Factors Contributing to the Academic Excellence of B40 Students in Rural Schools: A Case Study in the Small District of Paitan

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Abstract
This study investigates the factors influencing the academic excellence of B40 students in the Small District of Paitan, Malaysia. The focus of the research is to understand the success of these students despite facing socio-economic challenges. The methodology used includes interviews, observations, and document analysis of four successful B40 students. The study's findings suggest that personal motivation, social support from family and teachers, and the use of educational technology are key factors contributing to academic excellence. Additionally, a positive school environment plays a crucial role. This research demonstrates that with proper support and a conducive environment, B40 students can achieve academic success.
Keywords: Academic Excellence, B40 students, Small District of Paitan

Introduction
Academic achievement is a key focus in Malaysia's Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2015-2025, which emphasizes educational reform to ensure quality education. Education is a tool for changing lives, and the quality of education received plays a vital role indeterminingan individual's future. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), launched in 2015, also focus on inclusive and quality education. Goal 4 of the SDGs aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. As a member of the United Nations, Malaysia is committed to this goal, particularly in assisting the B40 group who face challenges in education.

In Malaysia, B40 students, who come from low-income families, often face multiple challenges in achieving academic excellence. According to data from the Department of Statistics Malaysia in 2019, 5.8% of the Malaysian population were not enrolled in school, with 72.1% choosing not to pursue further education after the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM). Many of these students come from low-income families, including the Indigenous communities and residents of Sabah and Sarawak.

Previous studies show that nearly two-thirds of B40 students experience low academic achievement, particularly in rural areas (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2016; Rasid & Samat, 2018). Factors such as a lack of learning facilities, the distant location of schools from urban areas, and socio-economic backgrounds are major challenges. However, there are also B40 students in rural areas, such as in the Small District of Paitan, who demonstrate outstanding academic achievements despite facing various constraints. To address this issue, the Malaysian government has implemented several programs, including the B40 Education and Vocational Training (TVET) Scholarship Program and the Sulung Keluarga Malaysia Program. These programs aim to enhance access to education and career opportunities for B40 students. However, despite these efforts, there are still gaps in facilities and support in rural areas. Previous studies indicate that rural B40 students face various challenges in achieving academic excellence, including lack of family support, low motivation to learn, limited educational facilities, and low academic resilience (Rasid & Samat, 2018; Govindarajoo, Selvarajoo, & Ali, 2022; Hasan, Ahmad, & Hashim, 2021).

However, in the Small District of Paitan, there are B40 students who show remarkable academic performance despite challenges such as poverty, lack of facilities, and distance from major cities. This district has the second-highest number of Ekasih beneficiaries in Sabah, with 949 households classified as poor and 750 households as extremely poor (Ekasih Unit, Small District Office of Paitan, 2024). Thus, this study aims to explore the factors contributing to the academic success of B40 students in the Small District of Paitan, despite facing many challenges that typically hinder academic achievement. Understanding how these students succeed is crucial for guiding efforts to improve education in rural areas and for the B40 group.

Research Objective
This study aims to explore the factors contributing to the academic excellence of B40 students in rural schools in the Small District of Paitan.

The research question is: What factors contribute to the academic excellence of B40 students in rural schools in the Small District of Paitan?

Literature Review
Academic achievement among poor students abroad is often the focus of research to understand the factors influencing their success. This article discusses the factors affecting the outstanding achievements of poor students abroad, with reference to previous studies. These factors include the role of teachers, schools, students, government, and families.

Teacher Factors
Teachers play a critical role in influencing the academic achievement of poor students. Studies show that quality teachers not only teach but also inspire and support students. Williams, Bryan, Morrison, and Scott (2020) studied the relationship between teachers and students, highlighting that teachers who establish good relationships with students, particularly those who lack attention at home, can boost students' motivation and achievement. In this study, teachers with good pedagogical skills who can connect empathetically with students positively impacted their performance. Additionally, Kendra McKenzie (2019) emphasized that effective pedagogical skills can influence students' enthusiasm for learning. Meanwhile, Ariaso (2020) highlighted the importance of creativity in teaching, which enables teachers to

create a more engaging and effective learning environment.
Thompson (2020) showed that teacher sensitivity to individual student issues is a key factor in academic achievement. These studies suggest that teachers must not only possess knowledge and teaching skills but also understand and support students' personal circumstances to achieve academic success.

School Factors

The school is an essential element in the education system that influences the academic achievement of poor students. Factors such as school leadership, facilities, and the school environment play a significant role. Effective school leadership has a substantial impact on the academic achievement of poor students. A study by Borman (2014) emphasized the importance of school management and teaching models implemented by the principal in improving student achievement. Williams, Bryan, Morrison, and Scott (2020) also suggested that good school support and policiescanpositivelyinfluencestudentachievement. Wannagatesiri, Nukultham, In, and Thongperm (2014) showed that community involvement and fundraising efforts by the school positively impacted student performance. Good leadership in school management not only improves teaching quality but also creates a conducive learning environment.

