

*Article*

## **Parents' Challenges Against The Intention of The Implementation of The 12-Year Compulsory Education Policy in Malaysia**

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**Abstract:** Compulsory education policies supported by the law have been implemented throughout the world for centuries, including in Malaysia. However, the implementation of the law is only limited to 6 years of compulsory education at the primary level as opposed to at the international level, which reaches a period of 8 to 12 years of compulsory schooling. Therefore, this study was conducted to explore the challenges faced by parents if Malaysia intends to implement compulsory education in Malaysia within a period of 12 years, starting from one year in preschool until the end of schooling at the secondary level. This study was conducted using a qualitative approach involving several participants selected through purposive sampling. The exploration results through open-ended questions, focus group discussions, and researcher notes were analysed using a thematic analysis, which then received expert consensus at an excellent level with a Cohen Kappa index value exceeding 0.81. The study discovered four themes of challenges faced by parents in implementing the 12-year compulsory education policy in Malaysia, namely parents' financial issues, school-related issues that are a challenge for parents, parents' difficulty in managing their children, and issues faced by children, all of which have resulted in challenges to parents. In this vein, these challenges should be emphasized because parents are the main implementers of the compulsory education policy, which also determines the success of the intended 12-year compulsory education policy.

**Keywords:** Challenge; compulsory education; parent; policy; qualitative; school

### **Introduction**

Compulsory education has been implemented throughout the world for centuries with the support of legal provisions in each country and the duration of its implementation in a country depends on the determination of the country's legal provisions. The average duration of compulsory education is enforced at the international level within a period of 8 to 12 years of compulsory schooling (Cabus & De Witte, 2011; Chakrabarti, 2014; Fisher, 2017; Gulesci et al., 2019; Raimondi & Vergolini, 2019; Reid & Watson, 2016; Yadav, 2012). Likewise, Malaysia also implements compulsory education through the legal provisions of the Education Act 1996 [Act 550] under subsection 29A, which came into force on 1 January 2003.

However, the implementation of the compulsory education law in Malaysia is only limited to the primary level, particularly for a period of 6 years of schooling, while preschool and secondary levels are not yet compulsory. However, it has become the practice of most parents in Malaysia to send their children to school starting from preschool to secondary levels. As such, the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) is making every effort to implement various initiatives to support these practices, and this includes making

secondary schooling compulsory through the 1<sup>st</sup> Shift, Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Additionally, this is driven by the success of compulsory primary education, which has been implemented for over a decade, and has led to an increase in primary-level enrolment year after year until a universal enrolment rate of 91.38 percent was finally reached in 2020 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013, 2020).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that this upward trend in enrolment is not observed in preschool and secondary school settings, despite the prevailing custom among parents to enrol their children in schools at both of these educational stages. In 2020, it was found that 13.2% of children aged 6 years were not registered in any MOE preschool or private kindergarten registered with the MOE or in any kindergarten under the supervision of other ministries (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2020). However, the extent of whether they have been registered in any other preschool education institution or have not attended school at all is not known. Enrolment at the secondary level is still lagging, particularly within the range of 88% to 89% every year, with a decreasing rate of students transitioning from the primary to secondary levels (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2020). This situation may become more worrisome if children at that age are not enrolled in the secondary school system. Have they entered the workforce? If such is the case, then this is a threat to the development of the country because it can result in an increase in child labour in the long run, an increase in the labour force compared to skilled workers, an increase in the poverty gap, an increase in social problems, and an increase in underage marriage (Cabus & De Witte, 2011; DeCicca & Krashinsky, 2020; Sufean Hussin, 2009).

Many studies at the international level have proven that the extension of the compulsory education period successfully addresses the negative issues that occur due to children not attending school, in addition to increasing student enrolment rates (Cabus & De Witte, 2011; Shi, 2016; Xiao et al., 2017). Compared to the implementation of compulsory education at the international level, the 6-year compulsory education period in Malaysia is very limited. Hence, there is no law that can keep children longer in the school system. The existing practices of parents are also unable to encourage some parents who lack the awareness to send their children to school. This has become a popular issue that is often debated at the national level (Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, 2018; Parliament of Malaysia, 2018, 2019).

However, if compulsory education is extended for a longer period, including at pre-school and secondary levels, then parents are obliged to register their children in school and ensure their children's attendance throughout the compulsory schooling period as part of the law. If parents fail to comply with the law, then appropriate legal action can be taken against them. The question is, if all schooling levels that reach 12 years of schooling starting from pre-school at the age of 6 to secondary at the age of 17 are made compulsory, can parents commit to it? Are parents still faced with various challenges to send their children to school?

