PEER'S PRESSURE EFFECTS: SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT'S DROPOUT BEHAVIOUR AND YOUNG OFFENDERS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the peer's pressure effects on students especially among secondary school students who tend to lose focus in teaching and learning process in school and facing individual identity challenges, behaviour and disciplinary issues. This qualitative study was conducted by interviewing a total of 40 Indian dropout students from secondary schools who were selected as the study sample in Selangor State. Based on the results, it was found, student's attitudes that very close to their peers without their parent's knowledge in school and out of school environment and its negative effects influencing students to lose focus in teaching and learning process. Building on detailed information on negative influences through friendship networks, this study found evidences, peer's pressure factor influencing students to left behind in their academics followed by a significant reduction in grade repetition and eventually lead them to dropout from school and involve in other social issues. Student's involvement in school dropout issues and then in criminal activities as young offenders questioning their social bonds to the school system and social environmental effectiveness in increasing youth's delinquency in society. Finally, the study implications were discussed and some appropriate recommendations were highlighted to reduce student's negative influences through peer's factor while improving teaching and learning style effectiveness in schools environment. Additionally, the study results can help the school management to inculcate good values and awareness among young teenagers to stay away from social issues or other crimes, so that they will become progressive individuals for their future well-being.

Keywords: Peer's pressure, Secondary school students, Indian dropouts, Social issues, Young offenders.

INTRODUCTION

The adolescent phase is a critical phase as the young teenagers have to face various changes in terms of physical, emotional, social and intellectual. What is chosen at this adolescent time will reflect teenager's future. Thus, choosing the right direction or pathway will help teenagers to shape their personality and behaviours (Srinivas & Venkatkrishnan 2016). At young stage, teenagers will be looking for a direction to answer all the questions and problems in their lives. Hence, peers who are almost the same age and always with teenagers, identified as the main source for their reference for most of the time. For teenagers, they will learn a new behaviour and try to adapt to their personality by emulating their peers. However, peer's negative influences will affect the teenager's well- being including their academicals performances in

schools (Supovitz, et al. 2009). Negative influences from peers groups or peer's pressure especially among the school students can lead them to neglect their studies and facing disciplinary problems. The peers influence is dominant factor in a student's life until the students consider the school rules are inconvenient and unnecessary to follow and a trivial matter (Olalekan 2016). This will cause disciplinary problems such as skipping school, threatening school children, making noise, interrupting lessons, damaging school properties, skipping classes, using abusive language and so on. Furthermore, the extreme level of negative influences from peer's factor is involving the teenagers in school dropout issue. School dropout is a major concern subject that is much more exposed to unemployment issues, poverty and delinquency (Kremer & Levy 2008). Moreover, the peer's pressure factor also effect the teenagers especially school dropouts to be involved in other social delinquency such as robberies, drug abuse, watching porn videos, public fights, physical assaults, consuming alcohol drinks, illegal racings, gambling, vandalism, stealing, hanging out, fighting with parents and so on (Adeola 2013; Ademorokun 2013; Black 2012).

The Edge Malaysia (2021, December 22) highlighted, Ministry of Education (MOE) of Malaysia reported that a total of 21,316 students stopped schooling between March 2020 and July 2021. Indeed, statistics from Malaysian Indian Blueprint (MIB 2017) and Science and Wellness Organization (SWO 2019) show an alarming increase in the frequency of students dropout cases before the completion of schooling especially amongst Indian students. Despite, *MySkills* Foundation (2016) reported, seven out of ten students that have spent eleven years schooling felt "lost" by the time they leave school environment. It defined dropouts from the education system as situations whereby a student is in school but exited the system before completing schooling or the period of education. This is a cause for concern, indeed, sending alarm bells ringing over school dropouts in Malaysian context. Thus, consequences of negative influences from peer's factor especially among students should be taken seriously by all the parties as adolescents are very much needed by society and nation because this group is a catalyst to national development. Therefore, this study examines peer's pressure factor and its effects on secondary school student's dropout behaviour and young offenders in Selangor state, whereby it is ranked at the top with 76 national secondary schools out of 402 schools from different states in Malaysia (*New Straits Times* 2017, August 18) that involved in disciplinary issues which is one of the factor to the dropout issue.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Peer's influence identified as a potential determinant of student's perceptions and choices as argued by Card & Giuliano (2013) and Bagwell & Schmidt (2011). Regarding peer's influences, it is concerned with social learning theory that introduced by Bandura & Walters (1977) which explain how an individual experiences learning in a real social environment. They hypothesized those changes in a person's behaviour in social events including peer's factor influence the perceptions and such individual's actions through mutually influential relationships with social environment. Changes in a person's behaviour as a result of social environment can have effects on individual's personality and social behaviour. Different social stances are also able to

