

# Reasons for student's disengagement from school



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The rate at which students are dropping out of school is a dilemma and has become a serious problem for school districts across the nation. The purpose of this study was to glean insights from the dropouts themselves, regarding their decision to leave school before completion and to codify their perceptions, beliefs and attitudes toward dropping out of school. This paper examines the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions through interviews. By understanding drops out from school further there will be greater potential to move towards a more meaningful notion of access. A qualitative research method was used to focus on the meaning that people make of their lives, their experiences, and their environment. Ten participants in Penang state made up the sample population specific to this study. The next section of paper reviews the theoretical research that attempts to explain why students drop out of school based on two perspectives- one that focuses on individual factors and one that focuses on institutional and contextual factors.

### Secondary Youth Perspective on Dropping Out of School

Concern for dropouts is not new. Mohamad Kamal Haji Nawawi, general manager for Malaysian Talents Development of Talent Corporation Malaysia Berhad said that: " between Form One and Form Five, out of the 400, 000 students that enrolled in Form One, some 44, 000 would leave school annually before completing their Form Five, or Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM)." " Some 80, 000 students are estimated to have dropped out of secondary schools from 2006 to 2010," said Deputy Education Minister Datuk Dr Wee Ka Siong. Wee speculated that some factors for droppings out may be for health reasons, to enter the workforce and because of lack of interest in education. Previously parents can say they have five or six

children and cannot afford to pay school fees. “ Now, the government is taking care of that. If they do not have the money, they will be given RM100 and for poor families, we give RM500 one-off,” said Deputy Education Minister Datuk Dr Wee Ka Siong. “ We are working towards that, meaning policy-wise we want to make everyone finish Form Five, at least complete the secondary education,” he said when asked if the ministry will consider making secondary school enrolment as mandatory.” said Deputy Education Minister Datuk Dr Wee Ka Siong. Before looking at the reasons for dropping out from school, it is necessary to define what it means to drop out. We use term “ dropout” refer to youth whom leave secondary school before graduation, including those who leave but return later, and those who subsequently complete some form of equivalency diploma (Audus & Willms, 2001). Dropping out of school is a serious problem, and society is finally acknowledging the profound social and economic consequences for students, their families, the school and the community. Leaving school without a diploma can have lasting negative effects on the individual socially and economically, causing severe disadvantages entering into adult life.

### Theoretical Framework

Understanding why students drop out of school is the key to addressing this major educational problem. A number of theories have been advanced to understand the specific phenomenon of the drooping out (Audas and Willms, 2001; Finn and Zimmer, 2012; Rumberger and Lim, 2008). I present two frameworks that focus on two perspectives for understanding this phenomenon. One framework is based on an individual perspective and one that focuses on an institutional perspective that focuses on the contextual

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factors found in students' families, school, communities and peers. Both frameworks are useful and, indeed, necessary to understand this complex phenomenon. It is important for the community to know why students are dropping out of school. There are number of reasons.

### Individual perspective

Individual factors that predict whether students drop out or graduate from high school fall into four areas: (1) educational performance, (2) behaviors, (3) attitudes, and (4) background. (1) Educational performance. Dropping out represents one aspect of three interrelated dimensions of educational performance: (1) academic achievement, as reflected in grades and test scores, (2) educational stability, which reflects whether students remain in the same school (school stability) or remain enrolled in school at all (enrollment stability), and (3) educational attainment, which is reflected by years of schooling completed and the completion of degrees or diplomas (Rumberger and Lim, 2008). The framework suggests that educational attainment is dependent on both educational stability and academic achievement. That is, students who either interrupt their schooling by dropping out or changing schools, or who have poor academic achievement in school, are less likely to graduate or complete that segment of schooling. (2) Behavior. A wide range of behaviors both in and out of school have been shown to predict dropout and graduation. One of the most important is student engagement, which includes students' active involvement in academic work (e. g., coming to class, doing homework) and the social aspects of school (e. g., participating in sports or other extracurricular

activities). Research consistently finds that high absenteeism-one specific indicator of engagement is associated with higher dropout rates. Misbehavior in high school and delinquent behavior outside of high school are both significantly associated with higher dropout and lower graduation rates. Having friends who engage in criminal behavior or friends who have dropped out also increases the odds of dropping out. Finally, a number of studies have found that students who work more than 20 hours a week are significantly more likely to drop out.