In view of these questions, it is, therefore, important to explore the challenges faced by parents before the extension of this high-impact policy is implemented. This is because the commitment and concern of parents are very important to ensure the success of this policy in order to prevent children from dropping out of education (Chakrabarti, 2014; Kamoo, 2013; Subra et al., 2019). In this regard, the researcher suggests that a comprehensive study be conducted to explore the challenges faced by parents in an effort to prepare for the implementation of the 12-year compulsory education policy in Malaysia.

## Literature Review

Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights officially recognized education as a human right in 1948, discussions on the subject have frequently been triggered in various global human rights treaties, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization Convention (UNESCO). Hence, education is becoming a priority in many countries, and it has been enacted in law. One of them is the provision of compulsory education. Internationally, compulsory education laws have begun to be implemented, with the duration determined by the stipulations of the individual countries' laws.

The United States is a pioneer of the compulsory education law that has been implemented in stages (Katz, 1976), with the duration of compulsory education varying by state from 8 to 12 years (Fisher, 2017) due to the decentralized implementation of education in that country. The Netherlands and Germany ratified

the Minimum Age Convention of 1976 and agreed to implement compulsory education for 9 years with a minimum age of up to 15 years, while Belgium implemented compulsory education up to the age of 15 in 1988, bringing the period of compulsory education to nine years (Cabus & De Witte, 2011). Italy similarly extended obligatory schooling from eight to nine years in 1999 (Raimondi & Vergolini, 2019).

In addition, compulsory education in Finland was extended from the age of 16 to 18 with effect from August 2021. Compulsory education in Finland begins at the stage of comprehensive education (basic education) from year 1 to 9 schools involving all children between the ages of 7 and 17 (overall age group) and ends when the student achieves the age of 18 or completes their upper secondary education (general upper secondary qualification or vocational qualification) (Ministry of Education and Culture Finland, 2020).

For countries in the Middle East, such as Turkey, the reform of the compulsory education law was implemented in 1997 by extending the educational requirement from five to eight years (Gulesci et al., 2019). This re-reform of the compulsory education policy has had a significant impact on the increase in enrolment in Turkey (Kirdar et al., 2014).

In Asian countries such as China, compulsory education legislation has been in effect since 1986 to ensure children's right to an education. China's compulsory education law requires children over the age of six to enroll in school within nine years (Chakrabarti, 2014). Other Asian countries such as India are implementing compulsory education through the laws of The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE), which was passed in 2009, which provides that free compulsory education be given to children between the ages of 6 and 14 and implemented effective in 2010 (Yadav, 2012). Malaysia, on the other hand, has had compulsory education rules in place since 2003 at the primary level for six years.

Universally, compulsory education has been established regardless of a nation's economic standing, whether it be developed, developing, or impoverished. In general, the duration of compulsory education in most nations spans between eight to nine years. The implementation of compulsory education laws serves to guarantee the accomplishment of a child's right to education.

## Methodology

This study was carried out using a qualitative approach that involved open-ended questions (OEQ) in the questionnaire and through focus group discussions (FGD). Focus group discussions are suitable for discussing non-sensitive topics (Milena et al., 2008), and the findings from the discussion can support those from the open-ended questions. Qualitative data were collected online through open-ended questions using Google Forms, while focus group discussions were conducted using Google Meet. The researcher also took formal notes on the challenges faced by parents. The open-ended questions in the questionnaire and the questions for focus group discussions in this study reached expert consensus using the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) by meeting all three conditions of FDM, namely the threshold value  $\leq 0.2$  (Chang et al., 2000), expert consensus percentage  $\geq 75\%$  (Chu & Hwang, 2008; Murry & Hammons, 1995), and the fuzzy score average value ( $A$ ),  $\alpha\text{-cut} > 0.5$  (Bodjanova, 2006; Tang & Wu, 2010); besides, their applicability in measuring the challenges faced by parents has also been validated.

This study involves parents in government primary schools who came from various states, socioeconomic statuses, and locations. A total of 704 participants were involved to answer the open-ended questions in the questionnaire, while 7 participants were involved in the focus group discussions. In addition, the selection of the research participants was conducted using purposive sampling. This sampling is typically used to ensure that the selected individuals know about the topic being studied (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

For the purpose of analysing qualitative data to explore the challenges faced by parents regarding the implementation of the 12-year compulsory education policy, the researcher used thematic analysis through Atlas.ti Version 22 software. Through this method, the researcher was able to detect the repetition of statements (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005) and subsequently produce strong and indisputable findings (Iksan & Saper, 2016; Iksan et al., 2016). The researcher selected the thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) to analyse data because the ability and flexibility of the analysis allow the researcher to identify patterns and themes from the data obtained without relying on theory and epistemology.

