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## The Literacy Experience of Indigenous People in Pahang, Malaysia

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### Abstract

This paper uses the Experience Sampling Method data drawn from Aboriginal people (indigenous) data collection in 2016. It examines the proximal environmental factors as well as behaviors and habits that correlate to personal happiness. The understanding and parent's participation show that reported happiness varies significantly from both literacy or non-literacy, family background. This study aimed to identify the level of illiteracy by the age structure of Aboriginal communities between the age of 15 years to 65 years, and explain the relationship between illiteracy rate with level of education, discuss factors that influence the illiteracy rate and measures to overcome them. A Total of 100 respondents randomly selected. The findings show factors that result in illiteracy are poverty, facilities and infrastructures, transportations and accessibility, parent's attitude and a personal attitude. However, there is some effective measures done by government such as, allocation and aid from government, good educational technic formulate to increase the interest of Aboriginal people's children, parent's role, personal attitude, and motivational campaign to increase the level of awareness among Aboriginal people. This issue needs to be given serious attention for reducing the gap between the community and for a mutual wellbeing.

**Keyword:** *Geography, Populations, Aboriginal People, Landscape Populations, Literacy, Happiness*

### Introduction

The awareness to get a good standard of living through education has been a dream of Aboriginal people (Richard et al. 2016; Gawaian & Bronwyn 2016; Abd Rahman et al. 2018). Low level of education make them unable to help in their children's education hence they totally rely on the

school (Clandinin 2016; Rosniza Aznie et al. 2017). Language and cultural barrier cause an interaction gap between Aboriginal people with other community (Catherine 2016) cause them to be left behind in educational development and also contributed to a increasing illiteracy rate (John 2016). There are number of factors in causing low literacy level among Aboriginal people's student such as influence of their native languages, parent's factor, poverty and socioeconomic factor, teachers and absence from school (John 2016; Don et al. 2012; Subhi 2015). The factors contributing to low academic achievement among aboriginal children are lack of socio-educational support due to socio-economic problems, limited access to modern technology, low self-esteem, lack of initiative, poverty, and lack of support from community, socioeconomic factors and family issues (Ahmad et al. 2016).

Therefore a program to transform the mindset and attitude of Aboriginal people called KEDAP is executed to create a more educated Aboriginal people's community in the future (Salleh 2009). Thus, the school especially the teachers, play an important role in implementing environmental education to the new generation of Aboriginals. This is to ensure their role in environmental management are still needed as well as strengthen their existing indigenous knowledge inherited by their ancestors. Due to fact that the environmental education is carried across the curriculum, the teachers should be competent in integrating environmental education contents in lesson in subject matter. In addition, environmental education also requires the support of environmental awareness programs conducted by schools and other stakeholders to develop environmental care behavior among aboriginal students (Gawaian 2016).

In Malaysia, according to Aboriginal Peoples Development Strategic Plan 2011-2015 and population census 2010, the total population of Orang Asli community was 178,197 (in year 2010), and this represented a mere 0.7% of the total Malaysian population (Portal Statistik Malaysia 2014). Because of that, the main objective of the study is to identify the illiteracy rate among the productive group of Aboriginal people as a whole based on age structure of Aboriginal people from 15 to 65 years, to clarify the relationship between illiteracy rate and the level of education of Aboriginal people, to discuss the factors that influence the illiteracy rate, and to propose a relevant measures can be taken to tackle this problems.

### **Background of Muadzam Shah**

Bandar Muadzam Shah was opened in 1979 by Lembaga Kemajuan Pahang Tenggara (DARA), and officially handed over to Federal Government by 15th June 1999 and later transferred to under the management of Majlis Daerah Rompin, Pahang. The location of Pahang, Malaysia is at 80 km away from Segamat, 110 km from Kuantan and approximately 250 km from Kuala Lumpur. Muadzam Shah has an area of 316,996.5 hectares with its distribution of 90% of Malay residential and 10% Aboriginal people (aboriginal) includes Aboriginal people Gadak settlement at Aboriginal people Buluh Nipis settlement (JAKOA 2014).

