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TRUANCY ISSUES AND MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES AMONG STUDENTS FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

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Abstract:

The symptoms of truancy are often associated with the ways in which students follow learning. It is linked to Multiple Intelligences which contribute to each student's own interests, especially in determining the direction of the chosen field of study. The basic elements of Multiple Intelligence include Kinesthetic, Musical, Naturalistic, Visual-Spatial, Verbal-Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical, Intrapersonal and Interpersonal. The main objective of this study is to study Multiple Intelligences and truancy problems among students in secondary schools. In addition, this study also aims to identify the dominant intelligence domain among students from low-income families at Perlis State High School who are experiencing truancy problems. The respondents of this study consisted of 94 students from low-income families at secondary schools in the Malaysian state of Perlis. The questionnaire method used in this study shows that the dominant intelligence among the respondents is interpersonal intelligence, while the second is body kinesthetic intelligence, and the third dominant is intrapersonal intelligence. The findings of the study show that the level of interpersonal intelligence of the study respondents is at a high level (mean=2.65, sd=0.97). The study indicates that teachers and school administrators should be sensitive to the different intelligences of each individual student. This study provides a starting point for the parties concerned to find appropriate solutions to related problems in an effort to produce a generation that can contribute to national development.

Keywords:

Truancy, Multiple Intelligence, Low Income-Families

Introduction

The problem of truancy has long been a serious disciplinary problem that is becoming more prevalent among students and is very difficult to overcome (Mat Daud, 2021). Based on data released by the Malaysian Ministry of Education, a total of 32,092 students were involved in truancy in 1993, while a total of 80,937 students were involved in truancy in 1997. This demonstrates that the problem of truancy was not yet solved over a period of 20 years, and in fact became worse every year. This problem is likely caused by ineffective teacher management, poor student attitudes and the influence of peers (Amin, 2019; Yahaya, 2007). There are also other causes such as part-time work (Mat Daud, 2021), family problems, and school environment problems (Amin, 2019; Mohd, 2013; Yahaya, 2007).

Figure 1: The Problem Of Truancy Among Students



The problem of truancy among students from low-income families is not a new phenomenon. Poor family background is one of the main factors contributing to the symptoms of skipping school. Truancy is also often associated with how students follow the learning. Multiple intelligence contributes to a student's individual interests, especially in determining the direction of the chosen field of study to continue further studies. The theory of Multiple Intelligences, introduced by Howard Gardner, is a theory that supports justice in education. The theory of Multiple Intelligences is constantly evolving according to the context of its use across various educational disciplines and subjects (KPM, 2001).

Howard Gardner (1983), in his book *Frames of Mind*, suggests that educators use this theoretical approach in the classroom as a step to recognize the differences inherited by each student. (Syarifah Nasyura, 2018). Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983) offers seven 'intelligences', namely verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligence. After that, he discovered two more intelligences, which are naturalist and existentialist (Mahani, 2003).

The lack of studies to identify the level of Multiple Intelligences with truancy problems has attracted the attention of researchers. The truancy problem is a very worrying educational issue and needs to be addressed immediately.

Literature Review

Many studies have been conducted to find a solution for the problem of truancy. According to Aida (2018), counselors are stakeholders who need to help the school deal with student discipline problems that are becoming more prevalent, including the problem of truancy. This is because counselors have the ability and high efficiency to help students with problems so that they change their attitudes to become better. If there is enough support and facilities, the

role of the guidance and counseling unit in the school may be further strengthened and can help the school make good decisions according to each case and the cause of each problem.

The problem of truancy is not a new phenomenon. It has been going on for a long time. Truancy is classified as an act of social misconduct in education (Jonathan W Shute, 2015). This case of truancy has been happening for decades and various ways have been done to reduce the case of truancy, but this issue still occurs (Diana Wulandari, 2018) both in primary and secondary schools (Ainonmadiah, 2016).

For low-income groups, the problem of truancy is not surprising. Until now, it is not difficult to see the situation of school truancy among students from low-income families, because there are many factors that encourage the occurrence of the problem, not to mention in schools located in rural areas. Poverty is one of the strong factors in the occurrence of this problem. However, as a society that is aware of this situation, we should not let it continue to happen.

According to Yahaya (2007), there is a significant relationship between truancy and academic achievement. Students who are often absent will find it difficult to keep up with learning and fall behind, causing their achievement to deteriorate further. Ultimately, it will contribute to the deterioration of the school's academic achievements when the school's percentage grade achievement declines. The symptoms of truancy are also often associated with the tendency of students to follow learning. It is linked to Multiple Intelligences that contribute to the student's own interests, especially in determining the direction of each student's chosen field of study.