Next, the qualitative data were then verified through the triangulation method against various data sources from open questions, transcripts of focus group discussions, and document analysis of the researcher's

formal notes. This method of triangulation can increase the validity and reliability of qualitative data (Mathison, 1988; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Next, the researcher relied on three experts to validate the findings of the thematic analysis based on the reliability value of the Cohen Kappa index. The qualitative analysis findings received expert consensus at a very good level with a Cohen Kappa index value exceeding 0.81, which is 0.96 (Landis & Koch, 1977).

**The Findings**

Thematic analysis was conducted on data sets from the open-ended questions, group discussions, and the researcher's formal notes. Based on the thematic analysis results, four themes related to the challenges faced by parents have been identified in the implementation of the 12-year compulsory education policy in Malaysia. The four themes were formed from categories and codes developed based on the frequency of data repetition obtained from parents' answers. The details of each of the challenge themes are explained in the next section.

**Theme 1: Financial Issues Faced by Parents**

In implementing the policy, parents faced two financial issues that consist of two categories, namely the burden of various fees or payments and financial constraints in providing school needs. Figure 1 shows the details of each financial issue under each category.

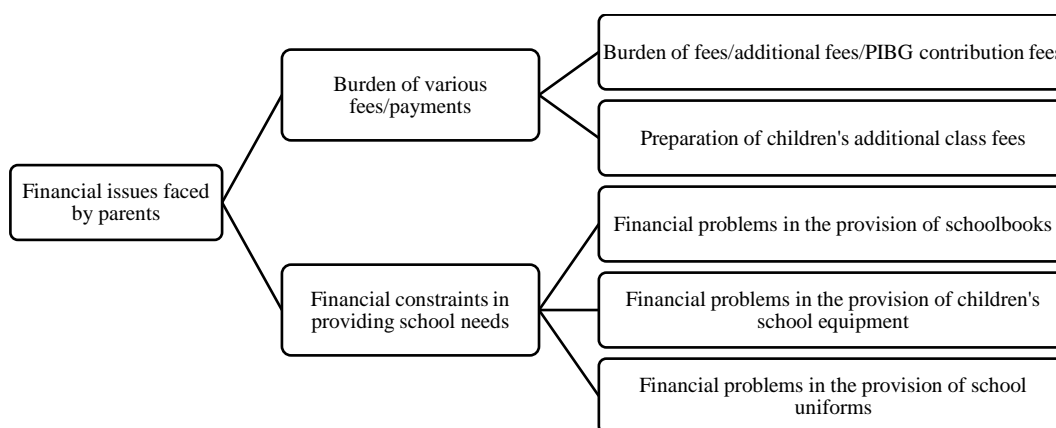


Figure 1. Theme 1: Financial issues faced by parents

Based on the evidence, parents in Malaysia were found to be facing financial issues due to the burden of various fees and payments set by the school such as preschool fees, other additional fees, and Parents-Teachers Association (PIBG) contribution fees. The empirical evidence pertaining to that subject is shown below.

*“The PIBG fees of certain schools are expensive for each student.”* (Informant 597/OEQ)

*“The cost of children’s needs who are (staying) in the dormitory and the various fees set by the school.”* (Informant 479/OEQ)

In addition, parents were also burdened with the need to pay additional class fees, especially for children who were in exam classes. Parents had to provide additional classes so that their children were better prepared for the upcoming exams, in addition to ensuring that the children could compete to obtain excellent results in the exams to further their studies later.

*“The learning cost for additional classes to ensure that children acquire enough knowledge to achieve their desire to further studies at universities.”* (Informant 629/OEQ)

*“I had to pay for extra tuition to support my child—you know—because he/she is sitting for SPM next year. My child is (now in) Form 5.”* (Informant 3/FGD)

Furthermore, parents encountered financial challenges in meeting the educational requirements of their children, including the provision of schoolbooks, school supplies such as stationery for both academic and extracurricular activities, and school uniforms. Hence, the prevailing financial challenges posed significant obstacles for parents in fulfilling their children's educational requirements, particularly for those who assume the financial responsibility of multiple children's schooling expenses. The empirical evidence pertaining to that subject is shown below.

