# FACTORS INFLUENCING ADAPTATION OF INDIGENOUS STUDENTS AT SELECTED PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN MALAYSIA

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# FACTORS INFLUENCING ADAPTATION OF INDIGENOUS STUDENTS AT SELECTED PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN MALAYSIA

by

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HEIs        Higher Education Institutions

SES        Socio-Economic Status

# FAKTOR-FAKTOR YANG MEMPENGARUHI ADAPTASI KENDIRI DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR ORANG ASLI UNIVERSITI AWAM TERPILIH DI MALAYSIA

## ABSTRAK

Prestasi yang lemah dan masalah keciciran dalam kalangan pelajar orang asli masih jelas ketara walaupun kemasukan ke universiti meningkat setiap tahun. Kajian-kajian lepas daripada Australia, Kanada dan New Zealand menunjukkan bahawa faktor yang menyumbang kepada permasalahan ini adalah pelajar orang asli gagal dalam adaptasi akademik dan kehidupan sosial di universiti. Oleh kerana kajian tentang pelajar orang asli di universiti tempatan masih kurang, maklumat tentang adaptasi kendiri mereka di universiti sukar ditemui.  Untuk mengisi jurang literatur, kajian ini ingin mengetahui tahap adaptasi pelajar orang asli di universiti awam di Malaysia dan ingin meneroka sama ada adaptasi kendiri mereka berbeza berdasarkan demografi atau tidak. Kaedah gabungan (Mixed Method Sequential Explanatory Design) dijalankan untuk mencapai objektif dalam kajian ini.  Data telah dikutip secara kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Secara kuantitatif, sebanyak 160 (n=160) pelajar orang asli telah menjadi sampel melalui kaedah persampelan bertujuan di 10 buah universiti. Adaptasi kendiri mereka diukur menggunakan instrument Adaptasi Kendiri Ke Institut Pengajian Tinggi (SACQ). Instrument yang digunakan untuk mengukur faktor yang berkaitan dengan adaptasi kendiri pelajar orang asli adalah seperti instrumen estim-kendiri, instrumen jati diri, instrumen regulasi-kendiri dan instrumen sokongan.  Untuk bahagian kualitatif, 12 pelajar orang asli telah menyertai temu bual separa berstruktur. Temu bual separa berstruktur ini penting untuk mengetahui cabaran-cabaran yang dihadapi serta sumber sokongan yang mereka dapat. Dapatan kajian telah

menunjukkan bahawa pelajar orang asli mempunyai tahap adaptasi akademik yang sederhana (m=2.93), tahap adaptasi sosio-emosi yang tinggi (m=3.07) dan secara keseluruhannya tahap adaptasi kendiri yang tinggi (m=3.02). Tahap adaptasi kendiri juga berbeza berdasarkan profil demografi seperti generasi pertama masuk ke universiti, etnik dan pendapatan keluarga. Manakala faktor yang mempengaruhi adaptasi akademik ($R^2$=.581) pelajar orang asli adalah jati diri ($\beta$=.296), regulasi-kendiri ($\beta$=.268) dan sokongan ($\beta$=.322). Faktor yang mempengaruhi adaptasi sosio-emosi ($R^2$=.377) pelajar orang asli adalah estim-kendiri ($\beta$=.375), jati diri ($\beta$=.304) dan sokongan ($\beta$=.213). Analisis tematik menunjukkan bahawa cabaran akademik dan cabaran sosio-emosi adalah tema utama yang dikenal pasti. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa pelajar orang asli mendapat sokongan daripada kawan, keluarga, institusi, pensyarah dan JAKOA. Pada akhir bab lima, teoretikal dan implikasi pendidikan juga turut dibincangkan.

# FACTORS INFLUENCING ADAPTATION OF INDIGENOUS STUDENTS AT SELECTED PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN MALAYSIA

## ABSTRACT

Despite an increase in access to tertiary education, poor performance and high dropouts among the indigenous students are still evident. Past studies from Australia, Canada and New Zealand show that indigenous students' failure to adapt to academic and social life in the campus was a contributing factor. However, study on indigenous students in the local university context is still scarce, hence, not much is known about their state of adaptation. To fill in the literature gaps, this study aims to determine the level of adaptation among indigenous students at public universities in Malaysia and explore whether their adaptation differs according to demographic profile. A Mixed Method Sequential Explanatory Design was carried out to achieve the objectives of the study. Data was collected through both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitatively, 160 (n=160) indigenous students from 10 public universities were sampled through purposive sampling. Their adaptation was measured by the Self-Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ). Instruments that were used to measure factors related to indigenous' adaptation were self-esteem scale, resiliency scale, self-regulation scale and the support scale. Qualitatively, 12 indigenous students have participated in semi-structure interviews to explore the challenges faced by them when studying at the university and to understand the sources of the support that they received. The findings revealed that indigenous students' have moderate level of academic adaptation (m=2.93), high level of socio-emotional adaptation (m=3.07) and high overall adaptation (m=3.02).Level of adaptation also differ according to their demographic such as first-generation, ethnicity and household income. In terms of

factors that influence indigenous students' academic adaptation, this study found that academic adaptation ($R^2$=.581) was influenced by resilience ($\beta$=.296), self-regulation ($\beta$ =.268) and support ($\beta$ =.322). In terms of factors that influence indigenous students' socio-emotional adaptation, this study found that socio-emotional adaptation ($R^2$=.377) was influenced by self-esteem ($\beta$ =.375), resilience ($\beta$=.304), support ($\beta$ =.213). The thematic analysis showed that academic challenges and socio-emotional challenges are the main themes emerged. This study also found that indigenous students have received peers, family, institutional, lecturers and JAKOA are their main sources of support, which helped them to adapt at the university. At the end of chapter five, theoretical and educational implications of the study were also discussed.

