

# THE EFFECT OF PSYCHOSPIRITUAL INTERVENTION ON THE LEVEL OF RESILIENCE AMONG JUVENILE DELINQUENTS

Hamizah Muhammad<sup>1</sup>, Nor Shakirah Mohd Sakari<sup>2</sup>, Che Zuina Ismail<sup>1</sup>, Nor Adila Mohd Noor<sup>1</sup>, Juliana Arifin<sup>3</sup>, Salimah Yahaya<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Terengganu, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Business, Economic and Social Development, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup> Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, 21300 Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, Malaysia

## ABSTRACT

The involvement of teenagers in delinquency is much associated with the neglect of their psychological well-being. This situation demands a recent approach that incorporates spiritual elements, given that various interventions that have been implemented currently are still limited to non-spiritual approaches. Therefore, this study was conducted to evaluate the effect of psychospiritual intervention in increasing the level of resilience among delinquent adolescents. This study used quasi-experimental research with one group of pretest-posttest. Thirty-six delinquent adolescents (N=36) from Probation Schools and Approved School in Terengganu, Malaysia, were involved in this study. The data were analysed using paired sample t-tests. Moreover, Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) was used to measure the level of resilience before and after the psychospiritual intervention. The results showed that the level of resilience among the participants had increased after receiving the psychospiritual intervention. This indicates that Psychospiritual Intervention plays a significant role in increasing the level of resilience among adolescent delinquents. Thus, it is recommended to use a psychospiritual approach as an alternative to the current allopathic treatment method in dealing with the resiliency problem, especially among delinquent adolescents at Probation Schools and Approved Schools.

**Keywords:** psychospiritual, resilience, delinquent, quasi-experimental

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence refers to the stage between childhood and adulthood, which is considered a critical stage in one's life (Dixon, Scheidegger, & Mcwhirter, 2009). According to Arnett (1999), adolescence can be a period of tremendous changes and challenges, as it is the period of physical and personal development from youth into adulthood. Adolescence has been viewed as a time when a person can be influenced and shaped to become who he will be in the future. Any mistake at this critical time has the potential to disrupt one's future. Because of this, one of the social problems that can impair adolescents' future is juvenile delinquency. Juvenile delinquency is a persistent social problem (Heynen et. al, 2018).

Delinquency is unacceptable behaviour, attracting public attention (Adibah, Zakaria & Nor Shakirah, 2016). Murray and Farrington (2010) define delinquency as behaviours prohibited by criminal law, such as stealing, robbery, violence, vandalism, and drug abuse. While Choon, Hasbullah, Ahmad and Ling (2013) listed that social delinquency of adolescents ranging from minor misbehaviour such as the breach of school rules, truancy, smoking and vandalism, to more severe misconducts such as theft, robbery, drug abuse, rape, and illegal weapon possession.

Adolescents' involvement in delinquent behaviours in Malaysia is not a new situation. Based on the statistics by the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) and the Malaysian Department of Social Welfare (2019), the involvement of Malaysian teenagers in delinquency showed an increase in cases from 2015 to 2017 and a slow decline from 2018 to 2019. However, the recorded number was still high. A statistical report released by these two sources showed that 7985 juveniles were identified to be involved in crime in 2016 and continued to increase to 8560 in 2017. The number then slightly decreased to 6813 and 6510 respectively in 2018 and 2019. Even though the data showed a modest decline in 2018, it is concerning since the figure did not include unreported cases. Furthermore, Malay juvenile delinquents continue to be at the top. Typically, 'Malay' refers to a Muslim in Malaysia, and it's distressing to see Muslim adolescents engaging in such behaviour. If this problem persists, it could waste human resources as teenagers take a large part of our youth who should be ready to be the country's future leaders.

