

The Impact of Spiritual and Individual Factors on Social Problems and Mental Health of Malaysian Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

The increase in social problems among adolescents from time to time proves that the level of mental health among adolescents is at an alarming level. Various factors need to be given serious attention to curb this issue from spreading. The study aims to explore spiritual factors and individual factors in adolescents as contributing factors and identify their impact on social and mental health problems. The study involved a total of 11 respondents consisting of adolescents who faced a bond of good behaviour. A qualitative study along with a purposive sampling method is used in this study. Findings show that spiritual factors involve factors of belief and motivation to worship while in terms of individuals involving personality formation, feelings of complex inferiority, as well as lack of social interest, have been identified. It is hoped that the recommendations and limitations through this study can be used as a reference and guide to the parties involved in formulating various aids and treatments to help adolescents from getting involved in social and mental health problems in the future.

Keywords: *Spiritual factors, Individual factors, Mental health, Social problems, Adolescence*



INTRODUCTION

Social problems among adolescents are indeed a phenomenon that is increasingly worrying from time to time. This phenomenon has a detrimental effect on the development of adolescents, especially from the aspect of mental health. The World Health Organization (WHO) in 2015 stated that mental health is a condition in which an individual can maintain personal well-being, work productively, and contribute to society and the environment. This definition suggests that mental health is how an individual can function fully from thinking, acting and feeling in particular against the factors that can lead to failure in maintaining personal well-being (Ministry of Mental Health, 2017; National Mental Health Policy, 2012). Statistics from the National Health and Mobility Survey (NHMS) 2017 show that adolescents aged 13 to 17 years are estimated to 18.3% suffer from depression, 39.7% suffer from anxiety and 9.67% face stress. Shamzaeffa & Kevin Tan (2016) stated that mental health could be associated with increased criminal cases, social symptoms, drug abuse, incest, murder and so on, especially among adolescents.

Statistics from the Department of Social Welfare in 2015 showed that there were 4567 juvenile offenders, of which 36% of adolescents were involved in crimes involving property, 29.7% drug offences and 13.4% of crimes involving persons. In addition, the Statistics of Drug Addicts in Malaysia in 2017 through the National Anti-Drug Agency has found a total of 694 addicts aged 13-18 years of which 374 people in the age range of 18 years, 72 people for 13-15 years and 248 people aged 16 -17 years old. At the same time, the Statistics of the Ministry of Health Malaysia for 2012-2016 also reported about 4000 pregnant teenage girls under 18 years old. Thus, this disclosure illustrates that the rate of adolescent social problems is at an alarming level.

This increase also clarifies that the level of mental health of adolescents needs to be given serious attention by all parties. This is because social problems are conditions that cause behaviour contrary to the norms of society, which occurs as a result of various factors (Norfadilah Abdul Rahman & Zakaria Stapa, 2014).

The involvement of adolescents in social problems, especially crime, has had a significant impact on the growth and development of the country in an effort to produce people who are physically and mentally intelligent and fit, in line with technological developments. Problems of alcohol addiction, substance abuse, gambling, etc. that occur among adolescents impact health, behaviour, physical, mental and influence people to function fully, which encourages adolescents to engage in unhealthy activities so that some of them are involved in criminal cases. The Statistics of Admission of Detainees evidences this to Moral Rehabilitation Centers where the report shows that a total of 1198 adolescents live in Moral Rehabilitation Centers, 254 people are detained in Special Rehabilitation Centers and 4 people in Special Detention Centers (Malaysian Prisons Department, 2017).

A more comprehensive study of the causal factors to the spread of social problems among these adolescents needs to be studied and given more serious attention in an effort to address this issue from continuing to spread. Azahar Che Latiff et al. (2014) found that the close relationship between parents and children and peer influence contributes to adolescent social problems as parents can shape children's personalities through interaction and parenting style. The upbringing given by parents starting from childhood affects the formation of adolescent identity. However, in addition to external factors such as family, peers, society and community, individual factors also play a vital role. Individuals who can control and absorb the stress around them allow them to maintain a healthy lifestyle and grow positively without being influenced by other factors while setting self-goals, self-confidence, and social interests.

Apart from the individual factors, the spiritual factors that exist in the individual are also factors that need to be given attention. According to Halimah Abdul Halim & Zainab Ismail (2015), the cause of misconduct among adolescents is religious factors in terms of spirituality found in them. Thus, based on the findings obtained from previous studies, the main purpose of this study is to explore the individual and spiritual factors in adolescents and see to what extent these factors affect the tendency of adolescents to engage in social problems by involving adolescents involved in crime. Mild and is in the process of recovery.