All the elements of Multiple Intelligences need to be developed in each student through the curriculum in line with the intention of the National Education Philosophy to the level of creating individuals who can contribute to the well-being of the individual, family, community and country. The development of all the elements of Multiple Intelligences in each student is necessary, since all elements of Multiple Intelligences are important for a more prosperous life.

The Importance of The Study

This study is expected to assist schools and the Ministry of Education Malaysia in addressing the persistent issue of truancy, especially among students from low-income families, which has been prevalent from the past until today. In fact, this study provides a starting point for the relevant parties to seek appropriate solutions to the related problems in an effort to produce a generation that can contribute to the country's development.

Statement of The Problem

This study was conducted to measure the problem of truancy among students from low-income families in four schools in the state of Perlis and its relationship with Multiple Intelligence.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of intelligence among students from low-income families who are involved in truancy problems?
2. What are the domains of Multiple Intelligences dominant among students from low-income families involved in truancy?

Material and Methods

Truancy

Truancy is the behavior of students who do not attend school. It can be defined as not attending school without the permission of the teacher or parents (Yahya, 2005). According to Gase (2014), truancy is the behavior of a student not attending school without any permission either verbally or in writing from the responsible party, typically the principal of the school. Truancy is the absence of a student without giving any reasonable reason to the school within a certain period (Sutphen, 2010). Truancy can also be defined as the act of not attending school without the knowledge or permission of teachers and parents without certain legitimate and reasonable reasons (DBP, 2007). The symptoms of truancy are often associated with the tendency of students to follow learning. This is linked to Multiple Intelligence which contributes to the student's own interests, especially in determining the direction of the chosen field of study. The basic elements in Multiple Intelligence are Kinesthetic, Music-Rhythm, Naturalist, Visual-Spatial, Verbal-Linguistic, Logic- Mathematics, Intrapersonal and Interpersonal.

Multiple Intelligence

Multiple intelligence is an important element that needs to be identified in students from the beginning of school, the goal is to produce perfect human capital in addition to other intelligences. Findings from Poon (2007) citing Howard Gardner (1983) defined intelligence as the ability to solve problems and produce something of value in the respective socio-cultural context. Gardner (1983) himself listed seven domains of human intelligence as follows:

Table 1: The 8 Multiple Intelligences

Elements	Description
Mathematical Logic (LM)	The ability to interpret , solve complex problems, make connections through questioning, be critical, be able to make calculations, be able to make comparisons, be able to solve problems related to numbers and use computers. This intelligence combines both mathematical and scientific abilities
Verbal- linguistics (LG)	Ability to use words effectively in speaking and writing. A person with this intelligence is sensitive to the meaning of words and adept at manipulating them. They can also communicate effectively through listening, speaking, reading, writing and linking activities. They are also sensitive to the various functions of language, especially in terms of its ability to stimulate emotions.
Visual Spatial (VR)	The ability to detect and describe shape, space, color and line, including the ability to present visual and spatial ideas graphically. A person with this intelligence can form a picture in their mind and paint it. They are also talented in the field of art and creativity using colors, reading maps and having a strong imagination.
Kinesthetic Body (KNS)	The ability to use the body to express ideas, feelings and to solve problems includes physical skills such as coordination, flexibility, speed and balance. A person with this intelligence is adept at manipulating objects and activities that involve fine and gross motor skills. They enjoy physical activities such as dancing, playing and sports and are efficient in activities using motor skills.

Music (MZ)	The ability to detect rhythm, tone and melody, including the ability to recognize songs and change tempo and rhythm in simple melodies. A person with this intelligence is also sensitive to sounds such as human voices and musical instruments. Everyone has musical intelligence but to different degrees. Some are more skilled than others. Regardless of talent level, we all have the intelligence to enjoy and appreciate the experience of music.
Interpersonal (IEP)	The ability to understand other people's feelings, motivations, habits and desires. Those with interpersonal intelligence can work together in groups and communicate verbally or non-verbally with others. At a simple level this intelligence includes the ability of a child to recognize and be sensitive to the 'mood' of the adults around him. A more complex interpersonal skill is the adult's ability to read the intentions of others, even implicitly.
Intrapersonal (IAP)	The ability to understand other people's feelings, motivations, habits and desires. Those with interpersonal intelligence can work together in groups and communicate verbally or non-verbally with others. At a simple level this intelligence includes the ability of a child to recognize and be sensitive to the 'mood' of the adults around him. A more complex interpersonal skill is the adult's ability to read the intentions of others, even implicitly.
Naturalistic Intelligence (NR)	Those with naturalist intelligence are very sensitive to environmental issues and are very interested in learning about different types of flora and fauna. They can also identify patterns or shapes in the environment and are sensitive to any changes. In addition, they also like to appreciate nature.