influence an individual's self-concept. Related to social learning theoretical justification, for Bandura & Walters (1977), learning process will happens through imitation by observation way. They stated, in order to learn through observation, an individual must concentrate and usually the person being observed is an interesting person, well-known or competent or admired. Usually in this case it will often be associated with peers when peers are sharing same age range, background and interests. Thus, peers are playing a significant role in shaping one's personality and ethics. Additionally, peers is most dominant factor in shaping youngster's mind-set especially among students through strong influence as a social agent in their lives to share the same values and behaviors, education level or social class and to do social activities together (Babawale 2015; Coleman 2014). Indirectly, peers take over student's parental responsibilities while away from home. However, for Bankole & Ogunsakin (2015), the peers influence in a student's life can impact them either positively or negatively in terms of significant changes to their behavior, personality, physical, emotional and mental changes including skills and abilities.

Brown & Larson (2009) expressed, the caring peers can be a reference source and support system to their friends by understanding each other's strengths and weaknesses including their needs and wants. It is including reducing friend's anxiety and loneliness to enhance their well-being and quality lifestyle by fostering self-esteem and being supportive partners in overcoming struggles until they have an opportunity to explore and understand themselves during stressful times (Bramoulle, et al. 2009; Carrell, et al. 2013; Bukowski, et al. 2018; Filade, et al. 2019). Meanwhile, well performing peer's presence in students lives can contribute to them to boost interest and motivation towards the learning process, engaging in co-curricular activities and self-skills enhancing activities together for the both academicals and non- academicals achievements (Kilford, et al. 2016). Thus, supportive peers groups can give more positive impacts among adolescents to create a responsibility sense towards their academic performance in school (Kudari 2016). Therefore, it is very important for students or young teenagers to choose the right peers groups wisely as they are reinforcement agents and social models to them in determining their lives' direction at school levels as advised by Hallinger & Heck (2011).

However, though peers are important but if not handled the decision rationally during choosing the right peers, their pressure effects can influence changes or deviant behaviour in the way a person reacts or think until lead them into a negative direction which can be detrimental (Ogunsola, et al. 2014; Seel 2009). In this scenario, the peers can take advantages and their negative influences have potential to change other student's mind-set to involve in disciplinary problems such as skipping school, aggressive or anti-social behaviours, misconduct, extortion, fighting and bullying with peers in school environment (Issakainen 2014). The peer's negative influences also refers to student's involvement as young offenders in juvenile cases such as robbery, snatching and joining social illegal gangs which can threaten their lifestyles and cause teenagers to fall into social traps and questioning their future as well (La Greca & Harrison 2005). Additionally, choosing not the right peers among students also can cause them to left behind in classroom activities and learning process in school which potential to lead them towards academics failure as argued by Landau (2012). Thus, peer's negative impacts among teenagers also can make them to behave contrary to societal norms which can lead to engage in social issues or other crimes where students will experience the school dropout issues (Robert, et al. 2012).

