (Al-Zoubi & Younes, 2015). In addition, slow learner student had problem in socialisation in which the students were frequently involved in bully behaviour. For instance, Ruhela (2014) reported that school environment including the poor behaviour of teacher when interacting with slow learner student can influence emotions and social of student. This was because once the teacher practiced the bad interaction with the student, the student started to isolate themselves which affects their confidence to socialize with friends. As a result, these students were prone to be bullied by others. The emotions and social development also influence by the teachers and attitude of parents. For instance, the negative attitude of teacher such as showing the dislike gesture towards students and the negative perception from parents can lead the slow learner students to develop few problems such as isolation, anxiety and low self-confident (Vasudevan, 2017). Korikana (2020) also stated that slow learner students also exposed towards the unpleasant emotions rather than pleasant emotion due to the existence of the social hazard in terms of poor home and school environment. Based on the previous study, the researcher found that there was common finding from each research in which teachers attitude and parental involvement plays main roles in emotions and social issues in slow learner students. Therefore, the researcher aimed to study the indicator of dropout among slow learners in the perspectives of teachers

Research Method

Study design is qualitative, using phenomenological design, by interviewing the perceptive of the teachers, to explore the factors related to slow learner primary school students' risk of dropout. The teachers were recruited based on convenience sampling. The total participants were 10 primary school teachers who fulfilled the inclusive criteria, related to being primary school teachers, had involved with slow learners or dropout students and participant must experience in teaching at least 2 years. The participants were from 3 states which were Kelantan, Penang and Selangor.

The ethical approval was obtained from the Research Innovation and Management center of Sultan Idris Education University. The interview questions were developed by experts from Special Needs and clinical Psychology field with ensuring the validity and reliability of the

questions. The participants were recruited with convenience sampling through online session. The initial stage of data collection was briefing the participants regarding the research. The date and time to conduct the research were set up and the interview was conducted based on appointment. The interview session took 40 to 60 minutes with each participant. The interview audio were transcribed and analyzed according to the thematic analysis. The steps in conducting data analysis were based on the techniques proposed by Lichman (2013) involved the data was initially coded based on the responses obtained from the participant. Second, the initial coding were revised. Third, initial list of categories were developed. Forth, the initial list were modified once the researcher rereading the transcript and coding. Next, the categories and subcategories were revised. Lastly, the concepts or themes were drawn based on the categories.

Result

The results were analyzed using thematic analyses; the coding revealed the sub categories and main categories related to the risk factors of student's primary school dropout. The participant's details were tabled below:

Table 1: Demographic information of participants

Participants	Teaching years	Location
P1	4 years	Kelantan
P2	2 years	Selangor
P3	10 years	Kelantan
P4	3 years	Penang
P5	2 years	Selangor
P6	2 years	Kelantan
P7	6 years	Selangor
P8	5 years	Selangor
P9	4 years	Selangor
P10	5 years	Selangor

Teacher's perceptions of the indicator of drop out

	Categories	Subcategories
Indicator of dropout	Emotion	Emotional expression Empathy
	Behavioral	Self-control Passive behavior Lack of confidence Lack of motivation

social

Gadget use

Peers related issues

Family related issues

Teachers related issues

Participant described the indicator of dropout into 3 categories which were emotions, behavioral and social, which further indicates emotional expression, and empathy under emotional, and Behavior related self control, passive behavior, lack of confidence, lack of motivation and gadgets use. The social category included peers related issues, family and teacher related issues.

1. Emotions

The emotions of student at the risk of dropout were unstable in which they showed few characteristics of emotional issues. The first characteristics were lack of emotional expression;

Emotional expression:

“...There is one student in my class who would cry every time I ask him to answer my questions” (P.1)

There were 2 participants mentioned that the students at risk of dropout express their inability to express emotions.

“...There is also student that is sensitive, easily angry, and dont understand why the feel angry...” (P.3)

Empathy: There were 2 participant shared their thoughts on a student that had low empathy according to this scenario;

“He can just see his friend crying with blood around his finger without calling me. When I asked him “why”, he said it just a small cut, no hurt. Even when his friend is crying..” (P. 1)

“There is a boy in my class that hint his friend on head because his friend is crying” (P.3)

2. Behavioral

Self-Control: The participants explained the behavioral of student at risk of dropout were illustrated based on the self control and motivation level of student. The self-control level of the students could be observed based on their level of aggressiveness which includes the behavior of students towards their teachers and peers.

“They always rude with teachers” (P.2)

“..They are aggressive” (P.5)

“For student that wants to drop out.. they behave abnormal. For example, too passive or too active” (P.3)

Passive Behavior: However, there were 2 participant which stated that the behavior of student at risk of dropout were passive instead of aggressive. The statement of the participants were as follows;

“Children who dropout is actually very passive and shy” (P.1)

“Dropout student is passive student” (P. 9)

Gadgets use : Another participant mentioned that the students were exposed towards the gadget usage including the streaming of YouTube and daily usage of phone.