Student Factors

Student factors such as motivation, interest, and attitudes toward learning also affect their academic achievement. Galgo (2020) examined how students' motivation to overcome poverty challenges influences their academic achievement. High motivation often helps students overcome barriers and continue striving for success.

Williams, Greenleaf, Barnes, and Scott (2019) showed that good relationships with peers and teachers can enhance student motivation. Additionally, Husin et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of encouragement and support from parents as an additional motivational factor for students. Students' interest in learning also plays a key role. Duwal and Khonju (2021) showed that deep interest in learning helps students pay more attention and be prepared for exams. Ullah and Campus (2022) stated that student enthusiasm for learning, influenced by interest, is a key factor in academic achievement.

Government Factors

The government plays an essential role in helping poor students through action plans, financial aid, and educational support. Saluling (2009) suggested that government action plans to improve school facilities can influence the academic achievement of poor students. Bradbury (2002) proposed that government initiatives such as mobility to school programs help poor students. Eamon (2014) highlighted the importance of government aid in education to improve the achievement of poor students. The role of the government in providing funding, education plans, and support programs is crucial, but further research is needed to evaluate its impact on B40 students in rural areas like Paitan.

Family Factors

Family structure and support play an important role in the academic achievement of poor students. Suryahadi (2009) examined how parental rewards and sacrifices for their children's education affect academic achievement. Saluling (2009) showed that parents' aspirations for

their children are also an important factor in student achievement. Garcia and de Guzman (2020) emphasized the moral support from families as a key factor in enhancing student achievement.

Families that provide support, motivation, and aspirations to their children can positively influence academic achievement. Further research is needed to examine how family factors work in the context of B40 students in small districts like Paitan.

This article provides a comprehensive overview of various factors influencing the academic achievement of poor students abroad and emphasizes the importance of further studies to understand and address the challenges faced by students in specific contexts such as B40 in rural areas.

To answer the research question on factors affecting academic excellence among B40 students in rural schools in the Small District of Paitan, the selected theories provide an important theoretical framework. The following table summarizes how each theory functions and relates to the research question.

Methodology
This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to assess the factors influencing the academic excellence of B40 students in rural schools in the Paitan Small District. The data collection methods include interviews, observations, and document analysis. The study is conducted in rural schools in the Paitan Small District, involving a sample of 4 B40 students who excel academically. The selection criteria are based on their outstanding academic performance.

The research instruments include structured interviews to gather perspectives on motivation, social support, use of technology, and the school environment. Observations were conducted to assess student behavior in the classroom and during learning sessions, while document analysis involved reviewing academic records and student performance reports. The research procedure began with preparation, including obtaining permission, preparing interview questions, and training researchers. Data collection was done through interviews, observations, and document gathering, followed by data analysis to identify key themes from the interviews, behavioral patterns from the observations, and evaluations of academic data. To ensure validity and reliability, the study employed data triangulation by involving multiple data sources and peer reviews to ensure the accuracy of the findings. Trained and experienced researchers also contributed to the study's reliability. Regarding ethics, written consent was obtained from all participants, while the confidentiality of participants' personal data was maintained, and their welfare was ensured.

In conclusion, the study aims to provide an in-depth view of the factors influencing academic excellence among B40 students and how learning theories can be applied to enhance their performance. This methodology, which combines a qualitative approach and multiple data collection methods, ensures comprehensive and reliable research results.

Findings

In the analysis of the factors affecting the academic achievement of B40 students in rural schools in the Paitan Small District:

Motivation is the main theme highlighted in the participant transcripts. Masazumi states, "I have a strong desire to succeed and want to change my family's situation." This reflects intrinsic motivation driving academic success, in line with Schunk's (2001) finding that personal motivation plays a critical role in academic achievement. Masleah mentions, "My main goal is to get many A's in SPM and help my family," indicating a focus on personal motivation for success and family support. Emi states, "I want to help my family, and I am inspired by the success of others," showing how the drive to support her family and personal aspirations influence her performance, consistent with Maehr and Nicholls' (1980) study emphasizing personal goals in academic success. Krisna also expresses, "I aspire to help my less-educated family and want to become a teacher or accountant," highlighting a strong academic ambition to support his family.

Social support is also an essential theme in academic achievement, as shown in the participants' transcripts. Masazumi acknowledges, "I receive a lot of support from my friends and teachers," and Emi adds, "My friends help me a lot in studying." This aligns with Pintrich and Schunk's (2002) study, which emphasizes the importance of social support in academic success. Masleah states, "My parents and teachers provide valuable advice and guidance," and Krisna adds, "Support from friends and teachers helps me a lot." This confirms the importance of social support from various sources in student academic success.