Through a study of the literature, it was found that the major problems among these delinquent adolescents are mental health problems which include low resilient levels. Zautra, AJ Hall, JS and Murray (2010) view that self-resilience is how an individual act and interacts against weaknesses and protective factors at each level of influence such as cultural, community, family and

individual influences. According to Connor and Davidson (2003), self-resilience encompasses personal qualities that allow a person to thrive in the face of adversity. Adolescents who possess self-resilience do not necessarily keep it naturally, but they have good problem-solving skills (Bogenschneider, 1998).

Some studies admit that adolescents who engage in delinquency have low self-resilient (Nourian, Mohammadi Shahboulaghi, Nourozi Tabrizi, Rassouli, and Biglarrian, 2016; Wing Lo, Cheng, Wong, Rochelle and Kwok, 2011; Guerra, 2010; Fauziah et al., 2015). However, if the level of self-resilience of a teenager is high, it has also been proven to reduce the rate of involvement of adolescents in delinquent behaviour. This is because adolescents who have high self-resilience can avoid falling into self-destructive things (Shahabuddin et al. 2016; Howard and Johnson, 2000), able to resist any negative influences that come (Badrun. , 2016; Fergus and Zimmerman, 2005), have more positive views and plans about the future (Howard and Johnson, 2000), as well as have a particular strength to deal with tense situations faced (Zalkoski and Bullock, 2012).

Therefore, it is understood that every individual, especially adolescents are not immune from the influence of the environment. Still, by having high self-resilience, an adolescent can repel the impact of the negative environment that comes. In contrast, adolescents self-resilience involved in such delinquent behaviour with low self-resilience. This is the focus of the study, which is to increase the level of self-resilience among delinquent adolescents. Overall, low self-resilience does not help these teens face and solve upcoming problems. In the end, they take the easy and shortcut by engaging in more severe social symptoms. On the other hand, high self-resilience can be a shield for these teenagers from continuing to fall into things that deviate from the norms of society.

Thus, adolescent psychological concerns need serious attention since long-term consequences are worse than short-term ones. Previous research has discovered that spiritual beliefs or religions help overcome the depression issue among adolescents (Carothers, Borkowski, Lefever, & Whitman, 2005; Cotton, Larkin, Hoopes, Cromer, & Rosenthal, 2005). Thus, as a Muslim, it is essential to prioritise the guidance in Al-Quran and Al-Hadith. In other words, religion should be designed as the fundamental guidance in developing adolescents' personalities. Mohd Yusof et al. (2012) had put forward that personality is connected to the morals and dignity of any individual, community, and nation. In contrast, Islamic personality is an ideology about human's characteristics that developed through the combination of physical ability and one's strengthened inner spiritual beliefs (Kamarul, 2007). In this context, psycho-spiritual refers to an approach that integrates counselling and spiritual elements during interventions, which can affect the participants' emotional quotient, spiritual quotient, intelligence quotient, and psychomotor. Therefore, this study intended to analyse the effects of psychospiritual intervention in increasing self-resilience among delinquent adolescents in the correctional and rehabilitation centres.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a quasi-experimental pretest and posttest in one group design. This design allowed the research dependent variables, the self-resilience level among delinquent adolescents, to be compared before and after the program. This design was chosen as it was the most suitable design to see the effects of the intervention.

### **Research Sample**

Using purposive sampling, the research sample comprised 36 delinquent adolescents from the correctional and rehabilitation centres in Terengganu. The total number of samples was appropriate because, according to Creswell (2014), the number of samples for the experimental research should be no less than 15 persons for each group.

### **Research Instrument**

This study used the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) developed by Connor dan Davidson (2003) to measure self-resilience among the research participants. This scale contains 25 items with 5 Likert scale points ranging from 'not true at all' (0) to 'true almost all the time' (4). In the study, the internal consistency coefficient scales was .83.

### **Research Procedure**

All research participants were required to answer and complete the CD-RISC survey to obtain pre-data before receiving the intervention. The psychospiritual intervention was conducted once a week for three months, and it had integrated the elements of emotional fitness and psychomotor. Each session will last for 3 hours. It was filled with varieties of exciting activities from the Psychospiritual module. The intervention module was developed by researchers using the ADDIE Model approach founded by Rosset (1987).

