

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**A STUDY ON STATELESS
PARENTS' PARENTING STYLES IN
THE PURSUIT OF SURVIVAL AND
DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR
CHILDREN IN KOTA KINABALU,
SABAH**

NURUL AIMIN BINTI MOHD RIZAN

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ABSTRACT

Statelessness has been a long-standing issue in Malaysia, resurfacing in the 1970s following the influx of approximately 17,000 Filipino refugees into Sabah. The situation worsened as the number of Filipino refugees continued to grow, reaching 200,000 by 1986. This increase was partly due to births within the refugee community, resulting in many stateless children lacking official identification documents, such as birth certificates. As the stateless population grew rapidly, it eventually outnumbered the local population in Sabah. However, this growth posed significant challenges rather than benefits to the country. Stateless individuals live in uncertainty due to the lack of official documents from the government, which hinders their rights, including the right to nationality, education, and healthcare. Therefore, this study emphasised three objectives: (1) To explore how stateless parents' parenting styles influence the child's survival; (2) to scrutinise how stateless parents' parenting styles influence the child's development and (3) to analyse the challenges faced by stateless parents in ensuring the survival and development of their children. This study adopted a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with 19 stateless parents (6 fathers and 13 mothers) who resided at Kampung Pondo, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. The findings of this study revealed that stateless parents employ varied parenting styles they believe are best for their children's development despite encountering significant challenges. The findings showed that stateless parents adopt various parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive)– depending on the best preferences and practices for their children's survival and development. Notably, these stateless parents adopted three parenting styles in raising their children, and each of them influenced their children's daily lives and survival strategies. Among these parenting styles, authoritative was found to be the most practised, with a positive influence on children's survival and development. Additionally, authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles were shown to significantly affect children's development, particularly in areas of education and health. Interestingly, the findings indicate that these parents did not observe permissive parenting. Additionally, stateless parents also encounter many challenges in raising their children, including the absence of official documents, poor economic conditions, struggles for basic survival, and limited access to education and healthcare. Despite ongoing discussions about statelessness, no significant legislative or policy changes have been implemented to address this issue in Malaysia. The study contributes to the body of knowledge by identifying parenting styles and highlighting critical gaps in meeting the needs of this marginalised group. This study aligns with Malaysia's MADANI concept, which emphasises the principle of Ihsan, promoting care and compassion while supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agendas for a more inclusive future.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter focused on studies related to the parenting styles of stateless parents in raising their children and the influence on their children's survival and development. This chapter highlighted seven elements that were connected to the overall study, namely: (1) background of the study, (2) problem statement, (3) research questions, (4) research objectives, (5) scope of the study, (6) significance of the proposed study, and (7) definition of terms. Detailed discussions on each aspect are presented in the following sections.

1.2 Background of Study

This study explored the parenting styles of stateless parents and their influence on the survival and development of their children. The term "parenting" refers to an active connotation in which parents educate and guide their children to become complete human beings (Farras et al., 2025). Therefore, parents must significantly shape their children's growth and well-being regardless of their status. According to Masidinovna (2024), parents play a crucial role in shaping their child's personality, as the parent-child relationship is considered unique and precious yet challenging (Brooks, 2010; Eugene, 2011). This biological relationship develops emotional connections such as love and compassion while ensuring the children's protection and safety. However, an important question arose regarding how stateless parents raised their children while facing various challenges, such as lack of legal documents, financial constraints, improper shelter, limited access to healthcare and education, and numerous other deficiencies.

Hence, this study aimed to explore stateless parents' parenting styles and their influence on their children's survival and development. It held great significance, as all children, regardless of status, represented the future generation responsible for advancing the nation's agenda. With the rapid development and transformation of the world, parenting styles have evolved to adapt to the current situation. As children's