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1    Background of the Study

From international perspectives, indigenous students are predominantly underrepresented and very much disadvantaged within the most system of higher education (Flavell, Thackrah & Hoffman, 2013). Examples of indigenous peoples include the *Orang Asli* in Malaysia, Aborigine and Torres Strait Islander in Australia, Maori in New Zealand and Inuit, Métis and First Nation in Canada.

What makes indigenous students different from non-indigenous students? Many researchers believe that educators misunderstand their actions (Trudget, 2010). For example, when talking, indigenous students in Australia stay away from direct eye contact to a teacher as it is thought to be impolite in their culture. Hence, teachers misunderstood their behaviour it can speak of mild racism. Typically, the numbers of indigenous student are low in higher education. This is why many educators tend to ignore their existence (White, Frawley & Anh, 2013). Worst cases when the educators have prior expectation on them as if they are going to get low results or victimise them. Regularly, there are only half of the indigenous students that likely to complete their course compared to their non-indigenous friends (Trudget, 2010). The indigenous graduation rate was 28% while the graduation rate for the non-indigenous students was 59%.

As teachers teaching the indigenous students, they require the sensitivity of their special needs and prior knowledge about their cultural backgrounds. In Australia, there were many educators that lack of knowledge teaching and dealing with

indigenous students or society. On the other side of the coin, schools in the far North of Australia had a very high number of indigenous students. In order to reach them and get them interested in learning, educators need to follow the textbook solely but have to find some topics that may related to them (Flavell, Thackrah & Hoffman, 2013). A university in Australia implies that there were not many changes the way universities recruit and support indigenous students (White, Frawley & Anh, 2013). What and how actually works when it comes to better supporting indigenous students' adaptation and graduation in higher education were the questions left unanswered, due to many factors influencing and facilitating indigenous academic success.

Emphasis on the concept of widening participation and lifelong learning has becoming more apparent in Malaysian Education Policy over the past two decades (Smidt & Sursock, 2011). The changes were underpinned by the need to provide equality of opportunities for underrepresented groups in higher education such as the indigenous students and those from lower socio-economic status (Pechenkina, 2015). Malaysian government thus aimed to encourage more young people to remain in education and to increase the level of participation in higher education. The increasing emphasis on widening participation has resulted in increased diversity in students' population at public higher education institutions in Malaysia (Pandian, 2008).

The academic demand and student diversity at the university could impact indigenous students' academic and social development when pursuing higher education (Denson & Zhang, 2010). There were also other issues that indigenous students in higher education often faced, for instance low academic preparation and social incompetence (Jones, Coetzee, Bailey & Wickham, 2008). Those issues often were associated with poor adaptation at higher education. It was also a concern among

parents and educators who expect all students entering higher education to do well (Schroeder, 2011).

Generally, when attending universities with different culture where they have to challenge themselves with the new social arrangements, organisations, lifestyles and potentials as well as living were always associated with the issues of adaptation (Lan, Liu & Hsu, 2013). Transition into higher education becomes more complicated when the new students knew prior before entering. It becomes more complex when the new student thought that everything will be like just as their hometown (Schlossberg, 1981). So, when they do not foresee the challenges they may anticipate, they will not do any mental and physical preparation. Lack of preparation can cause adaptation problem (Schlossberg, 1981). Adapting problem normally affect the new students (Adams, 2014). As a whole, the effect of such challenging occurrences especially on the dissimilarity in cultural has been expressed as culture shock (Craven & Dillon, 2013).

It is very important for the indigenous people to know the quality of the emotional, socio-cultural and learning experiences in order to promoting intercultural understanding (Cravena, Ryana, Mooneya, Vallerand, Dillon et al, 2016). As expected, the indigenous students' adaptation is a problem that has been researched from the perspective of academic and socio-emotional development, (Hailu & Ku, 2015). Indigenous students may feel awkwardness in studying in the higher education due to the demands of academic. Language can also be a barrier in the academic process (Yiquan & Yijie, 2015). By taking charge of their own conduct to succeed in academic, new students may feel lost in their journey. This is due to differences in secondary school approach that are more spoon-feeding and university approach that

demand independent in the course of finding information and completing assignments (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping & Topman, 2008).

It is important for indigenous to mix around the campus to find friends which in turn help them to adapt at the university. Indigenous students who were small in numbers always face difficulties in finding social support at the higher education (Yiquan & Yijie, 2015). Those students also may have difficulties in adjusting their emotions compare to the majority of the non-indigenous students at the higher education (Hailu & Ku, 2015). Hailu and Ku (2015) also added that adaptation was linked with their emotional adjustments for being in new environment, new friends and new teachers. Research showed that academic, social and emotional adaptations are closely linked with each other (Carter, 2006).

Indigenous students were underrepresented in every level of education particularly at higher education (Dockery, 2013). Volpe, Bush, Johnson Jr., Kwok, Tudy-Jackson and Velez (2008) stated that underrepresented racial and ethnic groups perceived injustices requiring more aggressive methods to address the concerns. In broad perspective, difficulties in this category were categorized as informational and professional barriers (Dockery, 2013). Dockery (2013) added that some of the indigenous students perceived a lack of accessible information that leads to their barriers at higher education entrant. Carter (2006) believed that some students apparently understand the difficulties because of certain social and institutional custom that present in the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Indigenous students tend to indicate to a lack of mentors (Aird, Miller, Megen & Buys, 2010). When indigenous students experience these barriers, adaptation issues become more eminent and crucial (Dockery, 2013).