Methodology

This study uses a descriptive quantitative approach that was carried out for six months. The questionnaire is adapted from a previous questionnaire. The sample consisted of 94 secondary school students from low-income families in Perlis State Secondary School who were involved in truancy. The questionnaire contains two parts and uses a Likert scale of 1 to 4. Part A contains demographic information of respondents and part B contains 80 items used for the purpose of this study. According to Siegel (1988), questionnaire instruments are suitable for affective measurement for the purpose of knowing tendencies, attitudes, perceptions and so on. Questionnaires are the easiest and fastest way to obtain information in research.

The rationale for the use of the Likert scale is that it is widely used in educational research (Mason and Bramble, 1997) and is easier to build based entirely on empirical data on the evaluator's response than on the evaluator's subjective opinion. The research findings were analyzed using SPSS For Windows version 26.0 software (Statistical Package For Social Sciences).

Table 2: Demography Information of respondents

Part A (Demography)	
Gender	Male, Female
Age	12-14 , 15-17

Table 3: The 8 Multiple Intelligences Instrument

Part B		
Item	Multiple Intelligence	Indicator
1-10	Mathematical logic	LM
11-20	Verbal linguistics	VL
21-30	Visual Spatial	VS
31-40	Kinesthetic	KNS
41-50	Music	MZ
51-60	Intrapersonal	IEP
61-70	Interpersonal	IAP
71-80	Naturalist	NR

Result and Discussion

The analysis of the section aims to gather information on the Multiple Intelligence levels among students from low-income families in Perlis State Secondary School who were involved in truancy. This section shows respondents' perceptions of each item under the sub-scales of the 8 Multiple Intelligences. The response format consists of four elements: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

Table 4 shows the analysis of the average minimum levels and standard deviations for the 8 Multiple Intelligences. The findings indicate that the dominant intelligence among the respondents is interpersonal intelligence (mean 2.65), followed by bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (mean 2.58), and intrapersonal intelligence (mean 2.52). On the other hand, the three intelligences with the lowest minimum levels are visual-spatial intelligence (mean 2.44), naturalistic intelligence (mean 2.42), and linguistic intelligence (mean 2.17).

This suggests that the respondents in this study tend to perceive themselves as having higher levels of interpersonal, bodily-kinesthetic, and intrapersonal intelligence compared to visual-spatial, naturalistic, and linguistic intelligence. It is important to note that the minimum level represents the lowest average level achieved on this scale. Therefore, understanding and development in these intelligences may require further attention in teaching and learning for students from low-income families in the secondary school.

Table 4: Analysis of The Average Level of the Mean and Standard Deviation of the 8 Multiple Intelligences

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE	TD Totally Disagree	DS Disagree	A Agree	SA Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
Logical Mathematical (LM)	20.33	29.6	31.9	18.2	2.48	.985
Verbal Linguistic (VL)	21.6	32.3	31.4	14.7	2.17	.956
Visual Spatial (VS)	22.8	28.2	31.0	18.1	2.44	1.014
Bodily-Kinesthetic (KNS)	18.2	27.3	32.03	22.45	2.58	1.004

Musical Intelligence (MZ)	23.41	27.76	28.19	20.65	2.46	1.036
Interpersonal (IEP)	17.6	23.8	36.8	21.6	2.65	.097
Intrapersonal (IAP)	22.24	27.02	32.12	16.8	2.52	1.00
Naturalist Intelligence (NR)	26.27	26.48	25.97	21.27	2.42	1.07

Figure 2: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation of the 8 Multiple Intelligences



Conclusion

The findings of this study show that the dominant intelligence among respondents is interpersonal intelligence, while the second is body kinesthetic intelligence and the third is intrapersonal intelligence. The findings of the study in table 4 show that the level of interpersonal intelligence of the study respondents is at a high level (mean=2.65, sd=0.97). Students who have interpersonal intelligence are able to interact effectively with various parties. Therefore, the harmonious interaction between teachers and students can reduce the problem of truancy in school and increase the involvement of students to discuss together and further enable students to share the problems and the reasons why truancy problems may have arisen among them.

Shearer (2004) agrees, stating that the theory of Multiple Intelligences will encourage collaborative learning, increasing interpersonal intelligence and allowing students to share ideas in learning and teaching to achieve success together. The implication is that joint and student-centered learning reduces student discipline problems, especially the problem of skipping school.