*“The challenge is having to buy new notebooks every year even though the notebooks from the previous year are still mostly blank and unused. Perhaps the education department can give flexibility for students to continue or use notebooks that are still blank when the new year comes. This can prevent wastage.”* (Informant 567/OEQ)

*“The challenge is to provide the necessary school supplies in line with the textbook syllabus. For example, (when) students need to make a robot, they are asked to prepare the equipment they want to use such as boxes, bulbs, and others. For low-income families, it is rather burdensome to provide the equipment.”* (Informant 140/OEQ)

*“The cost of school uniform provision is increasing over time; if more than two children are schooling, then it can be rather burdensome.”* (Informant 661/OEQ)

### Theme 2: School-Related Issues That Are a Challenge for Parents

In addition to financial issues, parents also faced challenging school-related issues such as issues related to the physical aspects of the school, school location, and the management of school operations. The details of each category of school-related issues are shown in Figure 2.

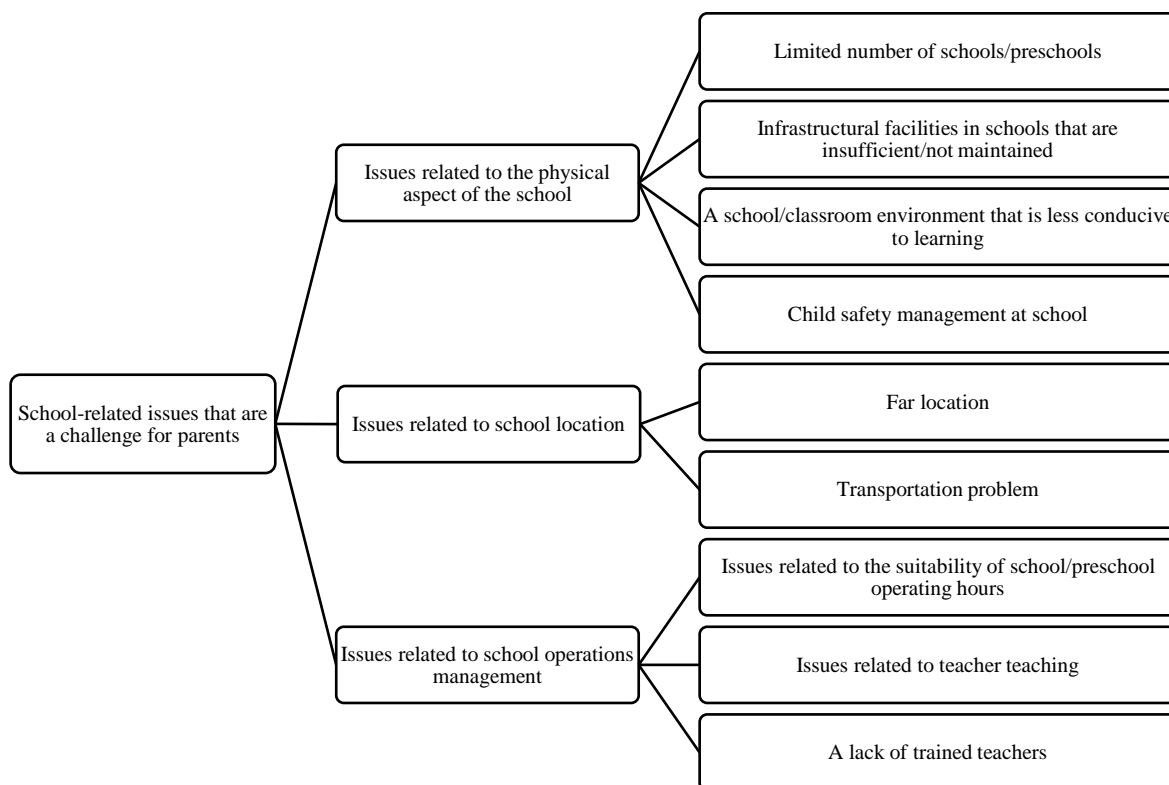


Figure 2. Theme 2: School-related issues that are a challenge for parents

Among the school-related issues that are a challenge for parents include physical aspects such as a limited number of schools or preschools, which made it difficult for parents to send their children to a government preschool that does not cost a lot of money. In addition, the scarcity of secondary schools led parents to enrol their children there even though the high student enrolment created a less conducive learning environment. Furthermore, there was a lack of school infrastructure such as toilets and classrooms that were not well-maintained, including the management of children's safety, especially for schools located in front of busy main roads and in densely populated areas. The empirical findings related to the aforementioned topic is shown below.