METHODOLOGY

This study involves a qualitative study design in which data collection is done through counselling sessions conducted on clients. The purposive sampling method was chosen as the sample for this study. This method shows a bond of good behaviour binds the specific characteristics that have been set, i.e., adolescents. Thus, the respondents involved in this study were 11 respondents who were undergoing a good behaviour bond order for 2 to 3 years after being convicted of a criminal offence under the Children Act 2001. The sample was also ordered to complete the bond by attending an interactive workshop involving counselling sessions in the counselling unit. This study uses verbatim and thematic analysis methods by using Atlas. ti application version 7. Audio recordings recorded during the data collection process were analyzed verbatim, and each theme and subtheme was removed manually.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

These findings discuss in terms of the demographic profile of the entire sample involved, the results of the analysis involving spiritual factors and individual factors as follows:

1. Demographic Profile

The participants of this study involved a total of 11 respondents consisting of interactive workshop participants who were completing a good behaviour bond. The participants were adolescents aged 16 to 20 years and still in the process of recovery. The results showed that the participants were made up of various backgrounds that were different from each other. Table 1 shows the demographic data of the participants involved in this study.

Table 1: Demographic Background of the Participants Involved in the Study

No	Age	Gender	Education Level	Occupation	Bond Execution Period
01	19	M	SPM	Lorry conductor	2 years
02	19	F	SPM	Expenditure Operators	2 years
03	17	M	Form 2	Not working	2 years
04	18	M	SPM	Expenditure Operator	3 years
05	20	M	SPM	Mechanic	3 years
06	18	M	Form 4	Working at welding company	3 years
07	19	M	SPM	Not working	2 years
08	20	F	SPM	Clerk	1 years
09	16	M	Form 4	Student	3 years
10	17	M	Certificate	Student	3 years
11	18	M	Form 4	Working at Aeon Mall	2 years

Demographic data showed that a total of 11 adolescents were selected as respondents of the study, of which eight were male adolescents, and three were female adolescents. The bond execution period also showed that most of the sample were subject to three year bonds, namely five people, five people were subject to two year bonds, and one person for 1 year bond was well behaved.

Based on the analysis done on the respondents, there are two main themes involving spiritual factors and three main themes for individual factors as shown in diagram 1 below:

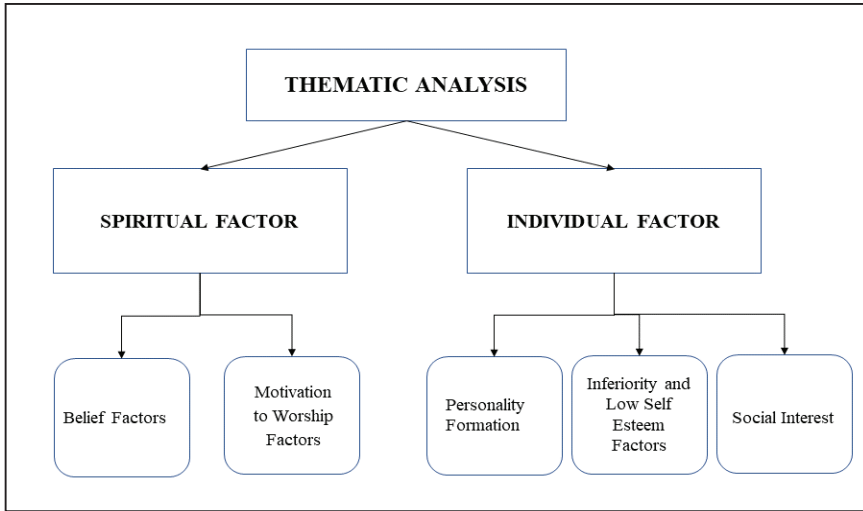


Figure 1: Results of Thematic Analysis

(a) Spiritual Factors

The analysis has successfully developed two main themes for spiritual factors affecting adolescents involved in social problems and mental health issues. Among the main themes are MT1: Belief Factor and MT2: Motivation to Worship Factors as below:

