

**INFLUENCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, SPIRITUAL
WELL-BEING AND SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS ON
PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF
INDIAN SCHOOL DROPOUTS AT
MYSKILLS FOUNDATION**

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UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

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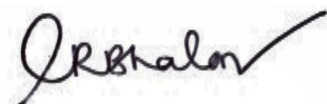
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the material in this thesis is my own except for quotations, equations, summaries and references, which have been duly acknowledged.



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Siva, who forgives all my faults after, Thiruvaarur (7.59.1)

I, devoted to the beloved ALMIGHTY of Arur, as a slave forever to the AAROORAN, Thiru VennaiNallor (7.1.10)

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to measure the effect of emotional intelligence, spiritual well-being and social connectedness on psychological well-being of Indian school dropouts. This is a cross-sectional study and the survey was conducted using questionnaires. A total of 84 participants were recruited in this study from MySkills Foundation. Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale, Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment questionnaire, Spiritual Well-Being Scale (shorted version) and revised Social Connectedness Scale were used in the questionnaire to assess the study variables. All the data were analysed using SPSS 23 and $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant. The study revealed that spiritual well-being and social connectedness possessed a significant positive and low relationship with psychological well-being of school dropouts ($r = 0.262$ and $r = 0.328$; $p < 0.05$). The spiritual well-being scale possessed a significant positive and low relationship with the dimension of personal development and autonomy ($r = 0.302$ and $r = 0.437$; $p < 0.05$), while social connectedness scale possessed a significant positive and low relationship with the dimension of self-acceptance ($r = 0.423$, $p < 0.05$). Although emotional intelligence showed no significant relationship with psychological well-being; it however showed a significant negative and low relationship with the dimension of person growth ($r = - 0.217$; $p < 0.05$). This observational study was in line with the current models and theories of positive psychological well-being among vulnerable adolescence. Therefore, this current study promotes the concept and idea that school-dropouts can still be a valuable resource to the community with the evidence of a moderate level of emotional intelligence, spiritual well-being and social connectedness which reflects the true effect of the environment in which school dropouts develop.

ABSTRAK

PENGARUH KECERDASAN EMOSI, KESEJAHTERAAN SPIRITUAL DAN KESALINGHUBUNGAN SOSIAL TERHADAP KESEJAHTERAAN PSIIKOLOGI DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR INDIA YANG TERCICIR DARI PERSEKOLAHAN DI MYSKILLS FOUNDATION

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menilai kesan kecerdasan emosi, kesejahteraan spiritual dan kesalinghubungan sosial terhadap kesejahteraan psikologi dalam kalangan pelajar India yang tercicir. Seramai 84 peserta telah mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini dari MySkills Foundation. Skala Kesihatan Psikologi Ryff, soal selidik Penilaian Diri Kecerdasan Emosi, Skala Kesejahteraan Sosial (versi pendek) dan Skala Kesalinghubungan Sosial (SCS) digunakan untuk menilai pemboleh-pemboleh ubah kajian. Semua data dianalisis dengan menggunakan SPSS 23 dan nilai- $p < 0.05$ dianggap signifikan secara statistik. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa kesejahteraan spiritual dan kesalinghubungan sosial mempunyai hubungan positif yang signifikan dan lemah antara kedua-dua pemboleh ubah ini. ($r = 0.262$ and $r = 0.328$; $p < 0.05$). Kesejahteraan spiritual menunjukkan hubungan signifikan yang positif dan lemah dengan dimensi pembangunan peribadi dan autonomi ($r = 0.302$ and $r = 0.437$; $p < 0.05$). Malah, kesalinghubungan sosial menunjukkan hubungan signifikan yang positif dan sederhana dengan dimensi penerimaan diri ($r = 0.423$, $p < 0.05$). Walaupun kecerdasan emosi tidak menunjukkan sebarang hubungan yang signifikan dengan kesejahteraan psikologi; ia menunjukkan hubungan signifikan yang songsang dan lemah dengan dimensi pembangunan peribadi ($r = -0.217$; $p < 0.05$). Kajian ini adalah sejajar dengan model dan teori terkini berkenaan dengan kesejahteraan positif psikologi dalam kalangan remaja yang tercicir dari persekolahan. Justeru, kajian ini membuktikan bahawa pelajar tercicir masih boleh menjadi sumber yang berharga kepada komuniti dengan bukti tahap kecerdasan emosi, kesejahteraan spiritual dan kesalinghubungan sosial yang sederhana lalu mencerminkan kesan persekitaran pelajar yang tercicir dari persekolahan tersebut.