*“The preschools provided are not enough. If there is (one), it is limited to families with an income of RM2 thousand and below, and if the family is self-employed, it is quite difficult for children to attend preschool.”* (Informant 650/OEQ)

*“Population density in urban areas is not in line with the number of secondary schools available.”* (Informant 659/OEQ)

*“Facilities in national schools such as toilets are not well-maintained, and children (therefore) have to wait until they get home.”* (Informant 524/OEQ)

*“Chairs in the canteen must be added. Children always complain about having to eat late and not having time to finish the food because there is no empty seat.”* (Informant 524/OEQ)

*“The stuffy classroom conditions make the students uncomfortable. Sometimes the fan is broken.”* (Informant 524/OEQ)

*“... here, in Selangor—from my observation—one of the challenges in primary school is that there are too many students in one class ...”* (Informant 1/FGD)

*“There is no security guarantee. The school (location) is close to the main road. The security guards admitted that they were only monitoring people going in and out at the school gate, not monitoring students who have not been fetched by their parents. While waiting to enter school and return from school, most of the students are outside the school area, which is very dangerous for them; they (also) play outside the area, which is likewise dangerous because it is close to the main road downhill.”* (Informant 597/OEQ)

Moreover, the school location was also a challenge for parents. Specifically, the remote location of the school made it difficult for parents to send their children and they had to travel long distances in traffic jams to ensure that their children go to school before going to work. In fact, some parents had to find special transport such as vans or school buses for their children, and some parents even faced transport problems because they were unable to provide transport for their children to go to school, as it requires relatively high expenses. The empirical findings relevant to the aforementioned topic is shown below.

*“The nearest school is still under construction after being abandoned for several years; (the children) had to go to the closest school, (about) 20km from home.”* (Informant 66/OEQ)

*“The school is quite far from home, so it is quite critical, especially if both parents are working.” This becomes a problem.”* (Informant 7/FGD)

*“The main challenge for me is providing transportation—vehicles—for children to go to school. Since we both (husband and wife) are working even though the children's school is quite close to a residential area, transportation problems are one of the biggest factors that we need to manage for our children.”* (Informant 1/FGD)

*“I also have transportation problems. I used to send and fetch my children from school, but now (no longer... I have asked others to help fetch my children. If we ask for help from relatives, perhaps it is not as costly, but it is still hundreds (amount).”* (Informant 5/FGD)

Additionally, parents also faced challenges related to the management of school operations such as the suitability of school or preschool operating hours. For instance, the non-uniformity of school operating hours puts pressure on parents to manage their children's schooling, especially parents who have more than one child and children who attend different schools. Then, parents were also forced to use other support services such as nurseries and transport rentals to manage their children's schooling. As a result, this indirectly increases the cost of children's schooling, which ultimately exposes parents to financial problems. The empirical evidence pertaining to that subject is shown below.

*“School time constraints (religious and national schools). Perhaps the education department can reduce the school hours (2 pm-6 pm) (7.30 am-12 pm).”* (Informant 168/OEQ)

*“We are both working parents. My child is in Primary 1, no, Primary 2. The school hours start at noon. So, the issue with the afternoon school session is if we could opt for just one session, one school. One session will do but managing the children... Meaning if we go to work, we (would) send the children to school, but since one of them is in high school, we have to transit—to manage our child.”* (Informant 3/FGD)

Furthermore, parents opined that they faced certain challenges in ensuring that their children go to school due to teacher-related issues such as teaching aspects and the lack of trained teachers. According to parents, as a result of this challenge, learning was not taught by trained teachers, and this indirectly reduces their child's interest and motivation to go to school. The empirical findings related to the aforementioned topic is shown below.

*“Educators (teachers) should be those who are really passionate about teaching.”* (Informant 37/OEQ)

*“When the teacher is teaching (my child) and he/she raises his/her hand, the teacher ignores him/her, and this sometimes reduces (the child’s) motivation. Such an atmosphere makes going to school—you know—unenjoyable.”* (Informant 3/FGD)

*“A lack of trained teachers.”* (Informant 22/OEQ)

*“The teacher’s way of teaching lacks creativity such that students feel lazy to go to school.”* (Informant 597/OEQ)