Main Theme 1: Belief Factors

This factor was successfully formed as a result of analysis obtained from respondents two(2), six (6) and three (3), which showed that a lack of belief in Allah and his power had caused them to do things contrary to religion and adversely affected them. Based on Al-Ghazali’s spiritual approach, there are four main elements that underlie the spirituality of every human being, namely *al-nafs* (lust), *al-qalb* (heart), *al-ruh* (spirit), and *al-aql* (intellect) which are these elements has a crucial role in explaining the fact of human occurrence or nature. The heart or *al-qalb* symbolizes the belief in the existence of Allah SWT, the belief in angels, the belief in power and destiny and the provisions determined by Allah SWT. The heart also reflects the existing

faith in Allah SWT, which gives influence to the faith in oneself. The subfactor obtained through this study is the belief in religion and Allah SWT. The spiritual factor refers to the inherent belief in the creator and religion through deeds, thoughts and hearts. This concept is very important for assessing and understanding the spiritual concept that exists in human beings. These concepts can be seen through the concept of faith, worship and morality as the view of Salasiah Hanim Hamjan & Noor Shakirah (2014); that is, these concepts can determine human beliefs, thoughts and behaviour. Findings show low belief in God affects self-esteem and leads to involvement in social problems.

Table 2: Beliefs Factor

Respondent	Interview Excerpts
Respondent 2	<i>"I think there are subtle beings in the factory..I think they are always with me..look at me. Make me restless, stay away from my friends at the factory. People don't want to be friends with me anymore, like my island... because it's a subtle creature..I go anywhere alone .. eat alone "</i>
Respondent 6	<i>"I see people who pray are all the same as me."</i>
Respondent 3	<i>"If I pray, can all my prayers be fulfilled? I don't think with prayer, all that prayer can help me "</i>

This belief causes respondents to believe that oneself has the right to determine whatever action one wants to take because one believes that oneself is to determine the behaviour, good and bad effects of a decision one wants to do even if it brings harm to oneself to the point of being involved in criminal cases. Faith also influences faith and deeds to perform worship to Allah SWT. Low belief in religion and Allah SWT causes clients to easily believe in things that should not be. This is clearly evidenced by the findings obtained from the second client, who often believes that all actions performed are because they are influenced by subtle beings and not because of themselves.

This finding is also supported by a study conducted by Siti Aishah & Sidar (2016), which according to the findings of the study,

showed that the appreciation of religion among adolescents could determine their morals and beliefs. Low belief in religion will cause them to be easily distracted and increase their involvement in social problems. The belief factor also plays an important role in the worship factor. Motivation to worship is a way to show piety to Allah SWT by doing instructions and abandoning prohibitions. However, it is undeniable that not all individuals, especially teenagers, see acts of worship such as prayer, fasting, remembrance etc., as obligatory demands that need to be done by them.

Main Theme 2: Motivation to Worship Factors

This theme was formed as a result of findings obtained through in-depth data from respondents 7 and 5, who explained that they were not adequately exposed to religious values since childhood. They also stated that their parents are not concerned about prayers and worship in the family. This resulted in a lack of motivation in the respondents to perform the worship and indirectly encouraged them to create various reasons. It has also motivated adolescents to engage in activities that are unhelpful and have harmful effects on themselves.

Table 3: Motivation to Worship Factors

Respondent	Interview Excerpts
Respondent 7	<i>“In my family, everyone is the same as me .. my parents never even asked about all the prayers.”</i>
Respondent 5	<i>“It’s not that I don’t want to pray, but work like me is hard, ma’am. I have to exchange with a Bangla boy, the workshop very busy, a lot of cars, during lunchtime the customer always full, lunch also I have to skip, all places are dirty, I want to pray in a clean place, there is no Surau, how to pray if there no clean place for prayer?...and I also don’t know where the Bangla boy pray.”</i>

The role of parents as role models to children and the application of spiritual aspects such as the essential practices of the pillars of Islam play an important role. Parents who inculcate the spiritual

aspect in their children from an early age allow the foundation of inner strength to be better formed. Family institutions that do not emphasize the application of Islamic elements in the upbringing of children tend to face a variety of more serious problems. According to Mohammad Nasir Masroom (2016), the strength of an individual's soul is determined by the types of worship and practices performed based on the Quran, which affects one's mental health, relationship with others and relationship with Allah SWT. There is no denying that the spiritual strength that is present in adolescents is a huge influence in helping adolescents build resilience, rational thinking and better behaviour.

(b) Individual Factors

Based on Adler's Theory of Individual Psychology, the individual factor is an emphasis on the overall understanding of the individual and how all aspects of the individual relate to each other. Analysis of the data that has been done in this study has shown that there are three main themes that tend to be present in clients that involve individual factors as an influence on social problems in them, that is, MT1: Personality Formation; MT2: Inferiority and Low Self Esteem Factors and MT3: Social Interest Factors.