A total number of Aboriginal people populations in Muazam Shah is 5,907 people where the combine population of Kampung Buluh Nipis (402) and Kampung Gadak (684) is 1086 according to JABATAN Kemajuan Aboriginal people (JAKOA) in 2014. Aboriginal people community in both study area namely Aboriginal people Kampung Gadak and Aboriginal people Kampung Buluh Nipis in muazam Shah made up of various tribe namely Jakun, Temuan, Semelai and Jah Hut. However the majority of the them are from Jakun tribe that is 99% while the other 1% are from the rest of other

tribe. From observation and interview made by researcher found that the major economic activity of Aboriginal people in the study area are rubber tapping and small number of retailers with small shops selling groceries in residential area. Other than that, some of them are also self employed and small scale farmers to support their daily life (Masran et al. 2010; Mohamad 2006; Vivien et al. 2015).

### **Method**

The primer data collection on the illiteracy rate among indigenous people in study area is done by using a set of questionnaire; and the present study was conducted within selected Orang Asli (the indigenous people of Peninsular Malaysia) communities in three villages of Peninsular Malaysia. Adults of 18 years old and above from the Orang Asli villages within states (Pahang) of Peninsular Malaysia. As this study engaged individual face-to-face in-depth interview, 20 successful interviews were finally conducted at the end of fieldwork. All interviews were carried out using Malay language. If the interviewee could not understand Malay language, another family member or neighbor who could speak dual languages (Orang Asli's ethnic language as well as Malay language) was used as an interpreter to the productive group from 15 to 65 years of age. The collection of the data through field work involved the method of questionnaires, interview, observation and monitoring directly or indirectly on the respondents. The researcher used purposive simple random sampling technic by choosing 100 respondent in the study area for questionnaires. The focused group are from aged 15 to 65 that can be considered as productive. Other than the Experience Sampling Method used. This research also evaluated by Mann-whitney U Test.

### **Result and Discussions**

A total of 100 respondents were randomly selected from among the Jakun villagers within the age range 15 to 65 years. The percentage of respondents showed 38% do not attend school and 35% attended school at the primary level, 25% secondary level, and 1% each for pre-school and higher education. Indirectly, the result shows that most of the respondents be affected by the ability of big size households and socioeconomic status.

### ***Respondent literacy***

The median line between the groups have literacy skills based on the Mann-Whitney U test and study boxplot graph show the median value for the group (b) is higher than the median of the group (a). The result found that there were significant differences between (a) 36 to 65 years' old who suffer from high illiteracy rates compared to (b) age 15 to 35 years. Experience (a) with respect to the impact of rising standards of living [ $U(n_1=32, n_2=29)=265.4, p < 0.05$ ]. The mean value of (b) (36.42) is greater than (a) (23.28). This is due to most of the aboriginal people in that age group (b) not have a strong memory to remember new lesson. Compared with people who are in the younger age group of 15 to 25 years and 26 to 35 years. In addition, there are also a handful of them are married at a young age so that they cause less interested and lagged behind in terms of education, either directly or indirectly. Then, it contributed to the problem of high illiteracy. Based on the studies conducted, researchers have listed five factors that influence the rate of illiteracy among aboriginal people. Among the aspects evaluated are poverty, infrastructure, transport and communications, the parents and attitude of the individual. Nevertheless, this article will only discuss and only.

### ***Respondent poverty***

Average poverty affecting illiterate aboriginal population. There are several factors that influence the illiterate, which is a source of parental income is not enough (100%). Most parents only work in the village only be able to support family basic needs. This situation leads parents to sacrifice their children's schooling. The high cost of living is also one of the factors that affect poverty rates among them (63.9% agree). It can be seen the situation of aboriginal people who feel burdened by various rising costs of living that occur and they are unable to adapt to the various processes of economic change happening now. In addition, there are as many as 29.5% of respondents disagreed and 6.6 per cent of respondents strongly disagreed with these factors.

### ***Respondent facilities and infrastructure***

Details of facilities and infrastructure factors that influence the rate of illiteracy aboriginal people show the details of the facilities and infrastructure that are experienced by respondents, which causes the occurrence of the problem of illiteracy among aboriginal people. Illiteracy is also influenced by several factors, facilities and infrastructure, including a lack of school construction around or near the village. All of respondents agreed with these factors. There are also as many as 98.4% agree on the lack of a mini library in the village and also no disclosure or use of ICT such as the Internet in the village. This shows the majority agree with both of these factors can affect the problem of illiteracy. This is because the two villages are located in remote areas with small number of population complicate the process. The primary or secondary school which was only built in Kampung Buluh Nipis is still suffering from a lack of educational facilities. In addition, it is also due to the terrain in the two villages as hilly mangrove complicate the process.