As the underrepresented ethnic groups, there were very limited numbers of indigenous students at higher education, it is not easy to look for same background mentors and preferably shares the same identity. Indigenous students find it hard to find suitable role models (Carter, 2006). Moreover, indigenous students particularly had difficulties in looking for role models with the same background as theirs. When the indigenous students cannot look for role models to advice academically, academic adaptation becomes an issue (Carter, 2006). Socioeconomic barriers also posed as their challenges at the higher education (Aird et al, 2010). Other than information and profesional difficulties, economic difficulties are recognized in this study as lack of financial support while in higher education. Even if there are opportunities for financial support do present at the university, they do not have the information about such opportunities (Aird et al, 2010).

Supporting transitions into higher education was vital for all first-year students (Hebdon, 2016). By providing opportunities for indigenous students at the secondary level, one way of promoting sensible opportunities of higher education was to speak with the seniors at the university, who had knowledge the transition. The focus was for the indigenous students to use their individual knowledge to make the transition into university and help other indigenous students realize what higher education, and predominantly a higher education student all about. Guidance such as academic and social and preparation to organise studies independently were vital in their first year (Townsend, 2008).

Moreover, peer mentoring was also crucial to avoid withdrawal from university and to sustain transition into higher education. This initiative can also reduce withdrawal because of a mismatch among the new students' outlooks of higher education and the actuality (Briggs, Clark & Hall, 2012). There were a few frequent

misunderstanding from by the students about moving into university (Lantz & Reddy, 2010), and it was understood to learn about the experiences and challenges of indigenous students who made the transition successfully and forget such misunderstanding before new students enrol into the university. In addition, peer mentoring has been very successful for both the mentors, and mentees, and enhanced self-esteem, academic self-efficacy and the skills of communication (Hill & Reddy, 2007).

During students' transition into the tertiary education, it was important to think about the commitment and empowerment of students by examining aspects such as academic and social preparation (Townsend, 2008). The rising of variety of ethnic background of higher education institutions (HEIs) showing the growing of challenges and opportunities in the field of transition (Skene & Evamy, 2009). It can be considered to be successful transition if the indigenous students can engage and empower during their pre-entry to university. Proactive students support also vital in developing a sense of belonging among the new students at the higher education institutions. Other than that, student support was crucial from those of underrepresented group in developing their sense of belonging.

There were many first year experiences that discussed in the literature (Tachin, Cabrera & Bird, 2016). It includes many authorities including partnership involving support services and teaching staff, library and student council so to offer a complete introduction into the tertiary education environment (Paton & Davis, 2014). It was crucial to value a certain transition problem related with diverse learner crowds but avoiding generalisations based on learner profile. For example, the need of minority students such as the indigenous students at the higher education (Packard, Tuladhar & Lee, 2013). However, it is also must be understood that no students can be left out

during the transition. Transition is vital to all indigenous students whether they are at-risk or not so it can maximise their potential of succeeding at the university.

Supporting transition into universities can be practiced by improving communication between schools and universities as well as building greater collaboration between schools and community learning (Ott & Cooper, 2013). During their first-year, students need to have efficient monitoring, tracking and evaluate their achievements. This ongoing intervention was important to track educational pathways and know the patterns of transition and their development (Paton & Davis, 2014). Proactive monitoring must concentrate on retention as well as performance. It was vital to have better emphasis on formative assessment in the first semester, as well as thorough response and tutorial support to explain the potentials and sustain adaptation to the university learning knowledge and promote students to endeavour risks.

On the institutions side, there were institutions that investigate the foremost efficient method for creating good casual networks of learning and assistance (McGill & Lazarowicz, 2012). According to Lazarowicz (2015), casual and common networking, peer support and peer mentoring structures play an essential role in supporting the social and academic combination. Same goes to the student engagement and empowerment.

Indigenous students need to have the power to go through transition approaches which looking for help to attain a outstanding level of self-efficacy in the area of money, accommodation, compulsory learning skills, comprehending the potentials and convey it accordingly (Kuh, 2008). Proactive involvement can be built and conveyed especially in the area of key competences needed to be successful in the first year. Additionally, accessing support at correct time through the year should be done

effectively and go well with the student using online resources and information, rather than depending on help of student support staff.

## 1.2    Problem Statement

Indigenous students often faced adaptation issues when studying at the universities (Wu, Garza & Guzman, 2016). Problems in adaptation during the early semester can lead to poor performance and dropout. Among the factors that causes adaptation issues include students' personal problems and other external reasons related to a lack of faculty and institutions support (Reynold, Wilson, Austin & Hooper, 2012). Indigenous students with high level of adaptation during their early semesters in the university are more likely to complete their tertiary studies (Pidgeon, 2009).

Due to lack of local studies in the area, the extent of adaptation among indigenous students in Malaysian universities is still unknown. Even though there is a rising trend in participation of Orang Asli students in higher education (Doreen, Melissa & Aziah, 2016; MOHE 2014), the number of indigenous students is still largely underrepresented (Gallop, 2016) due to a number of challenges that they faced to pursue higher education (Pechenkina & Anderson, 2011). Table 1.1 showed the number of indigenous students' enrolment in the year of 2018.

