Involvement of Schools, Parents, and Indigenous Communities in Addressing the Dropout of Indigenous Education

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Abstract
Education is a national agenda that requires the involvement of all parties. Involvement is seen as a continuous process involving planning, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation with the participation of various parties. Previous studies have shown the importance of involving schools, parents, and the community, especially in addressing educational dropouts. In Malaysia, efforts have been made to improve indigenous education; however, the dropout rate among indigenous students, particularly at the secondary school level, remains a concern. Therefore, this qualitative study aims to explore the involvement of schools, parents, and the indigenous community in addressing the dropout issue among indigenous students in Siput River, Perak. Using semi-structured interviews and purposive sampling, the researcher interviewed several teachers, parents, and members of the indigenous community in the Sungai Siput district, Perak. Additionally, direct observation was conducted in schools, homes, and indigenous villages to supplement the interview data. The study's findings describe the involvement of schools, parents, and the indigenous community, highlighting the efforts made by all three parties to address the dropout issue in indigenous education. The results also reveal the various challenges faced by these parties, necessitating the development of strategies to collectively tackle the dropout problem. This study carries important implications for addressing the educational dropout issue among indigenous students through the involvement of various stakeholders, particularly schools, parents, and the indigenous community.
Keywords: Schools Involvement, Parents Involvement, Indigenous Communities, Dropout

Introduction
The Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013-2025, under Initiative #57: Transformation of Indigenous and Indigenous Education, has been implemented to ensure equity by providing equal access to education for Indigenous students alongside mainstream education. This goal can be achieved through the determination and involvement of all parties. According to Vellymalay (2016), the involvement of schools in various programs, such as appreciating parents' visits to school, engaging in discussions about children's education, and informing

parents about meetings and activities, is considered a positive effort. However, there is a disconnect between the educational needs perceived by the school and those expected by the indigenous community Rosnon & Talib (2019), which contributes to the persisting dropout rates in indigenous education. Insufficient sensitivity of schools towards the challenges faced by the indigenous community is a key factor (Abdullah & Primus, 2020). Therefore, school efforts necessitate the involvement of parents and the community, both within and outside the school context (Salim & Samah, 2021).

Parental involvement is a crucial factor that contributes to educational development (Lee & Jan, 2020). However, Yusof et al (2017) stated that indigenous parents are still less involved in their children's learning activities, such as reading together, guiding them with school work, and sending them to attend extra classes. This lack of involvement stems from a lack of knowledge on how to guide children at home (Nor et al., 2018) and a lack of awareness among indigenous parents about the importance and direction of education (Kamarudin et al., 2019; Wafi and Sharifah, 2021). Language constraints, humility, shyness, and the fear of humiliation also contribute to the limited direct involvement of indigenous parents with the school (Awang, 2020). Therefore, bridging the gap between the involvement of indigenous parents and schools in educational development is crucial. Finding common ground is essential so that collective efforts to improve indigenous education can effectively address the issue of educational dropout.

In addition to the involvement of schools and parents, the indigenous community also needs to play a role in addressing the dropout issue in indigenous education. According to Hoicka et al (2021), the indigenous community has a strong sense of belonging, particularly towards their environment, culture, and language. However, the community's direction regarding education remains unclear (Abdul Wahab et al., 2016). This is because the indigenous community highly values children as individuals with the right to make decisions and explore their environment freely (Muir & Bohr, 2019), with parents acting as their protectors (Knauer et al., 2017). However, as per Rosnon (2016), the indigenous community needs to be involved in decision-making, planning, and other aspects to ensure the success of various educational activities. This highlights the need to study the involvement of the indigenous community, bridging the gap between schools and indigenous parents to align the direction of community education.

Literature Review
Efforts to bridge the engagement gap between schools, parents, and the indigenous community cannot be achieved without understanding the community's way of life. In Malaysia, there are still numerous indigenous tribes residing in remote areas, such as the Bateq tribe in Kelantan and Pahang, the Mendiq tribe in Kelantan, and the Senoi tribe in the interior regions of Perak, Kelantan, and Pahang. A study by Lee et al. (2018) on the economy of the indigenous community in Runchang, Pahang, revealed that nearly half of the indigenous population in the area were engaged in searching for wood stumps resulting from previous logging activities. Another 30.0% were involved in agricultural activities, 20.0% in the private sector, and only 1.0% operated retail shops in the area. This situation significantly impacts the dropout rate of indigenous students due to the community's struggles to engage in educational development, primarily attributed to their low socioeconomic status.