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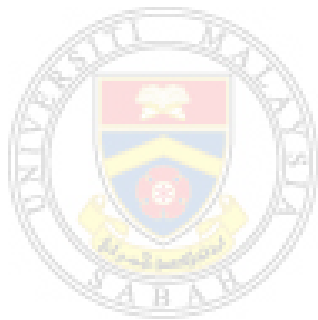
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A	-	Agree
ALS	-	Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis
ANOVA	-	One-way ANOVA
D	-	Disagree
EWB	-	Existential Well-Being
EQ-1	-	Emotional Quotient Inventory
HUNT	-	Nord-Trøndelag Health Study
MSCEIT	-	Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test
N	-	Neutral
NMMS	-	National Health and Morbidity Survey
PWS	-	Psychological Well-being Scale
RWB	-	Religious Well-being
SA	-	Strongly Agree
SAQ	-	Self-Administered Questionnaire
SCS	-	Social Connectedness Scale
SD	-	Strongly Disagree
SWBS	-	Spiritual Well-Being Scale

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Psychological well-being is the positive mental health of an individual (Versluis *et al.*, 2016). Researchers revealed the term psychological well-being as a concept with a diverse and multiple dimension (Ryff, 1989b; MacLeod & Moore, 2000; Wissing & Van Eeden, 2002; Linton, Dieppe & Medina-Lara, 2016) which is developed based on various personality characteristics including emotional regulation and life experiences (Versluis *et al.*, 2016). Keyes, Ryff, and Shmotkin (2002) found that psychological well-being decreases with neuroticism and increases with education, consciousness, extraversion, and age. Psychological well-being measures are not affected in terms of gender. Glynn *et al.*, (2016) found no significant difference in psychological well-being between men and women.

Psychological well-being has been an important subject to be discussed, especially in relation to education. Poor academic performance due to reduced psychological well-being results in significant disadvantages that can extend to unwanted events such as absenteeism or school-dropouts (Keng, Phang & Oei, 2015). In Malaysia, completing up to secondary schooling is a central resource for the distribution of opportunities in life and perspectives for the future. This is because, most of the jobs offered in Malaysia require minimum qualification of Form 5 or SPM (*Sijil Penilaian Malaysia*) (Nagaraj *et al.*, 2017). Every year nearly 10,000 students leave school before reaching SPM. According to the Malaysian Times newspaper, the percentage of Indian dropouts is at an alarming rate (Malaysian Times, 2019).

Statistics shows that four in ten Indian youths cease schooling especially those from underprivileged neighbourhoods. In most of the cases, school dropouts often involve in street crime or violence. Once they get on this path, there is little chance of turning back. The main cause for them to join in street crime or violence is to overcome economic crisis for a better living. However, academic success has an impact on indicators of material success such as income and social status as well as on other factors such as mental and physical health (Main, 2016). According to Shahidul and Zehadul Karim (2015), there are four factors that have contribute to the increase of school dropouts: (a) household level factors; (b) school level factors; (c) cultural factors; and (d) economic factors. These factors lead to poor education outcomes and eventually fail to shape students' behaviours, cognitions, and emotions.

In this 21st century, studies on personal factors that influence academic success tended to be focused on individual, spiritual and social aspects. These three aspects are interrelated with each other to form a complete person, and these variables cannot function individually to determine a person's success (Main, 2016). Focusing on the interest of this study, which is school dropouts, these groups of people are usually isolated by others as uneducated, lack of spiritual concern or not fit for society (subjective well-being) (Shahidul & Zehadul Karim, 2015). This situation can also be vice versa; therefore, it is important to investigate such causes to lead school dropouts to a healthier course and to pursue a regular life like many others. Individual factors, for example, emotional intelligence and spiritual well-being are usually neglected as an indicator of psychological well-being (Peter *et al.*, 2016).

Several factors, including personality, education, and gender, could be studied in the context of psychological well-being based on different research areas (Mani, 2016; Peter et al, 2016). However, the current study aims to focus on three different independent variables: (a) emotional intelligence; (b) spiritual well-being; and (c) social connectedness. These variables are the individual, spiritual and social predictors of psychological well-being among Indian youth dropouts (Shahidul & Zehadul Karim, 2015).