Table 1.1:     *The Number of Indigenous Students Intake into Public Higher Education in 2018*

| No | Public Higher Education Institutions | Diploma | Bachelor |
|----|---------------------------------------|---------|----------|
| 1 | Universiti Malaya (UM) | - | 7 |
| 2 | Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) | - | 7 |
| 3 | Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) | - | 3 |
| 4 | Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) | 4 | 10 |
| 5 | Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) | 0 | 8 |
| 6 | Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) | - | 15 |
| 7 | Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) | - | 7 |
| 8 | Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIAM) | - | 5 |
| 9 | Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) | 31 | 18 |
| 10 | Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) | - | 6 |
| 11 | Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) | 113 | 102 |
| 12 | Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA) | 4 | 2 |
| 13 | Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) | 6 | 19 |
| 14 | Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM) | 8 | 3 |
| 15 | Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP) | 4 | 11 |
| 16 | Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) | 1 | 9 |
| 17 | Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP) | 3 | 6 |
| 18 | Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia (UPNM) | 1 | 1 |
| | **TOTAL** | **174** | **239** |
| | | | **413** |

Source: JAKOA (2018)

Table 1.1 showed that in 2018, the number of indigenous population in higher education was 413; indicating a significant partaking among these communities to pursue higher learning. Therefore, with the number of indigenous students at higher education, it is crucial to understand their level of adaptation, experiences and issues at higher education. In view that only a small number of indigenous students made it to the university, it is crucial for the stakeholders to examine their adaptation to prevent them from dropping out from the university. Indigenous students' level of adaptation at public universities in Malaysia also should be examined and explored according to their demographic profile.

Adaptation at higher education is linked to the adaptability of different cultures simultaneously (Ozer, 2015). Meza and Gazzoli's study (2011) concluded that indigenous students generally are lacking in cultural competency, which caused them to feel alienated. Indigenous students may feel as if university is a foreign place, hence

affect their academic and social adaptation (Day, Nakata, Nakata & Martin, 2015). Past studies revealed that both individual and institutional factors could affect indigenous students' adaptation (Kinnane, Wilks, Wilson, Hughes & Thomas, 2014). However due to inadequate studies on *Orang Asli* students in Malaysia, factors that influence their adaptation at public universities could not be determined.

Miller, Rycek and Fritson (2011) linked social adaptation with academic adaptation. Indigenous students at public universities may experience social difficulties due to cultural barrier with non-indigenous students (Md Kail, 2015; Miller, 2011) which could lead to their poor academic achievement.

From the psychological perspective, indigenous students are more inclined to experience social barriers in the campus because of their low self-esteem (Doreen, Melissa & Aziah, 2016). Due to low self-esteem, Md Kail (2015) and Hasni Hussin (2015) found that indigenous students at one local university showed difficulties in socializing with other non-indigenous peers. Indigenous students may feel isolated, which lead to low self-esteem (Michael & Eng, 2012). This is in line with Wood, Zuniga and David's (2012) study which found that psychological factors such as low self-esteem could have negative impact on indigenous students' adaptation at the tertiary level. Hurtado and Ruiz (2012) stated that students from indigenous and minority ethnic groups may experience stereotyping, harassment and other types of prejudice which contributed to adaptation issues at higher education institutions. However, the extent of isolation affecting their social adaptation is unclear.

Resiliency is another psychological factor that maybe related to indigenous students' adaptation of the indigenous students. Low resilience forms a trend in dropping out among the indigenous students at higher education (Boon, 2008).

Lacking in resiliency, indigenous students at higher education may be risky of dropping out than non-indigenous students. Regardless of their efforts, dropout is still high because of indigenous students' low resiliency (Milne, Creedy & West, 2016). 880 indigenous students have finished tertiary education between 1971 and 2010 and this was mainly due to their low resilience to challenges at higher education (Ramlee, Wan Hasmah, Amir & Asmawi, 2013). Hence, to fill up the literature gaps, it is crucial to investigate the relationships between indigenous students' resiliency and their adaptation at public universities in Malaysia.

Literature reviews also suggest that, another psychological factor that could affect adaptation is self-regulation. Self-regulation is a predictor of academic success among universities students (Kitsantas, Winsler & Huie, 2008). It is a crucial skill to sustain and improve indigenous students' performance. Hasni Hussin (2015) stated that in 2014 alone, 30% of the indigenous students were dismissed due to failure to cope with academic demand at public universities. Therefore, examining self-regulation and its relationship with adaptation is essential among indigenous students the universities.

Support that indigenous students received could also have important impact on indigenous students' adaptation as well. Institutions that are less concern about the welfare of indigenous students are among the reasons that contributed to indigenous dropout in higher education (Restoule, Mashford-Pringle, Chacaby, Smillie & Brunette, 2013). Other study by Pechenkina (2015) also suggested that administrators or faculty's negative attitude could cause great obstacles for them to adapt in higher education. External factors such as institutional and faculty support may help them to adapt at the universities. Institutional and faculty support is equally important in supporting the indigenous students' adaptation in universities (Kitsantas, Winsler &

Huie, 2008).Institutional support also including the administrative and support staff that involve in the process of registration and academic. Lecturers and counsellors are a part of the faculty that can also contribute to the supportive environment of indigenous students at the universities.

Studies on adaptation of indigenous students at higher education are very limited in Malaysia. Not much is known about the challenges faced by indigenous students in the local universities and the sources of support that they received when adapting to university life (Adams, 2014). However, lack of studies in Malaysia context call for in-depth study in the area.