The attachment of the indigenous community to their ecological life in the forest and jungle leads them to prioritize other aspects over education (Kahriman-Pamuk & Ahi, 2019). According to Abdul Rahman (2018), indigenous children who do not continue their education from primary to secondary school often engage in self-supporting work, such as collecting forest produce. For them, basic literacy skills, encompassing reading, writing, and arithmetic (3M), are considered sufficient for their livelihoods (Nor et al., 2018). The occurrence of educational dropouts among the indigenous community highlights their prioritization of immediate life needs over long-term learning and the future of their children (Manaf et al., 2018; Khir et al., 2018). Furthermore, the dropout rate among indigenous students transitioning from primary to secondary school has increased from 16.75% in 2016 to 22.67% in 2019 (KPM, 2020). The situation is even more concerning, as a study found that 80% of the young generation of indigenous did not complete secondary education (Wei, C. Y., 2020). These circumstances contribute to the significant dropout rate within the indigenous community.

Past studies have also proven that the involvement of parents and the community, especially the indigenous community, in education is still lacking and requires further research to examine the appropriate approach to attract their attention to education (Abdul Wahab et al., 2016; Yulianti et al., 2018; Aman et al., 2019). Yew et al (2018) stated that the lack of involvement of the indigenous community in education is due to not fully prioritizing the aspects of education and career as the main medium in developing themselves and their families, in addition to assuming that their children will help them work to support their daily lives. indigenous parents are also found to be less involved in children's learning activities such as reading together, guiding children to complete schoolwork or sending children to attend extra classes (Yusof et al., 2017; Saidi et al., 2018). In that sequence, research gaps show that the indigenous community is in dire need of guidance and motivation in particular to get involved in dealing with the dropout of their children's education (Abdul Wahab et al. 2016; Yulianti et al., 2018; Aman et al., 2019).

Methodology
The study adopts a qualitative design using a case study approach. Data collection was conducted through fieldwork in Sungai Siput, Perak, involving the Indigenous National Secondary School and several villages. A total of 14 respondents were interviewed, including four from the school, six indigenous parents, and four representatives from the indigenous community in Sungai Siput, Perak. The sample selection was based on purposive sampling, considering specific criteria relevant to the study. Additionally, data was gathered through direct observations conducted at the school, homes, and various indigenous village areas to augment the interview data obtained from the school, parents, and the indigenous community.

The interview questions were semi-structured and designed based on the study's objectives, which are as follows:
1. To explore the involvement of schools in addressing the dropout of indigenous education.
2. To explore the involvement of parents in addressing the dropout of indigenous education.
3. To explore the involvement of the Indigenous community in addressing the dropout of indigenous education.

Results and Discussion
Involvement of Schools in Addressing the Dropout of Aboriginal Education

The school is actively involved in addressing the dropout of indigenous education by implementing various programs and activities. One of these initiatives is the CAKNA program, which involves visiting the homes of indigenous students who have been absent from school for an extended period or have discontinued their education. According to the four interviewed teachers, this program is planned and executed on a monthly basis. The school also collaborates with Tok Batin, the village head, through monthly meetings to ensure that all plans are agreed upon and implemented together. Tok Batin, as a representative of the indigenous community, is given the opportunity to voice their opinions and raise any issues occurring in their respective villages.

To garner parental cooperation, the school organizes various programs aimed at encouraging parents to visit the school and commit to supporting their children's education. However, the school encounters challenges related to time, energy, and cost. Monitoring 44 villages is a demanding task, especially considering that some villages are located one to two hours away from the school. Despite their efforts, the monthly program is unable to include all the dropout students, who number over 100 individuals. Moreover, programs involving parents face reception challenges due to the long distances involved and transportation issues.

> "*We conduct monthly meetings with representatives of the* indigenous *community, specifically Tok Batin. These meetings serve as a platform to discuss not only disciplinary matters but also address the issue of student dropout. It has been observed that over 100* indigenous *students frequently miss school, including those who have dropped out entirely.*"

> "*The implementation of the CAKNA program has been carried out successfully, with teachers visiting students' homes every month to encourage their return to school. However, teachers face challenges due to their commitments at school. Their primary responsibility is to manage and teach the students who are present at school. Moreover, the students who do not attend school are spread across different villages, often located far away. It takes approximately three hours to travel to and from these villages alone. Considering these factors, it becomes challenging for teachers to visit a substantial number of houses within half a day.*"