The first independent variable, emotional intelligence, is claimed to be a fundamental part of stress management and psychological well-being (Mishra & Vashist, 2014). Emotional intelligence is the ability of an individual to distinguish feelings and emotions that aggravate them and then manage their selves and others in the process (Mahmood *et al.*, 2015). Salovey and Mayer (1990) proposed fundamental theories that comprise emotional intelligence with three mental abilities: (a) to be able to evaluate and reveal self or other emotions; (b) to be able to control self or other emotions; and (c) to be able to handle emotions in an adaptable way.

Emotional intelligence helps to assess situations in which individuals are present and helps them to act accordingly. These three mental abilities are considered vital to the process of emotion and fit for intelligence. Van Deursen et al., (2015) suggest that emotional intelligence is the effect of one's reactions and actions on others.

Emotional intelligence and psychological well-being have played a vital role in the overall well-being of most individuals. Ruiz-Aranda, Extremera and Pineda-Galán (2014) conducted a study on subjective happiness, life satisfaction and emotional intelligence among female student health specialists. Students with a higher level of emotional intelligence have shown to have indicators of well-being, particularly life satisfaction and happiness. On the other hand, Mahmood and Gulzar (2014) assessed the association of psychological well-being with emotional intelligence, depression, and self-esteem. The study showed that emotional intelligence and self-esteem were positively and significantly associated with psychological well-being, and vice versa. This indicates that people who are emotionally intelligent are more likely to adapt to the flexibility of life. This flexibility protects a person from feeling neglected and depressed, and ultimately improves his or her psychological well-being. Emotional intelligence also affects the success of one's life. Higher emotional intelligence helps a person to gain a positive sense of self, which then contributes to the development of higher self-esteem. Individuals with higher self-esteem are more confident and can deal with life's hardships more intelligently and effectively. A higher level of emotional intelligence

also helps to control stress and anxiety. This leads to a happy life (Cazan & Năstasă, 2015).

Spiritual well-being is a concept that seeks to be fundamental and to focus more on individuals and their individuality. The basic principle is that there is a dominant force, and that force controls the whole of life. 'Spirit' which is known as 'spiritus' in Latin has been translated as 'breath'. Spiritual intelligence, one of the components of spiritual well-being, reflects one's ability to question the meaning of life and the ability to strengthen the bond between fellow human beings and their lives in this world (Holder *et al.*, 2016; Mani, 2016).

People really interact with their inner self when they use prayer or meditation as their communication tool (Holder *et al.*, 2016; Peter *et al.*, 2016). This interaction is a matter of spiritual intelligence; however, spiritual intelligence is not proportional to religious faith or belief. According to Post and Wade (2014), spirituality involves a relationship between self and God that does not require validation by people, while religion involves practices that require validation by a group of people. An atheist can have a high level of spiritual intelligence while an extremely religious person can have a low level of spiritual intelligence (Khan & Nathawat, 2012). In recent times, the subject of spiritual well-being has been an important part of psychological literature. Theorists begin to understand and realize their importance in the field of psychological well-being. This can be seen clearly as there is a great deal of proliferation of available measures and an increase in the number of studies to measure these variables (Ziapour *et al.*, 2017; Holder *et al.*, 2016; Peter *et al.*, 2016; Mitchell *et al.*, 2016).

Low social connected people feel that there are isolated or self-misunderstood, experience uneasiness in social circumstances or have an unsatisfactory feeling in their relationships with family or friends. Study consistently shows that those who experience the relational and social difficulties are identified with low social connectedness and they may develop general psychological distress (Cartwright, White & Clitherow, 2018). Social connectedness is positively correlated with self-esteem, hope, and social competence. On the other hand, psychological distress,

anxiety, depressive symptoms, and conformity are negatively correlated with social connectedness (Çelik, Çetin & Tutkun, 2015). High social connectedness acts as a protective factor which associates with fewer interpersonal difficulties, isolation, social avoidance, and less rejection sensitivity (Bloch, 2018).

Social connectedness has been suggested to be acts as a mediator or moderator respect to different psychological wellbeing. Even across the various types of interpersonal (gay, lesbian, and bisexual), social connectedness mediates the extraversion and wellbeing of these samples (Bond, 2018). On the other hand, social-connectedness acts as a mediator between social support (family, friends, and colleagues), depression and self-esteem among young adults. A structural equation modeling revealed that social connectedness directly associates with self-esteem and inversely associates with depression among this group (Macrynika, Miranda & Soffer, 2018).