Despite, Johnson (2012) stressed, the school and family institutions together with other social agents should take responsibility in organizing self development programmes among students to enhance their life and social skills in order to protect themselves from peer's pressures even from their heretical teachings. Thus, holistic approaches through comprehensive counselling programmes should conduct among students which can lead them towards self-discipline, self-esteem, confidence and progress well in academics and participate in productive activities as urged by Erath, et al. (2007). Additionally, Jeremy & Derek (2008) emphasized, the vital role of school management, family and community partners are initial in shaping adolescent's mental and emotional well-beings in identifying good and bad values and as a guideline in choosing their peers. Hence, building healthy relationships for the joint activities with peers is important to prevent dropout behaviours among students due to peer's pressures as demonstrated by Mosha (2017). Various school dropout factors have been shown in previous researches but this study therefore has tried to fill the gap of information by establishing the peer's pressure factor and its effects on student's dropout behaviour and young offenders which has not yet been explored in detailed in the research literature. By examining peer influence, this study sought to fill this research gap by indicating the school dropout issue among secondary schools Indian students and to be studied more seriously in highlighting the education's importance towards the life quality among risk - students. Therefore, this study highlighted peer's significant role either in school or residential environment and its negative impacts among students which can potentially influence to left behind in their studies and subsequently leading them to dropout from school education system.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach and thematic discussion. The data collection had been done through interacted directly with the study sample. The descriptive discussion explains the actual situation or real experiences and highlights the empirical evidence in each respondent's life perspective as suggested by Yin (2015). Detailed and accurate information that collected helped this study to bring narrative decomposition through findings and to address the school dropout issue by revealed the contributing factors, effects and prevention strategy. This study carried out in Selangor state. This study involved 40 Indian male students those who had dropped out from national secondary schools before completion of schooling system in Selangor and who are undergoing skills training as a second chance of learning in *MySkills* Foundation. The study also focused other supportive respondents such as Police Officer from Crime and Legal Investigation Department from Police Headquarter of Shah Alam and who had handled juvenile and school dropout cases, including an Executive Officer from *MySkills* Foundation that is centre for skills and trainings in Selangor. The entire respondent's selection was based on 'non-probability' and 'purposive' sampling strategies to increase understanding of the selected individual's experiences as discovered by Glesne (2016). This study conducted in-depth-interview method to collect data and as a research instrument, open-ended questions sets were used to get respondent's sharing and opinions. The responses from these focused and targeted respondents enabled this study to obtain relevant, excessive and concrete data in order to meet

the study needs and strengthened and expand the knowledge in understanding of peer pressure factor on school dropout issue among students. By using triangulation technique, the encoding data process was conducted to identify 'themes' to organize and give meaning for the disclosure of school dropout issue to be presented in narrative decomposition as suggested by Bryman (2016). Relevant research findings were developed to address the school dropout issue that contributed by peer pressure factor and focused on challenges facing by Malaysian education system.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The results presented in this study demonstrated, the kinds of friends students had in secondary schools were related to a wide range of important educational outcomes, after holding constant important demographic characteristics and previous academic achievement. The results of this study clearly suggested that students who had more "learning-oriented" friends tended to perform better in school over the course of their schooling, and students who spent time with those interested in delinquent activities were less likely to experience success in school. The investigation results of the effects of peer associations on student's learning and other important educational indicators such as dropping out of school explained in detail based on thematic discussion as follows.

Disciplinary Issues

This study found, all 40 (100%) respondents that interviewed had been influenced by their peers to leave the school system. It was identified, the peer's influences was one of the causes of students dropping out of school. Meanwhile, the majority about 34 (85%) respondents admitted, their peers highly impacted their school life until they dropped out from school due to extreme level of behavior and disciplinary issues. For an example, Krish who was interviewed stated,

> *"I really like being with my friends at school. They like to teach me a lot of things, like smoking and drinking beers...we like to hang out and do the window shopping at shopping complex, cc, pubs and so on. Frequently I will go out with my friends who are at my place near to my house to spend my time with them. My families don't know... I will skip my school. I hate my school because the teachers all very strict, but all my friends are very nice and friendly."*
>
> (Respondent 32, 2018, 28th May).

At the same time, this study identified, the peer's influences factor also effected all the respondent's self-appearance or personality, thoughts, learning style, and their behaviours in secondary school environment. Peer's pressure factor also influencing respondents to lose focus in teaching and learning process in school and facing individual identity challenges. For instance, Raj who was interviewed shared,

> *"I lost interest in studying at school .... I like skipping school because I want to go out with friends. My friends like to invite me to race illegally, hang out, going to pub, go for clubbing....*

Sometimes we sit at the bus stop near to my school area and do scratches on the wall. My friends teach me to smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol. But my parents do not know about this since they are busy with their works. Every night we will plan in chatting, and then we go out in weekend or during weekdays by skipping school time. Then, my studies become worst after I close with my friends. Then, my exam results all not satisfied so I decide to dropout from my secondary school."

(Respondent 12, 2018, 23rd May).