## 1.3    Research Objectives

Based on the problem statement, five objectives were formulated to guide this research:

1.    To identify the level of indigenous students' adaptation at public universities.

2.    To identify whether indigenous students' adaptations in universities differ according to their demographic profile.

3.    To determine whether self-esteem, resilience, self-regulation and support predict indigenous students' adaptation at public universities.

4.    To understand the challenges faced by indigenous students when adapting to university life.

5.    To understand the sources of support that indigenous students received in adapting to university life.

**1.4    Research Questions**

Based on the research objectives, the research questions are as follows:

1.    What is the level of adaptation among indigenous students at public universities?

2.    Does adaptation of indigenous students in universities differ according to demographic profile?

3.    Do self-esteem, resilience, self-regulation and support predict indigenous students' adaptation at public universities?

4.    What are the challenges faced by indigenous students when adapting to university life?

5.    What are the sources of support received by indigenous students in adapting to university life?

**1.5    Significance of the Study**

This research is significant to higher education in general. By identifying the state of adaptation among indigenous students and understand the challenges that they face, public universities can plan more effective transition plan to support their adaptation. The university also can expand their support towards the improvement of institutional practices and student orientation program for this group of students.

This study also has great potentials to contribute towards understanding of indigenous students' experiences during university life. The outcome of this study may unveil strategies to promote positive tertiary experiences among indigenous students and guarantee their achievement at higher education. The study may also contribute findings that are useful for the Department of *Orang Asli* Development (JAKOA). By identifying factors associated to the adaptation of indigenous students at higher

education and the challenges that they face, JAKOA may formulate new policy and strategies to increase indigenous students' readiness and skills to adapt at higher education ultimately; this may enhance their performance and reduce the risks of dropping out.

This research also contributes to the body of knowledge. The evidence found in this research can add the existing literature review on indigenous students' studies in Malaysia. So far most studies on indigenous students focus on the primary level. The evidence from this research provides more robust explanation on adaptation issues that faced by the indigenous students at the universities.

Finally, this research hopes to fill in the knowledge and research gaps on indigenous students at higher education in Malaysia. Since studies on adaptation of indigenous students are very scarce, existing findings may not be generalizeable to Malaysian context. There are models and theories that explain retention of higher education students by Bean and Eaton (2001) but there are critics that their model is not suitable for indigenous students (Weng, Cheong & Cheong, 2010). Other than that, minority students' theory in higher education only touches on their social barriers (Berry, 2006). Therefore, conducting a research in this area is crucial in contributing new knowledge. Moreover, there are needs in investigating theory that best explain the indigenous students' adaptation and academic success in public university context.

## 1.6    Scope and Limitations

The scope of the study refers to the limitation under which the study will be operating (Simon & Goes, 2013). The scope for this research is focusing on indigenous students enrolling in diploma and degree courses at selected public universities. Those indigenous students that are successful in making the transition from pre-university to

universities are able to graduate and will continue to further studies in bachelor level. Indigenous students who are studying in higher education supposed to be the best among them and unlikely to develop adaptation issues (Hasni, 2015); however, there are still cases of dropout. The type of university chosen is public universities. There is no specific geographical location of the universities because the samples of this study were sampled from public universities which have the highest number of indigenous student in Malaysia and they are scattered all over Malaysia; to increase the probability of getting the representative samples. The finding, however, may not be generalizable to private universities that were beyond the scope of this study.

## 1.7    Definition of Terms

There are seven definitions of terms that will be discussed in this section. They are indigenous students, academic adaptations, socio-emotional adaptation, resilience, self-esteem, self-regulation and support.

### 1.7.1    Indigenous Students

Indigenous students in this research are the *Orang Asli* students in West Malaysia enrolling in diploma and degree programs at public universities. Indigenous students are registered as *Orang Asli* under JAKOA. In this study, students are classified as *Orang Asli* if one or both parents from indigenous origin (JAKOA, 2015).

### 1.7.2    Adaptation

Granot (2014) defines adaptation as the degree of students' success in coping with various life commitments as students at the higher education. These include coping with their academic, social, emotional and their attachment as university students. In this study, two types of adaptation were measured; (a) academic adaptation and (b) socio-emotional adaptation.

**1.7.2(a) Academic Adaptation**

Academic adaptation refers to the extent of a student's achievement in handling with a variety of educational difficulties such as motivation, application, performance and satisfaction with the new academic surroundings (Granot, 2014). In this study, indigenous students' academic adaptation was measured by Student Adaptation to College Scale (SACQ) developed by Robert Baker and Bohdan Siryk (1989). The scale consists of 17 items which measure the students' motivation, performance and a range of educational demands characteristic of the universities experiences. It is a four point-likert scale.

**1.7.2(b) Socio-Emotional Adaptation**

Social-emotional adaptation refers to how good the indigenous students can deal with the interpersonal-societal difficulties of a study, such as making friends, being part of collective activities or capable to work in groups (Granot, 2014). In this study, indigenous students' socio-emotional adaptation was measured by the Student Adaptation to College Scale (SACQ) developed by Robert Baker and Bohdan Siryk (1989). This scale consists of a 26 items, which measure students' degree of socio-emotional adaptation in terms of socializing with friends and social activities at the universities. It is a four point-likert scale.