The researcher therefore hopes that the three independent variables: (a) emotional intelligence; (b) spiritual well-being; and (c) social connectedness would have an impact on the psychological well-being of Indian youths. The three variables are essential for reducing the number of Indian youth dropouts and for promoting the growth of Indian youth in psychological well-being, which would eventually improve their educational status.

1.2 Research Context

This study focuses on Indian dropouts at MySkills Foundation, a skill study centre which has been identified as the core partner reaching out youth at risk and to design Youth Risk Assessment Tool with SEDIC (Socio-Economic Development of Indian Community), via the *Jawatankuasa Teknikal Pelan Tindakan* (Blueprint) *Masyarakat India Malaysia* since 2017. The researcher chooses a quantitative approach to meet the objectives of this research. In addition, the current research highlights three independent variables: (a) emotional intelligence; (b) spiritual well-being; and (c) social connectedness, which was observed as predictors of the

psychological well-being of young Indian dropouts in MySkills Foundation. Further details of the background and context is elaborated in the problem statement of the study.

1.3 Problem Statement

There is limited study that has been conducted previously on the psychological well-being (Maynard, Salas-Wright, & Vaughn, 2014) especially among Indian youth dropouts. Existing evidence, however, is still a very limited population scope, in with most studies were conducted among overall multi-ethnic students and there is a lack of studies investigating factors associated with psychological well-being beyond basic demographic characteristics. The rate of dropouts among minority groups in Western countries is observed as a significant public health issue (Maynard, Salas-Wright, & Vaughn, 2015) and various studies have been conducted among the Indian population (Kulis et al., 2016; Kelly et al., 2017; Wilson, 2017). However, the issue of Indian youth dropouts and any other issues related to Indians in Malaysia are not seen as serious issues. The Malaysian Indian community experiences marginalization in this country for years and as part of this minority community, they have witnessed the negative effects of the marginalization brought to the community (Mani, 2016).

The continuous disparaging has resulted in Indian youths becoming rebellious and engaged in activities that harm social health and harmony (Jayasooria & Nathan, 2016; Singh, 2013; Suryanarayan, 2011). Government and private sector authorities are investing their resources to provide skills studies to help the Indian community sustain and improve itself. However, despite the efforts, many Indians are still living in hardship, and their lives have not improved much. Malaysian Indian Blueprint of 2017 clearly states government and private sector authorities are investing their resources to provide skills studies to help the Indian community sustain and improve itself. However, despite the efforts, many Indians are still living in hardship, and their lives have not improved much. The national colloquium by the Malaysian Police Force (PDRM) on Gangsterism in 2017, pointed

that the challenges faced by the Indian community in Malaysia are leading to the worst living conditions and one of them is an increase in the rate of Indian youth dropouts. These conditions warrant further research and triggered the idea of predicting variables that would influence the psychological well-being of Indian youths who would eventually improve their lifestyle, including education.

Recent publishing of The Malaysian Times and The Star, November 2016 states that 4 out of 10 Indian youths are school dropouts. It sums up to almost 10,000 students have left school without reaching the SPM level. In 2017, The Malaysian Indian Blueprint (MIB) produced by the Malaysian Indian Congress under the Ministry of Prime Minister's department reported that the number of school dropouts among Indians is also disproportionately high, accounting for an estimated 13% of the total number of dropouts from primary school (Kaur, 2018; Nagaraj *et al.*, 2017). About 14.5% of Indians are unemployed, compared to 11.6% of Bumiputeras and 8% of Chinese. Among those aged 15 to 19, 25.5% of Indians are categorized as unemployed, compared to 8.1% of Bumiputeras and 12.1% of Chinese. MIB also highlights police statistics from 2014, which show that among those arrested for violent crimes, 31% were Indian, 51% Malay, and 11% Chinese. The figure for Indians is considered high since they make up only 7% of the Malaysian population.

Further, it is estimated that about 70% of criminal gang members in the country are Indians (Nagaraj *et al.*, 2017). These students ended up becoming gangsters involving in violence and street crime. Once they get divulged into gangsterism, it is almost impossible to turn back. This alarming percentage is due to the education system that is implemented in Malaysia. Students under this system are lacking in competency. This is because, in most situation, students can move on to the next level of education regardless of whether they have passed the previous level or not. Even if they do not pass their *Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah* (UPSR), they can still go to secondary school. High prevalence of dropouts occurs when students are in Form One or Form Two, as this is the period when these students struggle to adapt to higher education levels. Although the students cannot be expelled, the system has lower tolerance for those unable to adapt as they