Armstrong (2009) stated that interpersonal intelligence has a positive impact in building cooperative groups. Active involvement among students encourages students to enjoy learning in groups. Students were found to experience positive behavior changes in terms of discussing ideas together, contributing ideas as a group, students were able to establish close relationships,

creating a harmonious atmosphere in the discussion of learning topics given by the teacher. Therefore, teachers can take the initiative by introducing group activities during P&P sessions. He further stated that teachers who uncover a student's interpersonal intelligence will help create cooperation among students. Students also help each other from the aspect of improving each other's weaknesses. Mentor and mentee activities can also be conducted between peer mentors and students with truancy problems.

Interpersonal relationships play a significant role in shaping behavior, particularly during adolescence. Students who possess strong interpersonal intelligence may be more capable of resisting negative peer pressure and making positive choices regarding attendance. High interpersonal intelligence in students can be applied by teachers to encourage students to come to school by doing interesting activities in class that involve group work. Students will be more enjoy and excited to come to school if activities are carried out in group.

Next, the level of kinesthetic intelligence of the respondent's body in this study is also at the second highest level (mean=2.58, sd=1.004). Students with high kinesthetic intelligence use their limbs to communicate and tend to prefer active learning methods at school. According to Gardner (1983) in general, a healthy mind and body starts from balanced physical movement. Physical movement allows building a lively mind in learning. These have a positive impact on academic achievement.

This can be related to the situation at school where students are very interested in sports activities. There are among them who are willing to skip PP classes in the morning but will attend sports activities in the afternoon. According to Wan, Tajul and Melor (2018), the relationship between Multiple Intelligences and attitudes towards students in the subject of sports has a positive relationship with improving academic achievement. The results of the study emphasize that sports activities are important to students because they encourage students to have a cheerful and comfortable mood. Therefore, when students have a calm soul, they can pay full attention to learning. This will have a positive impact on academic achievement. Therefore, teachers may be able to take steps to reduce the problem of absenteeism at school by planning activities at school that can attract students who like kinesthetic activities. For example, holding P&P that is not only focused on class may be beneficial, such as by holding P&P outside the classroom or incorporating game activities.

Next, the level of intrapersonal intelligence of the respondents in this study was at the third highest level (mean=2.52, sd=1.000). According to Gardner (2006), individuals with intrapersonal intelligence are able to deeply recognize their strengths and weaknesses. Individuals who have high confidence, have a high determination in their field of endeavor. The ability to be independent and have a high level of concentration allows individuals to be able to do everything on their own.

The results of the study also show that visual-spatial, naturalistic and linguistic intelligences are weak among respondents. Students with weak visual-spatial, naturalistic and linguistic intelligence may struggle with specific learning difficulties or learning disabilities that affect their ability to comprehend and process information in these areas. These difficulties can make it challenging for them to engage with the curriculum and may contribute to their decision to skip school.

Past studies also show that visual-spatial and naturalist intelligence is a low intelligence dominated by students. This situation shows that more emphasis on academic intelligence is still rooted in the education system in Malaysia. Greater emphasis on one intelligence causes students who have a certain intelligence to be sidelined and not appreciated. According to Gardner (1983), genetic factors and decline are not valid factors in determining an individual's intelligence, while environmental factors are strongly influencing. In fact, an intelligence that is not high can be honed and sharpened through a conducive environment.

Truancy students may find these intelligences less interesting or relevant to their lives. They may not see the practical application or value of skills associated with visual-spatial, naturalistic, or linguistic intelligence, leading to disengagement from academic activities and a higher likelihood of skipping classes. Some truant students may come from environments with limited exposure to activities or resources that promote the development of these intelligences. For example, they may not have access to art classes, nature experiences, or rich linguistic environments that foster the growth of these skills. This lack of exposure can contribute to weaknesses in these intelligences.

In conclusion, the findings in this study seemed to suggest that students have Multiple Intelligences albeit at differences levels. The task of a teacher is to celebrate the differences and not focus only on selected intelligences. They have to help students identify their Multiple Intelligences. Students should take Multiple Intelligence tests to determine which intelligences are dominant among them. This will help them understand their strengths and find the best ways to learn. The recommendation is thus to encourage diverse learning approaches to accommodate various types of intelligences. For example, if a student has bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, involve them in physical activities or practical experiments. If there are students with linguistic intelligence, assign writing tasks or oral presentations. Provide a wide range of learning activities that target different intelligences. Incorporate visual aids, hands-on projects, group discussions, and creative assignments to engage students and tap into their diverse intelligences. Recognize that each student has unique strengths and learning preferences. Such personalized approaches will help motivate students and enhance their learning experiences. Therefore, comprehensive and in-depth study is necessary to find strengths and weaknesses and find a solution to the truancy problem that is prevalent in schools today as it relates to students' Multiple Intelligence.

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