**1.7.3   Self-Esteem**

Srivastava and Joshi (2014) define self-esteem as how we value ourselves and perceive our value to the world and how valuable we think we are to others. In this research, indigenous students' self-esteem refers to their power and flexibility to monitor their lives at universities and develop from their mistakes with no fear of dismissal. In this research, self-esteem was measured by Self-Esteem Scale (6 items), a four-point liker scale and adapted from Todd Heatherton and Janet Polivy (1991).

### 1.7.4   Resilience

Resilience is the capacity to withstand stress and disaster (Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick & Yehuda, 2014).   It is also recognized as the capabilities of humans to adapt and overcome risk and adversity. In this research, resilience refers to indigenous students' ability to rebuild their confidence and strive in academic at universities. The Resilience Questionnaire has 11 items and developed by Oddgeir Friborg, Dag Barlaug, Monica Martinussen, Jan Rosenvinge and Odin Hjemdal (2005) was used to measure the construct. In this research resilience was measured by a four-point likert scale.

### 1.7.5   Self-Regulation

Virtanen, Nergi and Nieni (2013) stated that self-regulation is the skill to proceed in long-term best interest, constant with innermost principles. In this study, self-regulation refers to the need to self-drive their intentions in succeeding in academic at universities.   Self-Regulation Scale has 16 items and adapted from Tryntsje Tsjitske Toering, Marije Elferink-Gemser, Laura Jonker, Van Heuvelen, and Chris Visscher (2014).In this research, indigenous students' self-regulation was measured by a four-point likert scale.

### 1.7.6   Challenges

Preston (2016) refers challenges as the barriers that hinder indigenous students to complete their studies at higher education. Challenges in this research are referring to the indigenous students' academic and socio-emotional challenges at the universities. Challenges is measured based on the participants' views and responses. The interview protocol is based on 'Measuring service quality in higher education' by Firdaus Abdullah (2006).

### 1.7.7 Support

Support is the assistance provided by the university where the indigenous students learn and adapt in campus life (Pechenkina, Andersen & Bunda, 2013). In this study, support refers to the indigenous students' perception to external support that they received at the university. The Support Scale has 10 items and measured based on the perceived support by the indigenous students. The instrument was adapted from 'Measuring service quality in higher education' by Firdaus Abdullah (2006) and was measured by a four-point likert scale.

### 1.7.8 Sources of Support

Sources of support can be a type of internal and external assistance provided by the university where the indigenous students learn (Pechenkina, 2015). In this study, sources of support refer to the indigenous students' perception to academic, social and financial support provided by JAKOA. Sources of support is measured based on the participants' views and responses. The interview protocol is adapted from 'Measuring service quality in higher education' by Firdaus Abdullah (2006).

### 1.8 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in Figure 1.1 is based on the literature reviews and shows the key concepts of this study in relation to indigenous students' adaptation at the universities. The relationships between independent variables and dependent variable were also grounded in literature reviews and supported by two major theories; Transition Theory and Acculturation Theory.
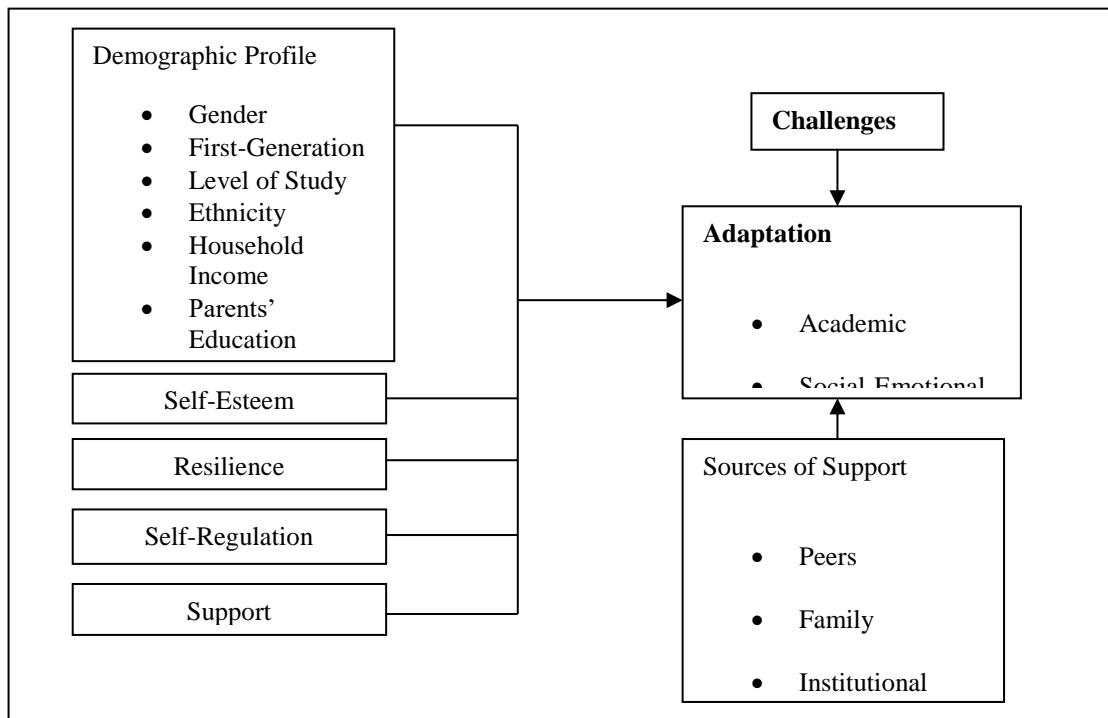
*Figure 1.1*      Conceptual Framework (Adapted from Schlossberg, 1981)

Demographic profile, self-esteem, resilience, self-regulation and support were identified as independent variables that could influence adaptation (Noraini, 2010). Dependent variable refers to the manipulated variable (Noraini, 2010) and in this study; it refers to indigenous students' adaptation at the universities. Adaptation was divided into two dimensions; academic adaptation and socio-emotional adaptation. Indigenous students may have different levels of adaptation and it may differ according to demographic profile (Schlossberg, 1981).

