

Challenges Faced by the Asnaf Community in Understanding the Importance of Education in Chemor, Perak

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.930000010>

Received: 10 December 2025; Accepted: 16 December 2025; Published: 24 December 2025

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the challenges faced by the *asnaf* community in Chemor, Perak in understanding the importance of education, as well as the factors that influence their level of awareness regarding educational opportunities. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, data was collected through semi-structured interviews involving two teachers and five students, complemented by classroom observations to gain deeper insights into the challenges encountered and potential solutions. The findings reveal that the primary challenges include economic constraints that limit access to learning materials and basic educational resources, low educational awareness due to limited parental educational background, and environmental factors that do not place emphasis on academic achievement. Additionally, low self-motivation, insufficient moral support, and limited exposure to educational opportunities were identified as significant barriers. This study proposes several strategic interventions, including strengthening educational awareness programmes through schools and educational agencies, expanding financial aid initiatives, and implementing counselling and motivational sessions to cultivate greater interest in education among the *asnaf* community. The outcomes of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for local authorities, educational institutions, and non-governmental organisations in formulating more effective strategies to enhance educational awareness and participation among the *asnaf* community.

Keywords: Challenges, Asnaf Community, Awareness, Education

INTRODUCTION

The term *asnaf* refers to groups of individuals who are eligible to receive zakat (almsgiving) as stipulated by Islamic law. These groups comprise eight main categories: the fakir (destitute), miskin (poor), amil (zakat administrators), mualaf (new converts to Islam), riqab (those seeking freedom from bondage), gharimin (debtors), fisabilillah (those striving in the cause of Allah), and ibnu sabil (wayfarers). Among these categories, the fakir and miskin represent the most vulnerable groups in need of continuous assistance to meet their basic needs. The fakir refers to those who have no source of income, whereas the miskin refers to individuals who earn an income but insufficient to cover essential living expenses (Bahri & Arif, 2020). The existence of these *asnaf* groups calls for the sustained attention of society and relevant institutions to provide ongoing support—particularly through education, which plays a pivotal role in breaking the cycle of poverty and fostering a more promising future for them (Sandie & Abdillah, 2024).

Education serves as a key mechanism for improving the socio-economic status of the *asnaf* community, enabling them to acquire essential knowledge and skills that can lead to better employment opportunities and improved living standards. Various stakeholders, including state religious authorities, NGOs, and educational institutions, have implemented initiatives such as scholarships, school supplies, and remedial classes to ensure equitable access to quality education for *asnaf* children.

In addition, institutions like special hostels for *asnaf* students have been established to create conducive learning environments and foster positive character development. In Chemor, Perak, the welfare of the *asnaf* community continues to receive attention from charitable organisations and local institutions. For example, the Chemor

Orphanage and Home for the Poor, established in 2005, provides shelter, food, and educational support to underprivileged children. Quest International University (QIU) also contributes through its corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, such as organising iftar programmes with orphans and *asnaf* families. These efforts collectively promote educational inclusivity while offering moral and emotional support to the *asnaf* community.

Problem Statement

Despite various initiatives aimed at improving educational access for the *asnaf* community, challenges in understanding and appreciating the importance of education remain prevalent. Economic hardship continues to limit access to essential learning resources and facilities, while low parental education levels and unsupportive social environments further hinder academic motivation among *asnaf* students. Additionally, a lack of consistent moral support and limited exposure to educational opportunities contribute to low educational attainment within this group.

In the context of Chemor, Perak, these issues persist despite the involvement of welfare institutions and educational organisations. Although programmes such as those offered by the Chemor Orphanage and Home for the Poor and Quest International University (QIU) have made meaningful contributions, their impact is often limited in scope and sustainability. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth investigation into the challenges faced by the *asnaf* community in understanding the value of education and the factors influencing their level of educational awareness and participation.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the challenges faced by the *asnaf* community in Chemor, Perak in understanding the importance of education.
2. To examine the socio-economic, familial, and environmental factors influencing educational awareness and participation among the *asnaf* community.
3. To explore potential strategies and interventions that can enhance educational engagement and motivation among *asnaf* students.

Research Questions

1. What are the main challenges faced by the *asnaf* community in understanding the importance of education?
2. How do socio-economic, familial, and environmental factors affect the level of educational awareness among *asnaf* students?
3. What strategies can be implemented to improve educational motivation and participation among the *asnaf* community in Chemor, Perak?

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value in understanding the educational challenges faced by the *asnaf* community, particularly in the context of Chemor, Perak. By identifying the key barriers that hinder awareness and participation in education, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the socio-economic and cultural dimensions affecting this marginalized group.