The intervention module consists of four sub-modules: Heart Literacy Therapy, Purpose of Life, Meaning of Excellence in Life, and Positive Attitude Determinants of Success. This module comprises both the psychological and spiritual elements to treat the personalities of the delinquent adolescents, such as remembrance to God, prayers, and meditation. It also integrated arts therapy activities such as music therapy, drawing therapy and writing therapy to explore the adolescents' lives, hoping that they could be guided and lead to behavioural change, especially in terms of their emotions.

During these sessions, resilience management skills were introduced using various psychospiritual approaches that integrated elements of the spiritual quotient (SQ), intelligent quotient (IQ), emotional quotient (EQ) and psychomotor. The summary of the sessions is as follows:

**Session 1-** Participants were introduced to each other, the program's objective was described, the program was presented, the importance of resilience management was stressed, and the participants were grouped.

**Session 2 to 4-** Awareness Therapy session provided several activities for the participants, including remembrance of Allah SWT, repentance to Allah SWT and self-reflection.

**Session 5 to 7-** Purpose of Life session exposed the participants to think about where they come from, what purpose they are created, and where they are heading to as caliphs of Allah SWT in this world and hereafter. Activities that required some thinking and creativity were also conducted.

**Session 8 to 9-** The Meaning of Successful Life session encouraged the participants to think about what being successful means to them and define success. The participants were reminded that managing their self-resilience is also a big success in life.

**Session 10 to 11-** The Positive Attitude of Success session exposes participants to the importance of positive attitudes and their effects on their level of self-resilience. Several activities related to positive attitudes were conducted, such as group discussions, short lectures, and filling up the provided worksheet using art therapy and sharing moments.

**Session 12-** Closing Session: The purpose of this session is to let all participants summarise the previous sessions and explain the effects of the sessions on their self-resilience level from their point of view.

At the end of the program, all the participants answered the CD-RISC instrument again as the post data.

### **Data Analysis**

The collected data were then analysed using the SPSS device version 20 through descriptive analysis to determine the differences of self-resilience mean score between pretest and posttest.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **Descriptive Analysis: Frequency and Percentage of Study Respondent Profiles**

Table 1 below shows the respondents' demographic profiles, including gender, race, religion, age range, marital status, and education.

Table 1 Demographic profiles of the respondents

| Item           | Respondent             |           |      |
|----------------|------------------------|-----------|------|
|                | Respondent             | Frequency | %    |
| Gender         | Male                   | 10        | 27.8 |
|                | Female                 | 26        | 72.2 |
| Race           | Malay                  | 36        | 100  |
| Religion       | Islam                  | 36        | 100  |
| Age            | 21 years old and above | 0         | 0    |
|                | 18-20 years old        | 6         | 16.7 |
|                | 15-17 years old        | 30        | 83.3 |
| Marital Status | Single                 | 33        | 91.7 |
|                | Married                | 2         | 5.6  |
|                | Divorced               | 1         | 2.8  |
| Education      | University             | 0         | 0    |
|                | High School            | 15        | 41.7 |
|                | Middle School          | 16        | 44.4 |
|                | Primary School         | 3         | 8.3  |
|                | Informal Education     | 2         | 5.6  |

26 out of 36 respondents were female, and 30 respondents were aged between 15 to 17 years old. In terms of marital status, the majority was single, 33 of them. All of them were Malays and Muslims. 15 of them were in upper secondary school, and 15 were in lower secondary school in educational background.

#### Descriptive Analysis: Mean Differences in Levels of Self-Resilience of Respondents.

Table 2 below shows the mean score differences between the pretest and posttest of the respondents.