It is hypothesized that personal psychological factors namely self-esteem, resilience and self-regulation could influence indigenous students' adaptation in higher education (Schlossberg, 1981). Environmental factor such as support received by the indigenous students during the transition into higher education may also help them to adapt to university life.

## 1.9    Summary

Chapter one focuses on the background of the research, research objectives and discussion of the problem statement. The problem statement was discussed thoroughly as the main structure of this research. Indigenous students inadequately prepared for non-academic challenges can experience shock in sense of culture. Deficient in diversity in the student populace, faculty, personnel and set of courses often limit the nature and quality of indigenous students' interactions within and away of the classroom, intimidating their academic achievement and social experience. The indigenous also need to have commitment to educational goals in the institution. The stronger the educational purpose and institutional dedication, the more likely the student will adapt and to graduate (Mohd. Asri, 2014). Chapter two will be attempting to synthesize on the support from the literature review.

# CHAPTER 2

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1    Introduction

The literature review looks into several dominant themes that emerge from the research questions, such as adaptation of indigenous students at the universities, along with their self-esteem, resilience, self-regulation, and attachment displayed by these indigenous students to the institution. This part also discussed the participation on indigenous students in other countries as well as their challenges as being the minority in higher education. There are also factors that influence indigenous students' adaptation at the higher education and how the factors change their overall wellbeing as university students.

## 2.2    The Indigenous Population in Malaysia

The *Orang Asli* is the indigenous peoples of Peninsular Malaysia. They numbered 133,389, representing a mere 0.6% of the national population. According to Mohd. Asri (2012), anthropologists and government officials have conventionally regarded the indigenous as consisting of three main groups, comprising a number of distinct sub-groups: Negrito (Semang), Senoi and Proto-Malay.

'Original people' or 'first people' are other names for *Orang Asli* in Malay (JAKOA, 2014). The indigenous of Peninsular Malaysia is made up of 18 subgroups categorized under the (1) Negrito, (2) Senoi and (3) Proto-Malay (Mohd. Asri, 2012). They numbered only 0.6% of the whole Malaysian population. Senoi is the largest subgroups comprising about 55% of the total population of indigenous people, followed by the Proto Malays and the Negritos at 42% and 3% respectively.
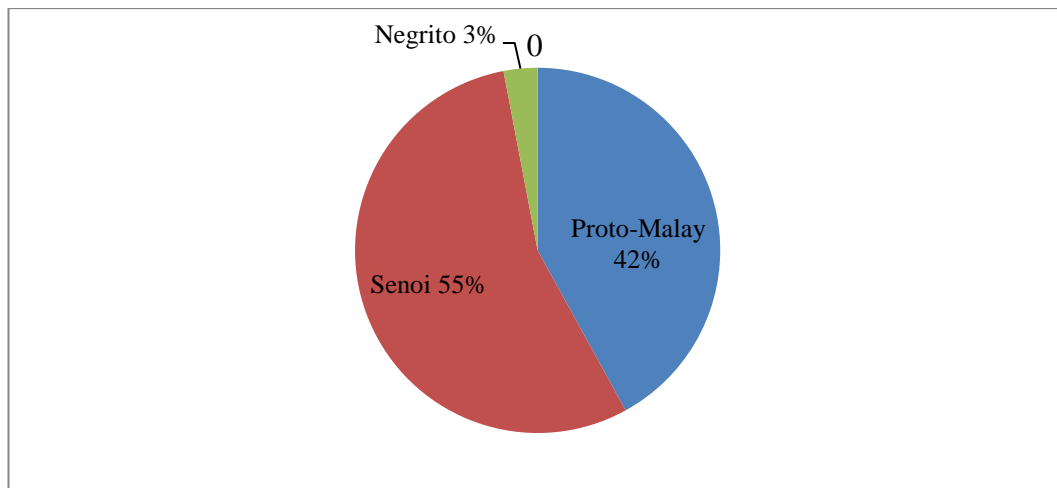
*Figure 2.1:* The Population of Indigenous by Subgroups (JAKOA, 2015)

Figure 2.1 is the population of indigenous according to their group. Senoi has the highest population that cover 55% of all three groups. Proto- Malay states the second largest group that cover 42%. Negrito (Semang) group carried the least among the three groups that comprises 3% (JAKOA, 2015).