The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in designing more effective interventions and support systems to improve educational access and motivation among *asnaf* students. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of strengthening community engagement and developing targeted educational programmes that address both academic and socio-emotional needs.

At the theoretical level, this research adds to the growing body of literature on inclusive education and social equity by emphasizing the intersection between poverty, educational awareness, and sustainable community development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Analysis of Empowerment Strategies for Asnaf Fakir and Miskin Based on the Hadith of the Ansar Man

The study by Thaidi et al. (2019) examines empowerment strategies for the *asnaf* categories of fakir and miskin based on the approach employed by Prophet Muhammad SAW in the hadith of the Ansar man. The study underscores that education and skills training serve as the primary instruments for enabling these groups to break free from poverty. The findings recommend strengthening educational programmes centred on skills development and entrepreneurship to ensure that *asnaf* do not remain fully dependent on zakat assistance.

The study by Rahisam Ramli et al. (2023) highlights the need to revise the *kifayah* limits for *asnaf* fakir and miskin in Melaka. The research identifies shortcomings in the existing standards used by zakat administrators, which fail to meet the evolving needs of these vulnerable groups. The findings suggest that the current monetary allocations and components of the *kifayah* are insufficient to meet the basic needs of *asnaf*, particularly in relation to housing and essential services (Rashid et al., 2015; Hasan & Rashid, 2019; Rashid et al., 2015). The study also reveals that rising living costs significantly affect the educational needs of *asnaf*. Therefore, the *kifayah* threshold must be updated to ensure adequate support, including scholarships and higher education incentives.

The Concept of ‘Temporarily Poor’ Asnaf in Zakat Distribution During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The study by Zulkifli Ahmad (2021) introduces the concept of the “temporarily poor” *asnaf* within the context of zakat distribution during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research finds that many individuals who were previously not classified as *asnaf* became poor due to job loss. Consequently, education becomes a crucial factor in equipping this group with new skills to improve post-pandemic employment opportunities.

The Role of Higher Education Institutions in the Educational Development of Asnaf Converts: A Case Study of Kolej Dar al-Hikmah

The study by Ahmad Fauzi Mohd Ayob (2018) explores the role of Kolej Dar al-Hikmah in providing educational opportunities for *asnaf mualaf*. The study concludes that a holistic Islamic educational approach plays an essential role in guiding converts, not only academically but also in strengthening their faith and social well-being. Higher education institutions are encouraged to expand such programmes to further support education as a tool for *asnaf* empowerment.

Management of Zakat Distribution for Education: A Study of Zakat Pulau Pinang

The study by Norazlina Abd Wahab and Mohd Rizal Palil (2018) assesses the effectiveness of zakat distribution for educational purposes by Zakat Pulau Pinang. The research finds that although substantial educational assistance is provided, weaknesses remain in data recording and monitoring systems for student beneficiaries. Therefore, improvements in distribution mechanisms and periodic evaluation of recipients are necessary to ensure the effectiveness of educational aid.

The Role of Zakat in Enhancing Educational Equity Among Urban Poor Children in Malaysia

The study by Norfariza Mohd Radzi and Nur Aliza Ahmad (2017) investigates how zakat can enhance educational equity for children from urban poor households. Their findings indicate that *asnaf* in urban areas face distinct challenges, including higher economic pressures and intense academic competition. As such, zakat institutions are encouraged to introduce more targeted programmes focusing on providing quality education for urban *asnaf* children.

Mechanisms of Zakat Distribution for Higher Education Locally and Abroad: A Study of the Kedah State Zakat Board

The study by Azman Ab Rahman and Siti Martiah Anwar (2020) examines zakat distribution mechanisms for higher education administered by the Kedah State Zakat Board. Although higher education assistance is available, challenges persist, particularly regarding student monitoring and complicated application procedures.

The study recommends simplifying assistance systems and enhancing flexibility to better meet the needs of *asnaf* students pursuing studies locally or internationally.

Determinants of Zakat Distribution Priorities to Asnaf by Zakat Institutions in Malaysia

The study by Norazlina Abd Wahab (2017) investigates the factors influencing zakat distribution priorities for *asnaf* in Malaysia. The findings show that while education is considered an important component, priority is often given to basic needs such as food and shelter. The study recommends that educational assistance should not be limited to tuition fees, but should also include learning tools and psychological support.

A Comparative Study of Zakat Distribution Practices to Asnaf Fi Sabilillah in Five Malaysian States

The study by Muhammad Ridhwan Ab. Aziz (2022) compares zakat distribution practices for *asnaf fi sabilillah* across five Malaysian states. The findings indicate that the interpretation of *fi sabilillah* has expanded to include support for Islamic educational development. The study therefore recommends allocating more zakat funds to sustainable educational opportunities, including skills training and human capital development.