“Children are exposed to gadget. There is student im my class that only talk if I ask about game” (P.3)

“Children play phone everyday” (P.2)

Lack of Confidence: There was a participant that mentioned the confident level and trust as indicator of dropout, stated as follows;

“It is just they have low confident level .And I think trust also the issues” (P.1)

Lack of Motivation: The participants explained on the interest and willingness to go to school to define the lack of motivations of student, as follows;

“They don’t want to talk or answer my questions” (P.3)

In addition, there were participant who stated that student that at risk of dropout had no emotions issues but had lack of interest in study.

“ The dropout student tend to show their lack of interest in study... They didn’t show any emotion and just drop out like that” (P. 4)

The motivation level of students were observed based on absenteeism, the willingness of students to study and the expression of student during class session

“When they always absent...Absenteeism means student has no interest with learning” (P.5)

“Dropout because student is not interested to study. Always tease others and show boring or sleepy face” (P.6)

“They are fine, no emotion problem but they usually not active in class” (P. 3)

3. Social

The indicator of student at risk of dropout could be observed based on the social aspects. This could be divided into 3 parts which were the social in terms of peers, family and teachers.

Peers related issues: Most of the participant mentioned that students had lack of social skills in which they had problems in socializing, and lack of social activities..

“They live in their own world and had no friend” (P.3)

“This children usually non talkative and quite difficult to stay close with them” (P.10)

“Some children have problem to socialize” (P.8)

“Students have lack of social activities” (P.2)

Family issues: The participants mentioned family factor focused on the parent's aspects such as parenting, attention from parents, and family background

The participant illustrated parents of student at risk of drop out as strict, lenient and neglecting parents. They also stated that the parents were usually misunderstood when the teacher contact them. These were based on the participant dialogues, as follows;

“The parents are too strict towards them” (P.2)

“Parents are too lenient about their children. Mother keep on saying that her child is good and okay at home” (P. 3)

Lack of attention from parents could be factors of drop out in which the student feels neglected when the parents were busy or ignored them;

“Some parents are neglecting their children” (P.1)

“They don't have time with children. The children are neglected because parent is too busy to go to work”

The student with divorce or live with extended family also contributes towards the school dropout among students. The statement from participant was as follows;

“Student from divorce or single mother. Their parents pay no attention to them, make them feel useless” (P.5)

Teachers' behavior: the teacher explained on the reaction of teachers on their students, as a risk factors for students drop out from the school. Based on the answer provided by the teacher, the researcher found that teacher's behavior and interaction can be factors towards the risk of student's dropout;

“Teacher cannot control the children anymore” (P.4)

“Students make us angry and irritated”

“There is one child that always goes in and out from class and quite naughty. Teacher scold and neglect him” (P.3)

“Teacher usually give student weird looking and scold the for being slow or if they cannot do the work” (P.6)

Discussion

Indicators of school dropout were categorized according the theme merged in the coding, the main categories reflected, emotional, behavioral and social issues. Emotional main category of themes indicated the sub category of emotional expression, and empathy. The behavior category indicated the self control, passive behavior, lack of confidence and lack of

motivation. The social category reflected the subcategory of peers related issues, family and teacher related issues.

Emotion: The result for emotions indicator of dropout illustrated that the children had low empathy, lack of interest to study, emotion disturbed and lack of confident level. Tinto (1993) stated that students' goal were important for the students dropout and academic achievement in which this can help the student to enhanced their motivation, persistence and deeper learning (Vansteenkiste et, al., 2004). These emotions illustrated the school burnout symptoms among students. The previous researchers stated that there were relationship between the negative emotions such as low self esteem, general school maladjustment, risky behavior such as gambling and the increases for the risk of dropout (Fimian & Cross, 1986 cited in Farina et. al.; Rasanen, et. al., 2015; Fiorilli et, al.,2017 cited in Garavand, 2021). Garwood (2020) stated that students with emotional disturbance were high-risk group for dropout. These statements were parallel with the finding in this research in which emotion disturbed was indicator for school dropout. However these personal issues alone were not strong factor for the students to dropout. Lee-St. John and colleagues (2018) which focused on the intervention of dropout stated that risk of dropout is predicted by in and out-school factors which include school, family and community. The same idea were illustrated by Fortin and colleagues (2010) which stated that the tendency of dropout among student was higher when the school and family factors were involved,