### Theme 3: Issues of Difficulty for Parents in Managing Children

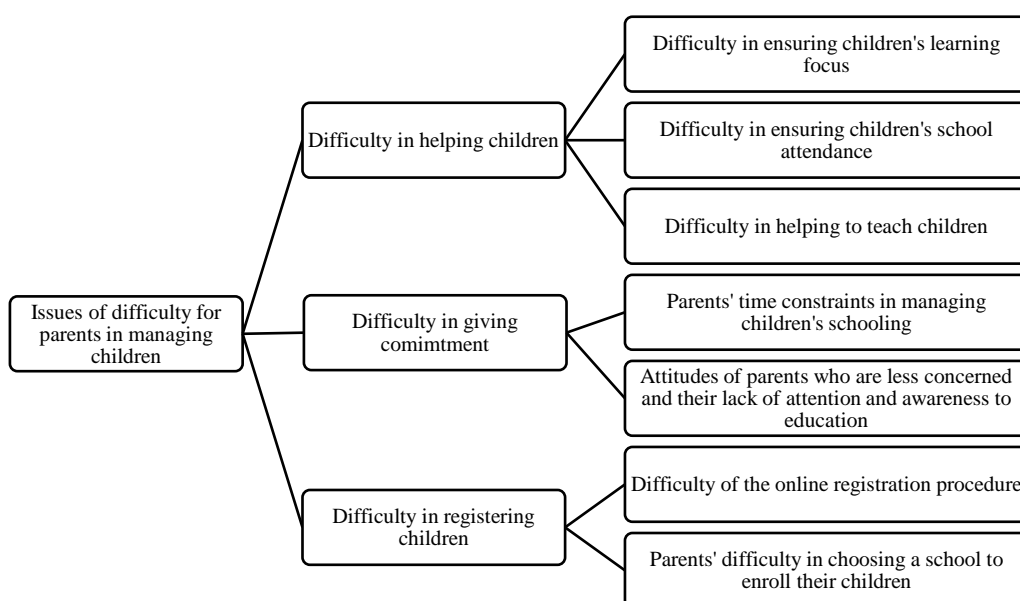


Figure 3. Theme 3: Issues of difficulty for parents in managing children

The next challenge faced by parents in ensuring their children's schooling for 12 years is related to the issues of parents' difficulty in managing their children. Figure 3 depicts the details of each category related to the above-mentioned issues. For this theme, parents faced difficulties in facilitating children learning. They found it difficult to ensure children focus on learning, to ensure children's attendance at school during the school period, and to help children at home with their learning. The empirical findings related to the aforementioned topic is shown below.

*“The challenge is to ensure that the children continue to strive to excel.”* (Informant 603/OEQ)

*“Challenges in ensuring that children attend school every day and have full attendance.”*  
(Informant 575/OEQ)

*“Parents’ understanding levels and children’s learning levels today are not the same; parents face difficulties in guiding children in (their) schoolwork.”* (Informant 161/OEQ)

*“I am not smart myself, sometimes I cannot even teach my child.”* (Informant 2/FGD)

Moreover, parents faced difficulties in committing to their children's schooling due to time constraints to manage it, and some parents also had a less caring attitude and less awareness of their children's education. As a result, parents were not able to fully commit to their children's schooling. The empirical evidence pertaining to the preceding subject is presented below.

*“Parents who work in shifts find it difficult to monitor children.”* (Informant 56/OEQ)

*“In rural areas, it is challenging to increase public understanding of the value of education.”* (Informant 637/OEQ)

Additionally, children's school registration matters also caused difficulties for parents, including online registration and school selection. Parents, especially those in rural areas or those who are less skilled in the use of information technology, found it difficult to register their children to school because they do not have access to the internet or do not know how to perform an online registration. Meanwhile, in terms of school selection, parents found it difficult to choose the right school for their children, especially based on the school's excellent academic performance due to the non-uniformity or difference in the performance of academic excellence in certain schools. Parents indeed want the best school for their children; however, sometimes the school happens to be located outside the area where they live, and this causes the school registration to become complicated and difficult to fulfil according to the student placement policies that have been set by the Ministry of Education (MOE) Malaysia. The empirical findings related to the aforementioned topic is shown below.

*“The challenge of doing online registration.”* (Informant 498/OEQ)

*“There are other school-related issues, which standards are not the same in terms of delivery, books, the learning environment (among others). This becomes—you know—pressure to parents. When sending children to school (for example), it (the school) is neither a selected one nor (a school) in the city.”* (Informant 3/FGD)

*“As a parent myself, I also feel that sense of—you know—wanting children to enrol in a good school, like all parents do.”* (Informant 1/FGD)

#### Theme 4: Issues Faced by Children That Are a Challenge for Parents

Finally, the findings regarding the challenges faced by parents showed several issues faced by children, which contributed to the challenges faced by parents in managing their children's schooling. The details of children-related issues are shown in Figure 4.