Entrepreneurial Culture and Leadership, and Their Relationship with the Entrepreneurial Mindset of Asnaf Children

Education is identified as a key factor influencing entrepreneurial intentions among *asnaf* students (Zaini et al., 2022). Programs aimed at enhancing entrepreneurial skills can significantly impact the likelihood of *asnaf* students pursuing entrepreneurship (Nadzri et al., 2018). The study finds that education plays a vital role in shaping an entrepreneurial mindset, which can ultimately help them escape poverty. It recommends that entrepreneurship education be given greater emphasis within the curriculum to ensure *asnaf* children acquire adequate skills for self-reliance and income generation.

Asnaf Students' Participation in Education: Issues and Realities

In the study by Aziz and Hassan (2018), economic constraints are identified as the main barrier to *asnaf* students' participation in education. Many are compelled to help supplement family income, which reduces their academic focus. A lack of basic necessities also contributes to low self-esteem and diminished motivation to remain in school.

Level of Educational Awareness Among Asnaf Families in Secondary Schools

Rahman et al. (2020), Bahar (2023) and Hidayatullah (2024) find that parental education levels directly influence students' awareness of the importance of education. Among *asnaf* families, parents with limited educational backgrounds often struggle to provide academic support, motivation, and guidance, resulting in reduced appreciation of educational values among their children.

Social Factors Influencing Academic Achievement Among Asnaf Students

In the study by Ibrahim and Nor (2019), the social environment is shown to significantly shape students' attitudes towards learning. *Asnaf* students living in communities that place little emphasis on education tend to be less motivated academically. Negative peer influence further undermines their interest and persistence in learning.

Challenges of Online Learning Among Asnaf Students During the Pandemic

The study by Mustafa et.al (2025) highlights that inadequate access to educational resources—such as internet connectivity, stationery, and learning materials—was a major challenge for *asnaf* students during the pandemic. These limitations hindered learning processes and directly affected academic performance and motivation.

Effectiveness of Zakat Educational Assistance for Asnaf Students

The study by Latif and Yusof (2017) reveals that despite the availability of various educational assistance programmes, their effectiveness largely depends on implementation and monitoring. Many *asnaf* students and

families do not fully understand the benefits of the assistance provided, limiting its long-term impact on educational awareness.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that education is a critical instrument for empowering *asnaf* communities and enabling them to escape poverty. Efficient zakat management, robust skills-training programmes, and an inclusive education system are essential components for improving their social well-being. Therefore, more comprehensive research and coordinated efforts are required to ensure that *asnaf* have access to quality education and meaningful opportunities for personal development.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach to investigate the challenges faced by the *asnaf* community in understanding the importance of education in Chemor, Perak. The study was conducted using semi-structured interviews involving two teachers and five students, selected through purposive sampling to ensure that participants possessed direct experience and relevant insights related to the research focus. The sample size of seven participants was deemed appropriate, as qualitative research prioritises depth, richness, and contextual understanding of data rather than large sample representation. This number was sufficient to achieve data saturation, whereby no new themes or significant information emerged from additional data collection. In addition to interviews, classroom teaching and learning observations, as well as document analysis, were conducted to obtain comprehensive and holistic findings. Thematic analysis was utilised to identify key emerging themes, including educational challenges, family roles, community support, and perceptions of education among the *asnaf* group. Furthermore, expert validation by educational specialists was employed to ensure the credibility and appropriateness of theme classification derived from the interview findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the study's demographics, descriptive analysis results, and discussion regarding the use of augmented reality-based technology as one of the methods in teaching and learning. Table 1 shows the students' behaviours in class. This data is based on observations of approximately 20 students. Meanwhile, 7 respondents were interviewed in this study, consisting of 2 male teachers and 5 male students.

Table 1 Students' Behavior in Class

Aspect	Observer's Notes
1. Shows interest in learning.	Majority of students show strong interest in learning.
2. Pays attention during class.	Good.
3. Brings complete books/writing materials to school.	A few students lack adequate access to learning materials.
Aspect	Observer's Notes
4. Actively interacts with teachers during lessons.	Good and active participation.
5. Attends class consistently (good attendance).	No issues observed.
6. Receives moral support from family (based on behavior or conversation).	Majority receive sufficient support.
7. Displays low motivation or weak learning behavior.	Majority demonstrate good behavior and motivation.

Table 1 briefly indicates 7 aspects shown in class. Findings show that *asnaf* students at PPIT possess high potential, as reflected in their interest, attendance, and active engagement in learning. However, financial constraints and the lack of basic learning materials such as stationery and books remain issues that require serious attention. Overall, the data supports the interview findings and align with established educational theories, including Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Bandura's Social Learning Theory.

The statement below shows a summary of the main findings from the interview with 7 respondents.