### ***Provisions granting or assistance by the Government***

A total of 75.4% of respondents agreeing and 24.6% of respondents strongly agreed to the provision of assistance in terms of clothing, shoes, school books and stationery to solve the problem. In addition, there are as many as 73.8% of respondents, while 26.2% of respondents strongly agreed with giving pocket money to school. It showed that 100% of respondents supported the move to tackle illiteracy suffered most aboriginal people. Most of the respondents were from poor families and cannot afford to purchase or provide education of their children. They need help from the responsible party. The aid makes them more eager to go to school and can reduce the burden on their families either directly or indirectly.

### ***Implementation Techniques of P&P: Attractive and Effective***

Detail step involving the school teaching and learning (P&P) in overcoming illiteracy aboriginal people. The result show 100% of the respondents agree that the use of technology "Power Point" in school attracted students from aboriginal people to go to school. As we know the aboriginal people are more attracted to the things that they rarely see and use in their lives. This step can indirectly reduce illiteracy suffered by them. Stated 52.5% of respondents who agreed with the use of "brainstorming" is able to overcome illiteracy because this technique can help students who are weak in many aspects, especially students with reading problems and write. This helps them to cope because this technique should be used against aboriginal students who have the problem of illiteracy.

This is because it can reduce the illiteracy rate among aboriginal people of the community. A total of 16.4% of respondents who disagreed because they believed the technique requires individuals to actively communicate. However most of the students are still embarrassed and less fluent communication, especially in front of people. Therefore, they think it's less appropriate steps to address the problem of illiteracy suffered.

In addition, as many as 91.8% of respondents who agreed that creating the System of Learning and Teaching (P&P) outside the classroom can overcome the problem of illiteracy suffered by the students. Learning outside the classroom more interesting than learning in the classroom. This is because students can breathe fresh air and avoid boring and sleepiness. The process of brain development among students can become more efficient, especially for students who have poor memory. This method is considered capable of handling the problem of illiteracy, either directly or indirectly. In the context of aboriginal students (Gawaian 2016), they need fun-learning instructional strategies because they easily get bored (Mamat et al. 2012). Consequently, learning strategies have an impact on the achievement of learning objectives. Therefore, interesting and effective teaching aids must also be emphasized by teachers in planning lessons. Teaching and learning of environmental education approach have been used in previous research are problem solving, experiment, fieldwork, simulation, module and imitation (Erdogan 2011; Hungerford et al. 2005).

### ***The role of parents***

Details of the role of parents in addressing the problem of illiteracy among students accounted for 77% of respondents agree and 14.8% of respondents strongly agreed that conducting early education to children at home can overcome the problem of illiteracy. This is because at home parents play an important role in educating children either directly or indirectly so that the children do not sit idly at home. With their early education at home and at school, children did not experience any problems. There are also as many as 6.6% of the respondents who disagree and 1.6% of respondents who strongly disagree with these factors. This occurs due to the presence of some parents who are illiterate. They also cannot afford to teach children at home. Therefore, they think it's less appropriate steps to address the problem of illiteracy suffered.

The majority of the parents emphasised the importance of education for better life. Most parents hoped that having received a good education their children will stand a better chance for good jobs. Thus, there is a tendency for the aboriginal students to complete schooling and continue their studies when their parents are aware of and serious about their future career. The comments indicate that the parents provide fundamental support to their children such as transportation and financial assistance. However, most parents did not mention educational guidance for their children. This implies that although the parents are very supportive, they have limitation in providing useful support for their children's education (Hungerford 2005).

### **Conclusion**

Most illiterate aboriginal people affected by various factors, either external or internal factors inherent in their environment. In particular, the factors that affect and cause themselves beset by illiteracy to some extent will hinder the process of development and progress in aboriginal communities. Most of them support that factors such as poverty, facilities and infrastructure,

transport and communication, parental attitudes and the attitudes of the individuals can contribute to the problem of illiteracy among themselves, either directly or indirectly. However, there are also a handful of them are not very supportive of all these factors because they have their own opinions and views on the problem of illiteracy. Overall, this study is also expected to help certain parties such as Department of Aboriginal People (JAKOA) either directly or indirectly in addressing the problem of illiteracy among the people of aboriginal people from rising in order to ensure the processes of social progress aboriginal people.

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