Secondary school is an important period of time in an adolescent's life. It is at this time that students are making decisions about their course taking and future educational and career plans (Deepika & Prema 2017). It is also the time when parental authority is being challenged by peer pressure. The peer's influence can be both positive and negative. On the positive side, it can serve as an important incentive for adolescents to perform well in school. On the negative side, peer influence can lead to discipline problems and delinquent behaviours both inside and outside school. Thus, the peer's values can play an important role in students' educational experiences and outcomes (Temitope & Christy 2015). However, according to Atis who was interviewed shared,

"I don't care about learning at school and I like to hang out with my friends, sometimes I skip school ... and go to internet centres.... I always play video games. If the school holidays are on Saturday Sunday I will go hang out with friends who take me to clubbing. They love shopping for alcohol and I will drink with them. During that time, I learned how to smoke from them. I always go out with my friends to go around because I am not close to my family. My parent are always busy with work. I went out with my friends to have fun because there was no one to take care of me..."

(Respondent 21, 2018, 28th May).

As children reach adolescence, peer groups gain special power to influence their behaviour, and young people tend to adapt their behaviour to fit group norms (Kirk 2014). When students engage in bullying, alcohol and smoking habits, and other behaviour, those in their peer group are more likely to engage in those behaviours as well. Indeed, Tina who was interviewed stated that,

"I dropped out from my secondary school because I didn't like studying at school. I have followed my friends to hang out and go around at my place near to my school and housing area. Sometimes I will go with my friends to drink alcohol after school or skip school to take alcohol drinks and smoking with my friends. I was expelled from school for engaging in social issues such as robbery. I was also involved in gang's activities due to the negative influence of my close friends. It's already a police case. This caused me to drop out from my previous secondary school."

(Respondent 1, 2018, 23rd May).

Based on the sharing of all respondents, this study captured, peer's influences as a contributing factor to the student dropout issue is seen as potential cause in shaping respondent's characters, perceptions and their thoughts as argued Ryan (2015). It is including the respondent's social skills that influenced by their peers in social environment. The study found, the

respondents were very excited in sharing about their peers compared to other questions such as about academics during in-depth interviews in this study. This study identified all the respondents were influenced by their peers those who often make them to skip school and engage in disciplinary or social issues. For instance, the findings showed, when a student skipped school they tended to find other students and make friends for not attending school. It shows students who are willing to skip school tended to find a group of friends to share their problems among each other and in order to strengthen the friendship. However, this kind of friendship affected student's well- being and causing them to left behind in teaching and learning process in school until its questioning their academicals performances as supported by Benner, et al. (2016).

Work Desire

Meanwhile, regarding the peers negative influences in respondent's residential area, this study found, respondents were involved in school dropout issue due to their peer's pressure which caused them to work to earn money and enjoy a material life instead studying in school. Thus, respondent's desire or tendency to work became one of the reasons for respondents to drop out of school as stressed by Emily, et al. (2020). According to Yesh who was interviewed stated that,

> *"I had to do a part time job at the carwash at my place near to my house to help my family and take care of myself. After school I would go to the carwash for work with my friend. The salary I get will be used for school expenses and other things. But due to bad influences from my friends...I start to skip my school and then I left behind in my studies. Then I lose interest in school academics until I dropped from my secondary school. But I like to work to earn money and enjoy my life, so I just leave the school life."*

(Respondent 9, 2018, 23rd May).

Activities Outside of School

Moreover, regarding the type of activities outside of school hours by respondents with their peers, it was found, 14 (35%) respondents were involved in hanging out activities just for their passing time with their friends, 9 (22.5%) respondents were involved in video games activities and 7 (17.5%) respondents were like to going out with their friends to take alcohol drinks and for the smoking purpose at pubs or clubbing. Indeed, 6 (15%) respondents like to play football with their friends daily without bothering their school home works and 3 (7.5%) respondents were active to go to entertainment places for the karaoke or window shopping purpose. However, one (2.5%) respondent was found very active to work for the part time in a car wash shop to cover his school expenses costs as well as noted in Table 1.