> "*In addition to the CAKNA program, the school has also implemented a program involving parents. However, this program has faced challenges in terms of low popularity and participation among parents. One of the main reasons for this is the considerable distance between the school and the* indigenous *villages, making it difficult for parents to attend school-related activities regularly. The lack of reliable transportation options further exacerbates this issue. Additionally, many parents face constraints due to their respective jobs, making it challenging for them to take time off to participate in these programs. These factors contribute to the limited involvement of parents in the program.*"

> "*When teachers visit the houses of the indigenous students, parents do show good cooperation and support. However, they often lack the authority or power to compel their children to attend school. The main challenge lies with the students themselves, as they may lack motivation or interest in pursuing education and feel more comfortable in their living environment. This mindset and preference for their*

immediate surroundings make it difficult to encourage consistent school attendance."

The statement highlights the school's efforts to address the dropout of indigenous education through persuasion, motivation, and emphasizing the importance of education for the future of the community. However, these efforts face challenges influenced by sociocultural factors, peer influence, and the limited involvement of parents and the indigenous community. Research conducted by Washington (2019) on school, parent, and Aboriginal community engagement in New England school districts supports the idea that parents and the community desire to be acknowledged and included within the school community. To effectively address these challenges, the school should incorporate and integrate indigenous culture into the school environment, including the classroom. This aligns with the findings of Sumantha et al (2022) in their study on practices and programs to enhance the participation of Aboriginal students in Australia during the transition to high school. The thematic analysis highlighted three crucial engagement practices: recognizing and valuing the students' cultural backgrounds, fostering strong relationships, and obtaining support from parents and the indigenous community.

Involvement of Aboriginal Parents in Addressing the Dropout of Indigenous Education

Six indigenous parents were interviewed to gather information on their involvement in addressing the dropout of indigenous education. According to the respondents, their children face difficulties in mastering the Malay language, which makes them perceive school subjects as challenging. Additionally, the parents noted that their children feel ashamed if placed in special education classes designed for students with poor literacy skills. Furthermore, the parents' limited educational background hampers their ability to provide adequate guidance and support to their children. Observations revealed that due to low socioeconomic factors, parents struggle to create a conducive learning environment at home. Interviews also indicated that parents are not strict with their children and allow them to make their own decisions. When asked about their children's educational direction, the indigenous parents appeared uncertain about the career prospects available to their children in order to improve the socioeconomic status of the indigenous community.

> "*My children struggle with reading and writing since primary school, and as a result, they are reluctant to continue to secondary school. They find it challenging, and at home, we primarily use the language of the Temiar tribe*"
> "*At first, he attended school, but he felt embarrassed when he was placed in a special education class. We didn't want to force him, as he strongly resists being compelled. Although a teacher made efforts to persuade him, the attempts were only temporary, and he eventually lost interest in going to school altogether*"
> "*I didn't complete our education. I attended school only until the third grade, while my husband completed sixth grade. However, we also face challenges when it comes to teaching our children*"
> "*We don't have any issues with the school itself, as it provides a dormitory for secondary school students. Every two weeks, the students are allowed to go home. However, our children do not want to go to school, and when we ask them, they express a lack of interest. We understand that we cannot force them to attend school*"

Most of the indigenous parents have a low level of education, with some completing only primary school and others not even finishing primary school. As a result, their ability to guide their children in learning is limited, leading them to rely heavily on teachers at school. Garcia and De Guzman (2020) conducted a study on the involvement of low-income Indigenous parents in the Philippines and its impact on their children's education. They interviewed a total of 31 indigenous parents, and qualitative data analysis revealed that Filipino indigenous parents believe that assisting their children with schoolwork, providing motivation, and establishing a conducive learning environment at home can contribute to their children's academic success. However, when it comes to aspects such as academic socialization, communication with teachers, and participating in volunteer activities at school, the responses reflect the cultural beliefs and practices of the indigenous community in the Philippines, which are influenced by traditional principles and the challenges of poverty.

In contrast, Ressler (2020) does not specifically study parental involvement, but instead examines the characteristics of schools and communities that can facilitate or encourage parental involvement, particularly among families from racial or ethnic minority groups. The research highlights the significance of the school and community in influencing parental behavior towards participating in their children's learning activities. Collaborative efforts between schools and communities to implement diverse educational programs contribute to motivating parents and raising their awareness about the crucial role of education for their children.