Table 2. Mean Score Differences between Pretest and Posttest

| Variable   | Mean Score |      |
|------------|------------|------|
|            | Pre        | Post |
| Resilience | 2.92       | 3.82 |

Table 2 clearly shows the significant mean differences between pretest and posttest of the self-resilience level among respondents. This means that the self-resilience level among teenage delinquents has increased significantly with the absolute mean differences of as much as 0.9 after receiving the psycho-spiritual intervention. The increase of self-resilience proves that psychospiritual intervention that utilises diverse approaches, including spiritual elements integrated with expressive art therapy, effectively treats resilience among delinquent adolescents.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the reported research findings, it is verified that the resilience level among the research participants has indeed increased. The research participants' resilience level had increased after receiving this psychospiritual art therapy intervention. The findings of this study are in line with previous studies related to the role of spiritual elements in affecting the level of self-resilience, such as Fauziah (2014), Peres (2007), Lassi and Mugnaini (2015), Mubarak et al. (2015) as well as Mubarak (2015).

Examining the previous study, the researcher has supported the findings of Fauziah (2014), wherein the study reported that pregnant women without marriage have low resilience. Still, their level of resilience was successfully improved through the approach of Human Centered Group Counseling and group counselling Ad-Din Cognitive Psychology that applies spiritual elements. Similarly, the findings of Peres (2007) where the findings of his study are in line with the researcher's study in terms of the existence of a positive relationship between spiritual elements and self-resilience. The findings of the researcher's study also strengthen the findings of Lassi and Mugnaini (2015) about the spiritual element does affect the increase in the level of resilience of a person, including entrepreneurs in Kelantan as the findings of Mubarak et al. (2015) and Mubarak (2015) as well as to trauma victims as per the study of Lassi and Mugnaini (2015). Researchers see the findings of these studies in line with the researchers' study in the context of low levels of self-resilience in a person can be improved again through interventions based on a spiritual approach.

Consequently, by considering the significance of these research findings, it can be concluded that the implication of psychospiritual elements plays a significant role in reducing the depression level among problematic adolescents. Mazlan (2006) proposed that without solid spiritual aspects, the physical abilities of human beings will not bear any values. This is because physically, humans are formed by various types of soil elements, whereas the spirit resides under the order and will of Allah (SWT). Hence, the combination of these elements within humanity conforms to the primary purpose of human creation, which is to devote oneself entirely to Allah (SWT) by obeying Islamic laws, which is a perfect way of life entirely from birth up until death, where humans are believed to meet their Maker in the afterlife (Kamarul, 2007).

This statement parallels the hypothesis from Nasser (2013), which stated that a religious approach is paramount since teenagers who value their spiritual, morals and principles are less likely to get involved in delinquent activities, for they had strong self-control. This will indirectly prevent these problematic teenagers from persistently plunging into endless negative social behaviours. This is also in line with the research findings by Remster (2014), which asserted that conceptualising self-control as a delectable resource influenced by internal factors and experiencing depressive symptoms may reduce self-control, which increases delinquency. Depression, anxiety, and stress are no longer associated with delinquency when self-control is considered.

The main limitation of the study was the lack of a control group. Also, the study's sample size may not be enough to represent delinquent adolescents. Hence, to reach more reliable results that can be generalised to a more significant part of society, future studies should be conducted with more samples. This study also assessed the effects of the psychospiritual intervention in increasing the level of resilience among delinquent adolescents based on pretest and posttest without administering any follow-up. Therefore, the long-term impact of this treatment is unknown. Further research is suggested to administer the longitudinal study as the human development process involves a long-term period.

In conclusion, the increase in misbehaviour among adolescents should be taken seriously by all parties. This is because the rise in adolescent misbehaviour will have a long-term harmful influence on adolescents themselves if this issue is not addressed. By considering the significance of these research findings, it can be concluded that the implication of the psychospiritual approach plays a vital role in increasing the resilience level among these delinquent adolescents, which later will protect them from getting involved in delinquent behaviours. Lastly, psychospiritual intervention needs to be implemented continuously to assist adolescents involved in delinquent behaviours to prevent them from implicating in serious crimes.

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