Table 1: Type of Activities Outside of School Hours by Respondents With Their Peers

Activities that are often associated outside of school hours by respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Hanging out activities just for their passing time with	14	35

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their friends.		
Playing a video game.	9	22.5
Going out with their friends to take alcohol drinks and for the smoking purpose at pubs or clubbing.	7	17.5
Playing football with their friends daily without bothering their school home works.	6	15
Going to entertainment places for the karaoke or window shopping purpose.	3	7.5
Working for the part time in a car wash to cover his school expences costs.	1	2.5

Source: Author's personal communication with respondents (2018)

For further details, it was found, internet cafes were most visited places as option for respondents to play video games and chat with peers or strangers a part from shopping malls for window shopping or entertainment places such as pubs or clubbing. For an example, according to Eva who was interviewed shared,

"I like to go to internet cafes to play video games with my friends. They teach me how to skip school and play video games at cc. I like to play video games a lot after I addicted because of my friends.... I never bother my school studies and I just collect my school money the pocket money that given by my parent to go to internet cafes and play until the evening. Sometimes, I forgot to do my school home works and everyday my teachers will scold me in classroom. But I never take it serious because my friends always there to back up me."

(Responden 7, 2018, 23rd May)

The role of peer social networks that surround activity participation is of particular concern. Based on Table 1, results show that the peer social networks of adolescents overlap significantly with the types of activities in which they participate outside of school hours. The respondents were experienced less desirable educational outcomes when they frequently hanging out with a group of peers who were not interested in academics. There is a negative correlation exists between peer pressure and academic achievement and this study reveals that peer pressure plays a vital role in lowering of achievement in academics. The respondents also experienced school dropping out issue and a lower rate of being enrolled in academic programs, graduating from secondary school and pursuing postsecondary education.

Meanwhile, respondent's negative influences through peer's factor led them to left behind in their academics followed by a significant reduction in grade repetition and eventually lead them to dropout from school and involve in anti-social activities. Moreover, these respondents have high tendency to engage in smoking practices or alcoholic drinks consumption

in groups, spending more time in entertainment centres with peers and other unethical behaviour or social issues. Esan who was interviewed, shared,

"I prefer to go to entertainment places such as karaoke centres, pubs, clubbing and hang out with friends. For me, those places are best entertainment places for me where I can share my feelings such as misunderstandings in between friends, family problems, and financial matters.... so on. Then it became habits for me to go to entertainment places with my friends after addicted to alcohol drinks and smoking. Sometimes, my friends will treat me. This caused me to be left in my studies and I decided to drop from my secondary school."

(Respondent 35, 2018, 28th May)

Based on the findings on type of activities outside of school hours, this study found, all the 40 respondents had been influenced by the their peers to lose focus in school earning process and neglect their studies until it does not bring any benefits to their better academicals performances in school. The peer's negative influences caused all the respondents did not appreciate their school days and did not realized the importance of teaching and learning values. Such student's lives are more affected towards finding pleasure and self-satisfaction only during their school time until left behind in academics and dropped out from schools.

DISCUSSION

Furthermore, this study found, extreme freedom given by parents to their children caused them affected by peer's negative influences until this factor lead them toward school dropout issue as shared by the respondents. This has again revived the discussion on concerns over school dropouts. Sadly, and unsurprisingly, according to 21 (52.5%) respondents in this study, most of the peers in their residential areas are actively involved in social issues and criminal activities such as illegal gangs, robberies, public fighting even drug trafficking and addiction. This was found to have a profound effect on adolescents in terms of criticizing the learning process in schools and influenced them with heretical teachings as stressed by SWO (2019). Evidently, SWO (2019) highlighted more than 29 000 Malaysian Indians were involved in drug trafficking syndicates in year 2010 and based on Malaysian Royal Police (*PDRM*) department's arrests record for drug abuse by ethnic group in 2010, Indian youngsters recorded 14% compared to other ethnicities in Malaysia. A part from drug issues, it is including alcohol consumption, vandalism, participation in criminal activities or other social issues and facing school dropout consequences. For example, 7 (17.5%) respondents in this study admitted that they had consumed alcohol drinks during their school time due to peer's pressure. However, this kind of respondent's involvement in social issues and then in criminal activities as young offenders due to peer's negative influences potentially detrimental to their future as stressed by Police Officer from Crime and Legal Investigation Department in this study during in depth interview.