Involvement of the Indigenous Community in Addressing the Dropout of Indigenous Education

The involvement of the indigenous community in addressing the issue of dropout rates in indigenous education is perceived to be insufficient due to various factors. Interviews conducted with four village leaders (Tok Batin) revealed that these leaders demonstrated strong cooperation with the school's efforts to tackle the dropout issue. They served as intermediaries, conveying information to the indigenous community, participating in the process of motivating indigenous children, and securing allocations for planned programs. However, the support from the indigenous community itself is lacking due to a prevailing mentality that prioritizes income-generating jobs over education. This mentality stems from the fact that many indigenous communities still rely on traditional means such as forest resources and farming for their livelihoods. Additionally, the low level of literacy among the indigenous population contributes to the lack of community involvement in endeavors to enhance indigenous education.

> *"Currently, there is no specific program in place within the community to address the issue of dropout rates. However, as a leader to community, i regularly attend meetings with the school on a monthly basis to discuss matters related to discipline and dropout problems. These meetings provide an opportunity to address and find solutions for these issues collaboratively. It is important to continue engaging in such meetings to actively contribute to addressing the challenges faced by the community in relation to discipline and dropout rates"*
>
> *"The* indigenous *community here does not care that the children of the* indigenous *do not go to school. It's normal for them. Children who do not go to school sometimes go into the forest or help their father work. There are also those who only play with friends who are also not in school"*

> "*So far, the children in the* indigenous *village lack educational guidance due to the overall low level of education within the community. Although they can communicate reasonably well in the Malay language due to their interactions with the outside community, not everyone is fluent in Malay.*"

The statement highlights that the indigenous community's lack of emphasis on education is influenced by various constraints they face. Consequently, their involvement in addressing educational dropout is limited due to cultural norms that perceive not attending school as normal rather than a wrongdoing. Ratcliffe and Boughton (2019) conducted a qualitative study focusing on the relationship between low levels of adult literacy and the ongoing isolation of the indigenous community in decision-making processes, particularly in education. The study involved interviews and observations with the indigenous community in rural areas such as Brewarrine, Wilcannia, and Enngonia in New South Wales. The findings revealed that the community's low literacy levels pose a challenge for their active involvement in education, especially when they must compete with other communities that have better literacy skills.

Childs and Grooms (2018) conducted a study in the United States to examine how a community implemented a strategy to address student absenteeism by involving various stakeholders. Through interviews with principals, community representatives, district administration, and parents, the study highlighted the importance of cooperation between the community and the school. It emphasized the need to engage external organizations that can contribute expertise and knowledge for the development of local community education. Verani-Norton (2021) conducted a study on the involvement of the Fijian Aboriginal community in New Zealand, focusing on the community's willingness to engage with parents and schools. The case study revealed that community readiness depends on the leadership of indigenous leaders in establishing relationships with parents and the school. The quality of leadership impacts the quality of relationships and the ease of collaboration. Insufficient support from the indigenous community poses challenges for schools in ensuring the successful implementation of planned educational development programs, including financial constraints. Overall, these studies emphasize the significance of community involvement, collaboration with external organizations, leadership, and community support in promoting educational development and addressing challenges within the indigenous community.

Conclusion
Overall, the involvement of schools in dealing with the dropout rate among indigenous students is limited. This is mainly due to the fact that indigenous communities live in remote areas, making it challenging for schools to reach them. Additionally, it requires a significant number of teachers and considerable time commitment to provide education in these areas. Meanwhile, schools already have various responsibilities in managing the students who are present. Furthermore, school involvement through various programs is often less effective due to the lack of participation from both parents and the indigenous community. This can be attributed to the low educational background of many parents and community members, resulting in low literacy levels. However, it is worth noting that parents and the indigenous community are generally adept at communication, as they interact with tourists who visit their villages. They do recognize the importance of education for their children. However, this study reveals that parenting skills and the ability to guide and motivate children among the indigenous community are weak. Moreover, the community lacks the skills necessary for

decision-making and setting goals. According to Epstein (2018), improving school, parent, and community involvement requires understanding the concept of multi-party collaboration, aligning school goals with parents and the community, and recognizing the community's role in ensuring the success of educational programs. It also emphasizes the need to strengthen teacher services, including school staff, to foster productive relationships between schools, parents, and the community. Therefore, addressing the issue of dropout rates among indigenous students requires the concerted efforts of various stakeholders. It is essential to focus not only on the children themselves but also on equipping parents and the indigenous community with the necessary skills and knowledge. This will ensure that efforts to improve indigenous education align with the objectives of schools and the Ministry of Education.

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