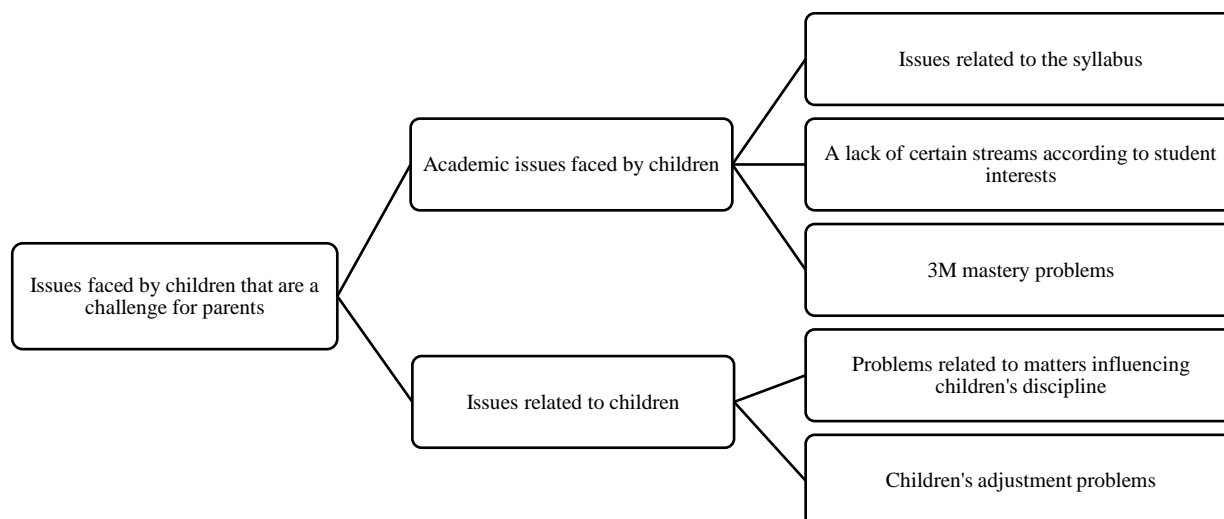


Figure 4. Theme 4: Issues faced by children that are a challenge for parents

The issues faced by children contributed to parents' difficulty in managing children's schooling. One of the issues faced by children is related to academic aspects, such as the increasingly challenging syllabus that children must study, making it a concern among parents. The empirical evidence pertaining to that subject is shown below.

*"The syllabus is too heavy compared to the child's grade."* (Informant 138/OEQ)

*"The education syllabus is so high that it seems as if they (policymakers) forget to step on their own land. If even the parents feel that the level of education provided is too difficult, let alone the children."* (Informant 520/OEQ)

In addition, there was also the issue of a lack of streams that children can choose according to their interests, especially at the upper secondary level. Most of the streams offered in schools are rather limited and have been set in a package, thus limiting the selection of streams according to the interests of the children. The empirical findings related to the aforementioned topic is shown below.

*"The streams offered in schools vary. Students do not have many options."* (Informant 119/OEQ)

*"Obviously only certain schools have them (some streams); not many schools are offering the same, so it becomes a constraint to choose a (particular) subject. Vocational subjects (for example), some are not suitable, and some are not interesting (to children)."* (Informant 3/FGD)

Another problem related to the academic aspect of children that parents were concerned about includes the mastery of reading, writing, and arithmetic (3M) skills, especially at the preschool and primary school levels. This is indeed a challenge for parents since the mastery of 3M is important for children's preparation to face the increasingly difficult syllabus. The empirical evidence pertaining to that subject is shown below.

*"The challenge of mastering reading, writing, and arithmetic skills for primary school entrance preparation."* (Informant 144/OEQ)

*"Students must master the 3M skills, namely reading, writing, and arithmetic."* (Informant 511/OEQ)

Finally, the issues faced by parents were also related to their own children such as self-adjustment and issues of influence on children's discipline. Consequently, parental apprehensions regarding matters pertaining to children have inadvertently posed a challenge for them in terms of facilitating their children's attendance at school. The empirical evidence for the preceding topic is presented below.