Executive Officer from *MySkills* Foundation, pay attention to the peer's negative influences which also can cause the students to be involved in juvenile criminal activities and then to drop out from school during in depth interview. In further explanation, he stressed, based on data from *PDRM* and the Malaysian Prisons Department for year 2010, *MySkills* Foundation

(2016) explained, peer's factor were found to influence students to get caught up in social or criminal activities especially during secondary schools. For instance, robbery cases were the most dominant cases that involved by students aged in between 13 to 18 years old. In addition, it was found that there were also students active in other cases such as abuse, intimidation and burglary. Moreover, the number of criminal cases involving Indian youngsters aged 19 to 26 years old was higher and most of them are school dropouts and came from dysfunctional family backgrounds as noted in Table 2.

Table 2: Type of Social Issues / Crime Based on Age Range and Number of Cases in 2010

Type of Social Issues / Crimes	Age Rage of Indian Students / Youngsters			
	13 – 15 years old	16 – 18 years old	19 – 21 years old	22 – 26 years old
	Number of Recorded Cases			
Murder	1 – 10	20 – 30	50 – 60	90 – 100
Robberies	30 – 40	110 - 120	210 – 220	420 – 430
Abuse / intimidation	1 - 10	70 – 80	150 – 160	300 – 310
Housebreaking case	20 – 30	60 – 70	100 – 110	150 – 160

Source: Combination Data of *PDRM* and Prisons Department from *MySkills* Foundation (2016)

Based on Table 2, this study found, the students aged in between 13 to 15 years old were involved in different type of social or criminal activities in 2010. Among the criminal activities involved by students is murder which involving one to 10 students, theft involving 30 to 40 students, abuse or intimidation involving one to 10 students and about 20 to 30 students were involved in burglary cases. Meanwhile, the students aged in between 16 to 18 years old also involved in criminal activities. For example, the murder case involved 20 to 30 students, theft involving 110 to 120 students, abuse or intimidation involving 70 to 80 students and about 60 to 70 students involved in burglary cases. Furthermore, for the age category in between 19 to 21 years old, this study identified that many Indian youngsters have dropped out from schools and involved in criminal activities. Among the criminal activities involved by these youngsters is murder cases involving 50 to 60 youths, theft involving 210 to 220 youths, abuse or intimidation involving 150 to 160 youths and 100 to 110 youths were involved in burglary cases. Moreover, for the age category in between 22 to 26 years old, about 90 to 100 youths were involved in murder cases, 420 to 430 youths involved in thefts, 300 to 310 youths involved in abuse or intimidation and 150 to 160 youths involved in burglary cases (*MySkills* Foundation 2016). This study reveals, school student's involvement in crime as a result of peer's pressure does not bring any benefits to their future.

The effects left by peer's influences in crime and social issues showing that the students become school dropouts and subsequently become victims in *PDRM* arrests as shared by 8 (20%) respondents who were found to be involved in criminal activities and social issues in this study. This is questioning school student's future and their role as future generation in Malaysian society. In addition, *MySkills* Foundation (2016) reported, a total of 260 Indian students who dropped out of school and who were enrolled in the *MySkills* Foundation Centre had at-risk

backgrounds and had been involved in criminal activities due to peer's pressure as noted in Table 3.

Table 3: At – Risk Background / Behaviour and Percentage of Indian Students

At- Risk Background / Behaviour of Indian Students	Student's Percentage out of 260 Students that Enrolled in Myskillls Foundation (%)
Dropped out from secondary school before sitting for Malaysian Certificate of Education (MCE / *SPM*) exam.	72.1
Once an active member of illegal gangs	57.1
Ever been active in night activities	40.8
Prone to smoking habits	36.7
Regular consumption of alcohol drinks	14.3
Experience in drug trials	12.2
Involved in juvenile delinquency	5.1

Source: *MySkills* Foundation (2016)

Based on Table 3, this study captured, about 72.1% students out of 260 Indian students at *MySkills* Foundation were found dropped out from secondary school before sitting for the Malaysian Certificate of Education (MCE / *SPM*) exam. Besides that, about 57.1 % students had been active members in illegal gangs, 40.8 % of students had been active in night activities, 36.7% of students had been exposed to smoking habits and 14.4% of students had consumed alcohol drinks on a regular basis. It is including, about 12.2% of students had experience in drug consumption attempts and 5.1% had been involved in juvenile delinquency together with their peers (*MySkills* Foundation 2016).

Additionally, *MySkills* Foundation (2016) reported, Indian student's involvement level those who dropped out from school while being active followers in illegal social gangs due to peer's pressures as noted in Table 4.