Objective 1: To Identify the Level of Understanding Among the *Asnaf* Community in Chemor Regarding the Importance of Education

Increasing Awareness of the Value of Education

Interviews revealed that students understand that education is the primary means to build a better future. One of the students' respondents stated that "education is the light for the future," reflecting a deep understanding that knowledge serves as a tool for social transformation.

Education Viewed Beyond Academics — as Character Formation

Respondents emphasized that education also encompasses moral and spiritual development. This indicates that, within the *tahfiz* context, the understanding of education extends beyond academic achievement to include ethical and spiritual dimensions.

Influence of Age and Exposure on Understanding

Older students demonstrated a more mature understanding compared to younger students. This difference aligns with variations in cognitive development and life experience.

Objective 2: To Identify the Main Challenges Faced by the *Asnaf* Group in Understanding and Appreciating Education

Economic Constraints Disrupt Learning Continuity

All students reported experiencing financial difficulties such as insufficient funds for transportation, lack of basic necessities, or the need to work to support their families. These conditions compel students to choose between meeting daily needs and continuing their education.

Emotional Pressure from Family Issues Affects Focus

Respondents admitted that family conflicts and parents' health problems make it difficult for them to concentrate. In this context, students are not only tested physically but also emotionally and psychologically.

Imbalance Between Home Responsibilities and Learning

Many *asnaf* students bear additional responsibilities at home, such as caring for younger siblings, cooking, or assisting parents with work. This situation impacts their revision time and causes physical exhaustion at the same time.

Lack of Comfortable and Conducive Learning Facilities

Some students stated that cramped and unconducive home environments hinder their learning. This also includes limited access to technological tools and modern reference materials.

Objective 3: To Analyze the Factors Influencing the Perceptions of the *Asnaf* Community Toward Education

Moral support from family has a direct impact on students' perceptions.

Respondent 1 admit that mother's encouragement was highly significant. This demonstrates that even in impoverished families, emotional support plays a vital role in shaping students' perceptions of education.

The role of teachers and religious instructors shapes positive educational narratives.

Teachers serve not only as educators but also as mentors and guides. Respondent 2 mentioned this exemplifies how caring and approachable teachers can influence the way students value education.

Role models and life experiences form long-term perceptions.

Several students reported that observing the success of their siblings, teachers, or former students instilled confidence that education can transform lives. Such role models are crucial in shaping perceptions among students from at-risk communities.

Consistent forms of assistance enhance positive perceptions.

When students receive financial aid, food support, or personal guidance from teachers, they feel appreciated. This not only fosters motivation but also strengthens the belief that education is a worthwhile pursuit.

Table 2 Overall Finding Summary based on 3 theories of Social Learning

Theory	Relevance to Current Study
1. Social Learning Theory (Bandura)	Explains how the influence of teachers and positive role models shapes the motivation and determination of <i>asnaf</i> students.
2. Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Maslow)	Highlights the importance of fulfilling basic needs (such as food, shelter, and emotional support) to ensure that students can concentrate effectively on learning.
3. Human Capital Theory (Becker & Schultz)	Emphasizes that education is a strategic investment that enhances the social and economic opportunities of <i>asnaf</i> students.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the challenges and learning experiences of *asnaf* students can be comprehensively explained through an integrated theoretical lens. Social Learning Theory (Bandura) underscores the crucial role of teachers and positive role models in shaping students' motivation and perseverance. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs highlights that the fulfillment of basic physiological and emotional needs is a prerequisite for effective learning engagement. Meanwhile, Human Capital Theory (Becker & Schultz) reinforces the view that education functions as a strategic investment that enhances the long-term social mobility and economic prospects of *asnaf* students. Collectively, these theories provide a robust conceptual framework for understanding how social, psychological, and structural factors interact to influence educational participation and outcomes among *asnaf* learners.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this study indicates that the level of understanding among the *asnaf* community regarding the importance of education remains at a stage that warrants further attention and intervention. Although a small segment of this group demonstrates awareness, substantial challenges persist, including economic constraints, negative perceptions of education, and insufficient support from the surrounding environment and institutions that should ideally guide them toward positive change.

The study also reveals that various external factors—such as family background, household income, and community context—exert significant influence on the *asnaf* community's attitudes toward education. Without sustained support and coordinated efforts from multiple stakeholders, this group may continue to remain trapped in the cycle of poverty and fail to recognise the true potential of education as a tool for social mobility.

Therefore, this study recommends the implementation of more community-friendly and educationally oriented approaches to ensure that education is not only accessible to the *asnaf* community but also understood as a fundamental necessity rather than a mere option. A holistic approach should integrate elements of assistance, guidance, motivation, and awareness-building among parents and their children.

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