*“Children’s tendency to get along with problematic friends.”* (Informant 164/OEQ)

*“Peer influence that affects children's behavior; children are easily exposed to social problems, making it quite difficult for working parents to control children’s behavior.”* (Informant 497/OEQ)

*“Dealing with teenagers who are now more open and perhaps are too exposed to social media, which sometimes come with negative elements.”* (Informant 686/OEQ)

*“Challenges in helping children to adapt to the school environment.”* (Informant 582/OEQ)

*“Children crying about going to school.”* (Informant 91/OEQ)

## **Discussion**

In order to accomplish the goal of implementing the 12-year compulsory education policy in Malaysia, this study revealed that the average parent in Malaysia faces four major challenges in order to be prepared for the desired change in the policy. The challenges encountered by these parents can impede the implementation of compulsory education policies in Malaysia if they are not adequately addressed or assisted, particularly regarding their financial issues. This situation is particularly worrisome for parents with low or irregular incomes, as it will make it difficult for them to assure their child's continued education. A study conducted by Abdul Rashid and Samat (2018) found that the reason for the low level of education among rural communities is due to the financial factors they face. This is particularly troubling because this factor can hinder the educational development of their children, particularly those living in rural areas. If this financial issue persists, it is anticipated that it will impede the future development of their generation's education, since the sociocultural environment of a child's community can influence his educational development (Vygotsky, 1978).

At the same time, the situation will be more difficult, if the financial challenges faced by them are mixed with the issue of sending a child to school due to the parents themselves such as being less caring, less commitment and attention as well as lack of awareness of the importance of education due to the history of a background that is less educational and does not care about education. This ultimately contributed to their child's mastery of learning (Jamian, 2011). Arshat and Baharudin (2011) in her study support the idea that the level of education and background of parents greatly influence the development of their child's education. Therefore, if the issue of parents who do not care about children's education is not given constant attention, it is feared that it will affect their involvement in the educational development of their children which will ultimately cause their future generations to remain in the same social class and unable to get out of the cocoon of poverty as education is a very effective element of social mobility (Prais, 1955).

Furthermore, the challenges experienced by parents due to school-related issues such as lack of schools, lack of infrastructure for this learning and lack of teachers are also important aspects to be emphasized towards further compulsory education. If it is not overcome, it is feared that it will affect the number of pupils who are not interested in school, and it will be difficult to get the cooperation of parents to ensure that children attend school. This is because failure to provide adequate school facilities and infrastructure to maintain an optimal learning environment could affect other initiatives in the development of education policy (Young et al., 2003).

In addition, the lack of teachers is also able to hamper the teaching and learning process of pupils which in turn is a challenge for parents as it requires them to help teach their children about learning that is poorly understood or unable to focus, whereas not all parents have a high level of education and can help teach their children at home. These weaknesses ultimately contribute to the challenge for school quality improvement (Taahyadin, 2020).

Additionally, parents are confronted with challenges pertaining to the academic obstacles their child encounters, such as the struggle to adhere to the present syllabus, which is perceived as excessively demanding and beyond their educational proficiency. Meanwhile, certain groups of their offspring who are currently enrolled in primary education continue to encounter challenges in achieving mastery of the 3M matter. The potential impact of parental disappointment regarding their child's extensive syllabus and level of mastery

should not be disregarded, as it has the potential to influence the students' inclination and ability to engage in the learning process (Jamian, 2011).

Consequently, parents may encounter the difficulty of their children lacking enthusiasm for attending school. Hence, it is imperative for policymakers to give due consideration to the results of the study that examined the obstacles encountered by parents in preparing for the implementation of the 12-year compulsory education policy. The challenges faced by parents have the potential to hinder their ability to fulfil the policy's objective of ensuring their child's regular attendance throughout the mandated period of compulsory education.

## Conclusion

This study has explained the comprehensive findings on the challenges faced by parents regarding the implementation of the 12-year compulsory education policy. The challenges include parents' financial aspects, school-related issues, parents' difficulties in managing children, and issues faced by their children. These challenges are important to emphasize and consider prior to the implementation of this policy in Malaysia. This is because parents are the owners of the children's absolute rights who are also the main policy implementers in ensuring the success of the 12-year compulsory education policy if it is to be implemented in the future. Hence, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges encountered by parents, future research endeavours may be undertaken to comprehensively investigate each facet of the challenges identified in this study. Research can be undertaken involving secondary carers, as the study exclusively concentrates on parents of primary school children. Further investigations can be conducted to delve into the intricacies of the challenges faced by different demographic groups in various locations. It is important to note that the present study is limited to exploring the challenges associated with the implementation of the 12-year compulsory education policy in a general sense.

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**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The researchers declare they do not have any conflicts of interest.

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