Table 4: Stages, Process and Percentage of Indian Student's Involvement in Illegal Social Gangs

Students Involvement Levels In Illegal Social Gangs	The Student Involvement Process (in making of gangster or crime offender	Student's Percentage out of 260 Students that Enrolled in Myskillls Foundation (%)
First stage	Ever been exposed to illegal social gangs during secondary school	25
Second stage	A strong follower of gang member during secondary school	40
Third stage	Ever been an active member in *'peers groups and social*	34

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	gang'	
Fourth stage	Ever registered as an official member in *'illegal gang member group'*	15
Fifth stage	Involved in illegal social gangs and criminal activities	4

Source: *MySkills* Foundation (2016)

Based on Table 4, this study identified, about 25% of students out of 260 students in *MySkills* Foundation Centre had been exposed to illegal social gangs during their primary school levels for the first stage. Meanwhile, 40% of students were found to have been strong followers of illegal social gangs during their secondary school levels for the second stage and for the third stage, about 34% of students had been active members in peers groups and illegal social gangs. Moreover, for both fourth and fifth stages, about 15% of students have registered as official members in illegal gangs and 4% of students were involved in illegal social gangs and criminal activities (*MySkills* Foundation 2016). This study describes in detail the student's involvement level even dropouts in illegal social gangs and how they fall into criminal activities. In addition, this study highlighted the consequences of peer's factor that causes students to be influenced by negative elements in terms of heretical teachings and risky behaviours until they dropout from school system. This has not been concerned seriously in detail in any previous study regarding the school dropout issue among Indian students in Malaysia. Therefore, this study took initiative to demonstrate peer's pressure factor and its effects on secondary school student's dropout behaviours and their presences as young offenders in society.

For Siennick & Staff (2008), adolescents who experienced personal identity loss after dropping out of school were found to experience emotional or mental disturbance when facing family and personal stress. They argued, unplanned future without any proper direction among youngsters can make them a burden to their family by being 'unemployed' in the future. Moreover, dropping out from school system by students also can contribute to the lower social status in society due to illiteracy issues later on. Meanwhile, MIB (2017) reported, in between year 2012 and 2013, the Ministry of Home Affairs (*KDN*) of Malaysia showed that the number of students involved in crime and violence issues increased to 50%. MIB (2017) also stated that the results of PDRM raids on criminal activities in 2014 showed a value breakdown of 10% from the age range in between 7 to 18 years old who were involved in social issues. This 10% value is from the total number of criminal arrests categorized by Indian ethnicity in 2014. Indeed, SWO (2019) indicated, students who leave the school system are found to be involved in crime and consequently increase the school dropouts issue among other students. This caused them easily trapped and extremely influenced by their peers to be involved in social issues at adolescent's early stage. This was also supported by 34 (85%) respondents through in -depth interviews in this study when they had been influenced by other school dropouts to engage in illegal social gangs activities. Thus, this study proved, school student's involvement in social issues and criminal acts left negative impacts on students which lead them to drop out from school system.

It shows, the student dropouts issue has caused the criminal activities through illegal social gangs to be extremely widespread in Malaysia especially among Indian youths. These will be not only affects the youngster's future but also affects their well-being which can lead to unemployment, insufficient income, poverty and social mobility issues as supported by Roberts, et al. (2011).

Furthermore, this study indicated, student's involvement in social issues, criminal acts and the school dropout's matters will cause Malaysian government to face the cost of maintaining at-risk adolescents and the construction of rehabilitation centres as discussed by Police Officer from Crime and Legal Investigation Department who was interviewed in this study. Therefore, criminal activities among students should be curbed at the school level for the f society's social well-being in Malaysia. Moreover, this study highlighted, the school dropouts who will suffer in poverty due to lack of educational knowledge will face challenges in providing quality education to their children in the future. Therefore, the school dropout's prevention is important to provide opportunities for Malaysian youngsters to give quality education to their children later. This can ensure the inclusiveness in terms of well -being, social mobility and future generation's sustainability through quality education and skills required according to the current modernization and globalization era as highlighted by Rachel, et al. (2013).