Regarding the use of technology, Masleah mentions, "I use my mobile phone to enhance my knowledge and practice in subjects," and Krisna states, "I use technology like videos and the internet for additional learning." This supports Kulik's (1994) findings that technology in education can enhance academic performance. However, Masazumi and Emi did not specifically mention the use of technology in their transcripts, suggesting that technology may not be widely used in their learning process.

Finally, the school environment is an important factor mentioned by participants. Masazumi states, "A good school environment and caring teachers positively affect my performance," and Emi adds, "A comfortable school environment helps me a lot in studying." Masleah mentions, "Positive friends also play an important role," and Krisna says, "A supportive school environment is a critical factor for my success." This aligns with Raudenbush and Rowan's (2002) study, which shows that a good school environment influences academic achievement, emphasizing that comfort and a positive atmosphere in school are vital for success.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that academic achievement is influenced by several interconnected factors. Below is the discussion of each theme highlighted:

1. **Motivation**:

   Intrinsic motivation plays a very important role in academic achievement. Masazumi, Masleah, Emi, and Krisna all showed that their personal desire to succeed and their ambitions to support their families significantly influenced their academic performance. This finding aligns with Schunk's (2001) study, which stresses that personal motivation is

a key driver in academic success. Intrinsic motivation encourages students to set and pursue goals diligently, which directly impacts their academic success.

2. **Social Support**:

Social support from friends, teachers, and family evidently plays a vital role in academic success. Participant transcripts indicate that help and encouragement from close relationships have a positive impact on their achievement. Pintrich and Schunk (2002) confirm that social support helps students overcome academic challenges and boosts their motivation. This shows that supportive and positive relationships within a student's environment can improve their academic outcomes.

3. **Use of Technology**:

The use of technology as an additional learning tool, as demonstrated by Masleah and Krisna, can improve academic performance. Kulik (1994) confirms that technology has the potential to enhance learning processes and academic results. While not all participants mentioned technology, the findings underline the value of integrating technology into education to provide additional support for academic success.

4. **School Environment**:

A good school environment, including a supportive atmosphere and caring teachers, significantly influences academic achievement. Masazumi, Emi, Masleah, and Krisna all acknowledged that a positive school environment played an essential role in their success. Raudenbush and Rowan (2002) show that a conducive learning environment supports academic achievement, indicating that factors such as physical and emotional comfort and school support are crucial for academic success.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that the academic excellence of B40 students in rural schools in the Paitan Small District results from the interaction between personal motivation, social support, use of technology, and the school environment. Each factor plays a complementary role in influencing student success. Educators and policymakers should consider all these elements to create an educational environment that supports and motivates students to reach their full potential.

Implications

1. **Enhancing Motivation**:

This study shows that intrinsic motivation is a crucial factor in academic achievement. This highlights the need for an educational approach that encourages students to develop personal goals and aspirations related to their academic success. Strong personal motivation can drive students to be more persistent and committed to their studies.

2. **Social Support**:

The findings confirm that social support from peers, teachers, and family is vital for student success. This suggests that strong support systems can help students overcome academic challenges and improve their performance. Educational institutions need to foster a positive social environment and provide platforms for supportive interactions between students and mentors.

3. **Use of Technology**:

This study indicates that technology can be a valuable supplementary tool in the learning process. Therefore, schools and educational institutions should consider the broader use

of technology to enhance teaching and learning processes, providing relevant resources that are easily accessible to students.

4. **School Environment**:
A supportive school environment is essential for academic success. This emphasizes the need to create conducive learning spaces, including comfortable physical environments and emotional support from teachers. Schools should focus on improving their environments and providing necessary support to students for academic success.

Recommendations

1. **Motivation Strategies**:
Education should integrate programs that encourage intrinsic motivation, such as setting personal goals and providing constructive feedback. Activities that foster ambition and allow students to identify and pursue their own academic goals can help boost their motivation.

2. **Developing Social Support**:
Schools and educational institutions should strengthen social support systems by offering mentoring programs, counseling sessions, and opportunities for interaction between students and mentors. Building a supportive community, where students can receive encouragement and assistance, is essential for their success.

3. **Integrating Technology**:
Educational institutions should invest in effective educational technologies and provide training for both teachers and students in using these tools. Providing access to technological resources like computers, the internet, and educational software can support students in their learning.

4. **Improving School Environment**:
Schools should evaluate and improve the physical and emotional environments within their institutions. This includes ensuring comfortable facilities, creating a positive learning atmosphere, and providing the support needed by students. Implementing student welfare programs and training teachers in communication and student support skills can also enhance the school environment.

Conclusion
By implementing these recommendations, educational institutions can improve overall student academic achievement and create a more supportive and effective learning environment.

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