

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**EXPLORING THE SECONDARY
SCHOOL DROPOUT RISK
PHENOMENON IN KINTA UTARA
DISTRICT, PERAK**

**NURFARAH NAJWA BINTI MOHAMMAD
FAISAL**

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ABSTRACT

The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) emphasizes the importance of education for all. However, dropout issues remain a problem, especially among secondary school students. The aim of this study is to provide an understanding of at-risk students who drop out using purposive sampling. A total of five schools in the Kinta Utara district, which have the highest risk of dropout cases in Perak, were selected. A qualitative case study research design was employed. This entailed examining the subjective experiences of students at a particular school who were at risk of leaving school. Documents from the Perak State Education Department, Kinta Utara District Education Office, and all five schools were collected. In addition, fourteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with at-risk students who dropped out, five semi-structured interviews were conducted with the school counsellors, and a collage session was held with each at-risk student from the five schools to gather information on the phenomenon. The purposive sampling method was used to choose the participants, especially the at-risk students who dropped out. The obtained data were transcribed and analysed. Thematic analysis and the AI Qualitative data analysis software, ATLAS.ti, were used for coding purposes. The findings revealed three factors contributing to dropout trends among at-risk secondary school students in the Kinta Utara district: individual perspective, inner institution perspective, and outer perspective. Within these factors, several themes emerged, including student's attitude, student's perception of success, family economic status, and lack of parental support. The findings also showed that racial factors were insignificant in dropout rates among secondary school students in the Kinta Utara district. Furthermore, the study identified approaches employed by counsellors and the school to address the dropout issue. The existing approaches can be improved when necessary parties, including schools, communities, parents, NGOs, law officers, and Education Districts, work together to address the issue. The hope is that the findings obtained can serve as a parameter for the Perak State Education Department in planning strategies to address the increasing number of dropout students in the state. It may also serve as a guideline for the respective parties to understand the dropout issue from the perspective of at-risk students in managing the phenomenon of dropout among secondary school students in Malaysia.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This first chapter describes the background of the study, followed by the problem statement, research questions, objectives, significance, and limitations of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Globally, it is an undeniable fact that a nation's progress relies immensely on the education of its people. It is widely acknowledged that one of the most significant elements contributing to poverty alleviation is education. Education is crucial and has a profound effect on all aspects of human life. It is a critical investment in both human and economic development. The significance of education is evident, and it is mentioned in the Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) eight targets, specifically Target 2, which aims to achieve universal primary education under the slogan "No Child Should Be Left Behind".

Malaysia's current school system is overseen by the Ministry of Education. Each state and federal territory has an Education Department responsible for coordinating educational matters within its jurisdiction under the supervision of the federal government. The Education Act 1996 is the main legislation governing education in Malaysia. The levels of education available include preschool, primary, secondary, post-secondary, and tertiary education. These are further categorised into national or private education. In Malaysia, education can be accessed through the multilingual national school system and is free for all Malaysians. However, fees are imposed for private schools or homeschooling. Primary schooling is compulsory by law.

Despite the country's significant progress since independence and its commitment to fulfilling the Education for All (EFA) and MDG targets—specifically ensuring no child is left behind and achieving universal primary education by 2015—dropout rates remain an issue (Rowell, 2020).

Malaysia is a developing country shifting towards a knowledge-based economy. In this context, education includes all activities aimed at enhancing the knowledge and skills of individuals in line with the demands of a knowledge economy, while also