RECOMMENDATION

This study provides some recommendations for exploring this issue and in reducing the low-achieving student's proportion with unrealistic aspirations in school climate due to peer's factor. The secondary school management should play an important role strengthening friendship ties in between students who are 'at risk' of dropping out and their high achieving classmates. It is likely that those students influence each other and maintain their friendship ties as their aspirations converge. This can motivate the low-achieving students with realistic aspirations to perform better in studies through academicals support such as group studies, discussions and healthy competitions with peers. It is including evolution on social interactions quality and improving behaviours pattern among students within treated classes. Furthermore, in a line with the goals of Malaysian Education Development Plan or Blueprint (MOE 2012) that planned for year 2013 to 2025, Malaysian government should play an important role in producing progressive, skilful, knowledgeable and visionary youths from school levels. This can lead young teenagers to have a balanced development in terms of intellectual, mental and emotional strength to overcome learning issues and discipline problems in school climate which can cause them to drop out of school. Indirectly, it can create the responsible and dedicated young generation in achieving sustainable transformation while combating school dropout issues.

Importantly, in order to reduce the school dropout's rate, Malaysian government through the cooperation network in between MOE, Ministry of Youth and Sports (*KBS*), District Education Office (*PPD*) and State Education Department (*JPN*) together with school administration, family and community-based organizations should address the student's needs. Thus, adolescents need to be given awareness and guidance appropriately to realize the importance of education and life challenges. Hence, organizing programmes based on social

learning theory that involve young teenagers, especially at-risk adolescents, can play a role in ensuring the reduction of their involvement in social issues due to peer's pressures. Among the programmes proposed in this study are outdoor activities during the school holidays such as encouraging students to carry out welfare activities in care centres such as orphanages and homes for children with disabilities to provide moral support. It is including group activities such as cleaning and painting the school environment, beautify public property themed '*Say No To Vandalism and No Smoking*', visits to prisons themed '*Say No To Social Crimes*', and a cycling convoy activity themed '*Say No To Illegal Races*'.

Proposed programmes also include mountain climbing expedition activities and 'explorace' games that also can bring perseverance among students to face challenges and dare to face any obstacles in learning aspects in school. Challenging activities initiative in building self-esteem and will power among students can play a role in creating self-resilience compared to organizing many talks in schools that are boring for teenagers now. These efforts not only serve to create the '*adventures and explores*' spirit to learn new things but also can be a guide for teenagers to progress well. Moreover, '*Junior Leaders Club*' establishment in school also can encourage the student's active participation in academics, sports, skills and social activities together with their peers. Organizing awareness camps on youth transformations can ensure the effectiveness of youth's sustainable development. This can foster a belonging sense among teenagers to provide social benefits and to contribute towards their families, society and nation growths as suggested by Okeyode (2010). Hence, exposure to the community development's importance can cause teenagers to act rationally to improve their life quality by stay away from peer's negative influences and to avoid their involvement in social issues or delinquency. Significantly, it also has the potential to reduce mental health problems, suicide cases, drug abuse, underage marriage, teenage pregnancy, involvement in illegal social gangs. It is including dropout issues among students while maintaining their well- being in both educational and social fields for a secure future. Therefore, efforts to reduce dropout issues among school students is ultimately important to ensures the current young generation's even future generation's well-being and socioeconomic mobility in terms of quality education and skills needed.

CONCLUSION

Finally yet importantly, concerns of high risk youngsters especially among students should be focused to protect them from peer's pressures and its negative influences which can lead them to school dropout issues. Thus, well-coordinated crime prevention initiatives and community policing programmes must be introduced, so that these youngsters have a positive response to society wellness including social law and order as emphasized by Vangie, et al (2019). Hence, school dropouts among students especially secondary school Indian students must be taken seriously in enhancing their capability, strengthening their well-being and inclusivity. It is including addressing student's rights and improving their basic needs in terms of equitable and quality education, so that it can potentially leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes and contribute towards future human capital development strategies. Therefore, based on '*no child left behind or isolated*' concept by United Nations International Children's Emergency

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Fund (UNICEF 2017), all the adolescents especially Malaysian Indian teenagers should equip with educational knowledge, values and new skills-set and competencies to reach their full potential and play an active role in their communities and societies. It is including utilizing significant social and economic returns of education in terms of better lives, greater social cohesion, lower burden on social welfare and ready to face future challenges in this era of Forth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0).

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