Behavioral: The result showed that the indicator of dropout in terms of behavioral were based on absenteeism and interactions of children between peers and teachers in which the children showed aggressiveness, uninvolved during class lesson and bully behavior. The measures of these problem behavioural was positively correlated with dropout in which based on previous researches, the more problematic behaviour showed by the students, the higher risk for the students to dropout (Hoff et. al., 2015; Balfanz et al., 2010; Christle et al., 2007; Fall & Roberts, 2012; Frazelle & Barton, 2013; French & Conrad, 2001; Klare, 2008; Neild et al., 2007; Protheroe, 2009; Rueble et al., 2002; Sparks, 2013; Suh et al., 2007). Absenteeism were the nation issues for school which linked to dropout problems for all level of study such as elementary, middle and high school (Balfanz & Chang, 2013; Hammond et. al., 2007). A study in Japan found that the severe problems such as abuse and neglected student had more than 50% high rate for school dropout (Tabuchi et. al., 2018)

Social factors

The finding of this research found that the social aspects of students such as socializing problem, poor communication skills, excessive gadget usage and poor home environment were the indicator of school dropout. The socializing problems such as poor interaction between students with peers and teachers were the determinants of dropout. The recent evaluation regarding dropout suggested that the feeling of unbelonging to the education place such as university and poor peer relationship were reasons for the student to dropout (Lucas, 2018; Delaney, 2008; OECD, 2014). The socialization also related to the poor communication skills with peers in which if the students had difficulties to communicate, it will lead to socializing problem. Manzouli et. al. (2019) stated that peers are the agents of

socialization which play important roles in affecting the behavioral, cognitive and cognitive commitment of student which directly affects give positive impact towards the academic achievement and success of students. This proved that peers works as the main social indicator of dropout. In which Ricard and Pellertier (2016) agreed that relationship with peers was the critical aspects for the long terms affects for school engagement and can be the predictor for school dropout (Carbonaro & Workman, 2013). In addition, communication with teachers also important in determine the indicator of school dropout. A recent study found that more than 50% of student never speaks with their teachers in which this could affects the learning process (Manzouli et, al., 2019). This unhealthy phenomenon could affects the motivations of student and increases the risk to dropout.

Family issues: The result also found that parenting styles such as being too strict or lenient, family background and socioeconomic status play role that contribute towards school dropout. The finding was similar with a study conducted by Sartaj and Aslam (2010) which found that authoritarian parenting styles lead to negative home environment, health and emotional adjustment among college students. These parenting styles also contributed towards the low social skills, helplessness and emotional problems such as low self-esteem of the students (Moon-Seo et. al., 2021 Alt, 2015; Sartaj & Aslam, 2010). As for permissive parenting styles which provided the children with excessive support and had very minimal to no demand gave unhealthy development for the children (Rawat & Gulati, 2018; Baumrind, 1991; Darling, 1999; Hamon & Schrodt, 2012; Baharudin & Kordi, 2010; Buboltz, Griffith-Ross, Marsiglia & Walczyk, 2007). Blondal and Adalbjarnardottir (2009) stated that the adolescents that comes from permissive parents were more likely to dropout from schools compared to other parenting styles. The finding also found that parent-child interaction was one of the factor for school dropout. A study found that effective support from family able to prevent the student from school dropout (Trieu Jayakody, 2018). Bilige and Gan (2020) which focused on hidden factors of school dropout revealed that the interaction of the students between their parents, peers and school were significantly correlated to the school dropout while Valkov (2018) stated that the parent-child interaction influence the bonding of students with the society in which if they had poor parent-child relationship, the student were at high risk to deviate themselves from society and eventually dropout from school.

Teacher: As for the teacher factor, the researcher found that teachers' helplessness were contributed towards school dropout. These were because the teachers were unmotivated and lack of enthusiasms to teach the slow learner students. Hattie (2009) mentioned that teachers are the proximal motivators in the classroom and play important role in facilitating the autonomous motivation and perceived competence (Lucas, 2018). In this study, the researcher found that the teachers were helplessness in which they mentioned on their incapability to control the student from drop out. The previous study suggested that controlling teacher and lack of relatedness are associated with higher alienation and likelihood of dropping out (Black & Deci, 2000; Hascher & Hagenauer, 2010). Lucas (2018) stated that these negativities of teachers which were unsupportive teacher and lack of relatedness between teacher and student were associated with dropout intentions of students.

Limitation of study

In this qualitative study, participants included were 10 primary school teachers which were recruited based on convenience sampling in which the result of this study cannot be generalized to population in Malaysia. Additionally, the study were conducted during the MCO in which the researchers had to conduct online interview instead of face-to-face interview which might affects the understanding and interaction between researcher and participants due to limited internet coverage in certain areas. Other than that, the perception and understanding of the participants for certain terms of this study such as slow learner and Emogamification might affects the data analysis.

Conclusion

As conclusion, this study focused on exploring the current situation of students by collecting data from the teachers. The research found that the indicator for dropout was divided into 3 aspects which were emotion, behavioral and social of student. Next, the factors of dropout were divided into 3 categories which were personal, family and teacher while the activities conducted by the teacher were focused on increasing the emotional intelligence of the student. The data obtained was useful for teachers and parents in order to plan for intervention and prevention program to reduce the possibility of student to dropout.

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