(3) Attitudes. The dropout literature has generally focused on a single indicator- educational expectations (how far in school a student expects to go) and has found that higher levels of educational expectations are associated with lower dropout rates.

(4) Background. A number of student background characteristics have been shown to predict withdrawal from school.

#### Institutional Perspective

Research on dropouts has identified a number of factors within students' families, schools, and communities that predict dropping out and graduating.

Family factors. Family background is widely recognized as the single most important contributor to success in school. Studies from the U. S. and the U. K. have consistently found that factors pertaining to the child's family circumstances are significantly related to dropping out of school. These include: socioeconomic status (SES), with those coming from poor backgrounds being more likely to drop out; family structure, with those

coming from large and single-parent families being more likely to drop out and parents' employment status, with those living with parents who are unemployed being more likely to drop out.

**School factors.** It is widely acknowledged that schools exert powerful influences on student achievement, including dropout rates. School effects are particularly important since they are the principal mechanism through which governments can target policies to curb dropping out, teen pregnancy and a variety of other undesirable outcomes. Wehlage and Rutter, 1986, as cited in Audas and Willms, 2001 found that youth who had dropped out perceived teachers to be less interested in them, and viewed school discipline as ineffective and inequitably applied. Those destined to leave school early had more disciplinary problems, and were generally dissatisfied with how their education was going.

**Community and Peers.** In addition to families and schools, communities and peer groups can influence students' withdrawal from school. Research (Ellenbogen & Chamberland, 1997 as cited in Audus & Willms, 2001) examine the peer networks of at-risk youths and describe how their networks compare to those of youth deemed to be of a low risk of dropping out of school. They identify three established trends: First, actual dropouts and future dropouts have more friends who have dropped out. Second, future dropouts tend to be rejected by their school peers. Finally, at-risk individuals tend to lack integration into their school's social network.

### Research Question

The research questions examined in this paper are:

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What are the reasons for students' disengagement from school?

What factors contributed to their decision to leave?

Can the dropouts themselves reveal the critical junctions in their decision to interrupt their education?

What can school administrators and educators do to prevent students from dropping out?

The main focus of discussion will be around the reasons for dropping out of school and knowing why they make such decision. The third research question is to understand either they still can back into some educational setting. Finally, the fourth question is looks at examples of good practice, try to prevent this process happens again.

### Significance of the Study

Keeping students in school is very important for the well-being of the students and society as a whole. Objective of this paper is to understand the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of the dropout students through interviews. The participant answer will help schools develop programs or policies for reducing the school drop out rate. What helps in achieving this objective must be studied so that suitable interventions and policies may be drawn out and implemented by the relevant authorities. To reduce the dropout rates of students in the long run, the issue of school engagement must be given due consideration. Schools can also benefit from the findings of the study. School administration can study how existing school practices, the school ambience and teachers affect students' school attitude.

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## Research Paradigm

### Methodology

#### Design

A qualitative research method was used to focus on the meaning that people make of their lives, their experiences, and their environment. A qualitative research can help understanding the experience of dropping out of school. Interview and interact with a small group of school dropouts.

#### Method of Data Collection

Main interview types that qualitative researchers use are in-depth, one-on-one interviews. Interviews are the most common method of data collection for qualitative research. Answers collected from structured interviews. These interviews were typically 15 to 30 minutes in duration. The participants were asked a set of structured open-ended questions in a prearranged order. The participants will be asked a few questions about the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions through interviews. The interview will be recorded in audio format and each answer was transcribed.

#### Participants of the Study

Ask participants to suggest other participants who qualify. Participants can refuse to answer any question. Participant answers to all questions are private.

#### Procedure



The interview will be conducted on ten participants with the presence of investigator. Throughout the session, the participants will be asked a few questions about the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions through interviews. It will all be done in a maximum time of 30 minutes, and a minimum of 15 minutes, and only be a one-time interview, this is so that the participants would not be too tired after the interview. The interview will be recorded in audio format so that a transcription can be done. The interview will be done in a closed room so that the privacy and the confidentiality of the participants will be protected with the best efforts of the experimenter.