JAKOA (formerly known as the Department of Orang Asli Affairs or JHEOA) stated in the Annual Report of the Department of Orang Asli Development or in 2008: there were about 113,389 indigenous living mainly in Pahang and Perak (JAKOA, 2015). Seventy six point nine percent of the indigenous population remains under the poverty line. About 35.2% is categorized as living in very poverty compared to 1.4% for national level (Rozita, Prema & Muhamad Fadzil, 2010). As to conclude the population of indigenous people in West Malaysia is 11.7 % as in the Census 2010. The indigenous people fall under other *Bumiputra* in the Figure 2.2:
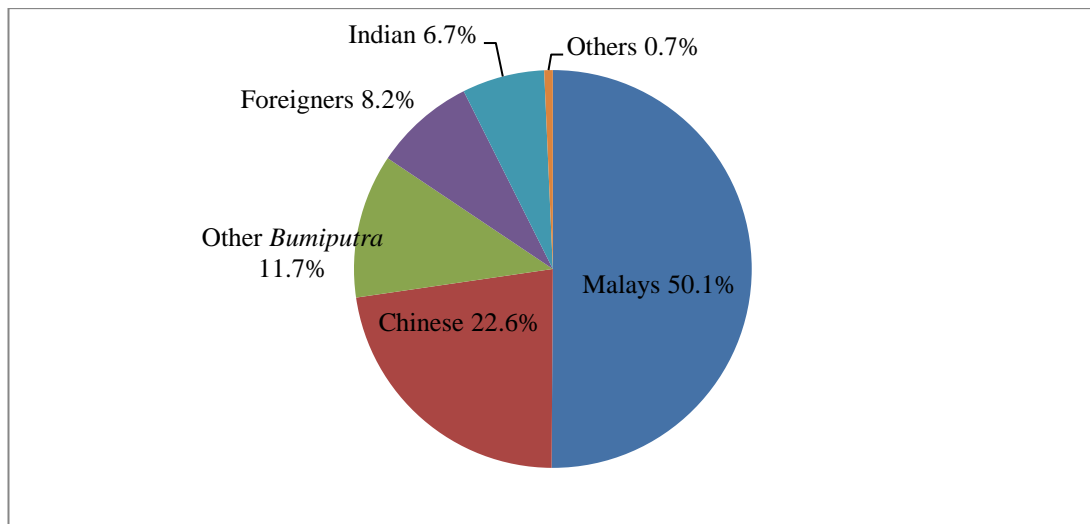
*Figure 2.2:* The Distribution of Population by Race (The Department of Statistics, 2010)

Under the New Economic Policy (NEP) (1971-1990), education was one of the strategies used to attain the objectives by increasing admission to all levels of education mostly for Bumiputera students including indigenous people of Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak, who were educationally underprivileged, compared to other ethnic groups (Government Transformation Program, 2010). The policy meant at generating more prospects for higher education throughout ethnic quotas in admittance policy and offering scholarships along with loans for them to study both at local and universities overseas (Ahmed, 2008).

Figure 2.3 shows the distribution of the indigenous according to their sub ethnic group in Peninsular Malaysia (JAKOA, 2015). The indigenous people of Malaysia are further divided into 18 subgroups. Negrito or also known as Semang has six groups known as Kintak, Mendriq, Kensui, Batak, Jahai and Lanoh. Senoi is divided into Temiar, Jahut, Samoq Beri, Semai, Che'Wong and Mahmeri. Finally, Proto-Malay or known as Aboriginal Malay is divided into Temuan, Kanaq, Semelai, Seletar, Orang Laut and Jakun.
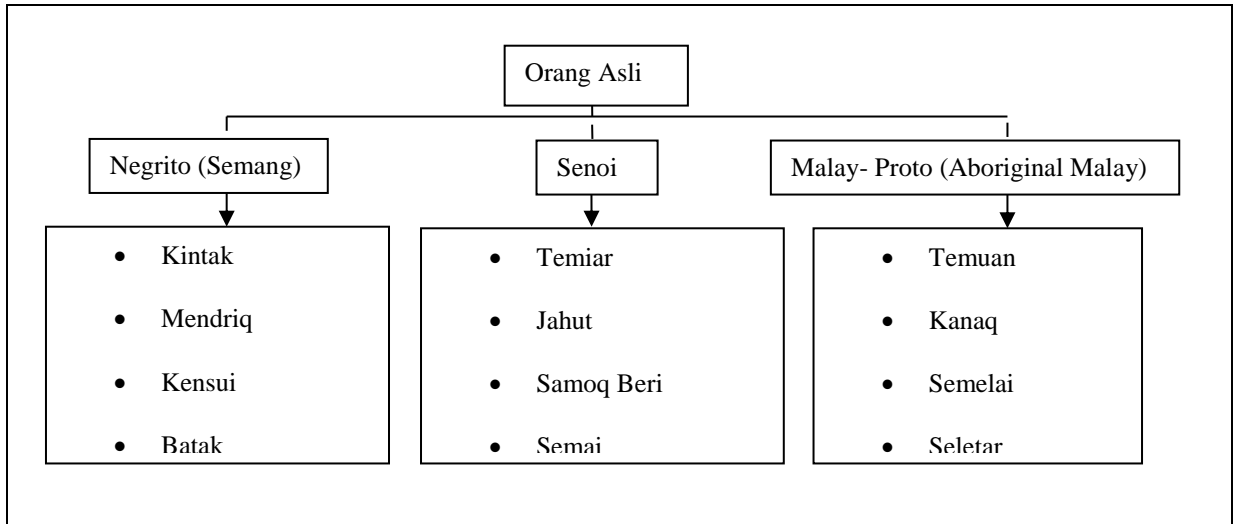
*Figure 2.3:* Indigenous According to their in Peninsular Malaysia Group (JAKOA, 2015)

Figure 2.4 shows the indigenous population according to their groups and subgroups in Peninsular Malaysia (SUHAKAM, 2010).



*Figure 2.4:* The Location of the Indigenous Group in Peninsular Malaysia (Mohd. Asri, 2012).