Main Theme 1: Personality Formation

The first factor is personality formation, in which the way the client behaves is influenced by the personality formation inherent in the family. Factors of neglect, abuse and lack of affection are triggers for clients to tend to form rebellious personalities and lead to deviant behaviors, as stated by respondents 1 and 6 in the table below:

Table 4: Personality Formation Factors

Respondent	Interview Excerpts
Respondent 1	<p><i>“My relationship with my family is not good since a young age, especially with my brother and mother. If there is something wrong, my brother will hit me, and supposedly he doesn’t want me to create trouble; my mother is always sided with my brother, she really like to see him hit me... again if she reprimands me..there are always things that aren’t right..better I’m hanging out with friends.”</i></p>
Respondent 6	<p><i>“I live with my aunt .. I have never met my mother and father .. they never find out about me... whatever I want to do it is all my business.”</i></p>

Inconsistent personality formation causes adolescents to seek satisfaction and pleasure to achieve self-satisfaction even through unhealthy activities. The way of upbringing received from parents during childhood to adulthood causes adolescents to absorb it into the formation of self-identity that influences adolescent behaviour and thinking. This is also supported by Mohd Fairuz & Shahizan (2016), where the increase in the self-esteem of adolescents is influenced by the family, especially in terms of stress factors and ability to meet the physical and mental needs and wants of adolescents. The family is a system that plays a major role in the formation of adolescent personality. The well-being of the family will determine the level of mental health of the children. Childhood will influence how an individual evaluates himself, others and the surrounding life as a process in the formation of a better self-identity (McQuiilin & Welford, 2014). Unhealthy family conditions will cause children to tend to be depressed, worried, and eventually, there is a sense of inferiority in themselves to continue to grow in a more positive direction. Some of them do unhealthy activities to increase self-confidence and ability. This is evidenced by the data collected through the 10th sample in which respondents sought pleasure and satisfaction through self-harming activities because they felt they were not needed by the family.

Main Theme 2: Inferiority and Low Self Esteem Factors

The second main theme identified was the inferiority complex that causes clients to fail to build resilience in the face of the challenges around them. The life of a society that emphasizes individualism causes competition in the community and ultimately causes individuals who are deficient either physically or mentally to feel unappreciated and unable to compete with society. This causes them to lack the confidence to make positive changes to themselves.

Table 5: Inferiority and Low Self Esteem Factors

Respondent	Interview Excerpts
Respondent 2	<i>“My family doesn’t love me, even my friends who are friends with me, they just want to use me. Be my friend, when I had something for them... I’ve had cases before, people like me there are no people who want to give me a job..I can’t go to study. I can’t, ma’am, I don’t think I have a future “</i>
Respondent 11	<i>“Because I always view my behaviour negatively..because .. when I was at previous home for a long time, the neighbours always talked about my behaviour.. sometimes I think am I a very bad person?”</i>

According to respondents 2 and 11, their sense of mental deficiencies and negative perceptions of themselves caused them to face extreme low self-esteem. This leaves them more vulnerable to stress, anxiety and depression compared to other individuals. Feelings of low self-esteem or inferiority have an important relationship with the achievement of happiness, where extreme feelings of inferiority cause individuals to tend to hide themselves, feel isolated, have no more positive desires. Akdogan & Cimsir (2019) support the findings of this study which, through their previous study, showed that individuals with high feelings of inferiority would cause them less exposure to personal information, feelings, sharing with others and even tend to hide from society. This is related to the diminished social interest in the individual as a result of complex feelings of inferiority.

Main Theme 3: Social Interest

The third main theme is social interest. Social interest refers to the nature of cooperation and the ability to give a contribution, compassion and sympathy to other individuals. Individuals who have good social interests have a sense of belonging, i.e. a desire to form good relationships with others, taking into account social interests. According to Robey, Wubbolding & Maltres (2017), social interest indicates a person’s interest in connecting and socializing and is defined as the attitude shown by an individual towards the surrounding society. Thus, the findings of this study show that respondents do not have good and encouraging social interests and even isolate themselves from the outside world and form good social interactions with others. This can be evidenced by data obtained from a sample of studies that show a sense of loneliness, isolation from family, community and friends, as stated by respondents 3 and 4 in the table below:

Table 6: Social Interest Factors

Respondent	Interview Excerpts
Respondent 3	<i>“I really don’t like mixing with people... if there is a family member coming home, I won’t leave the room.I don’t like it when people are busy asking me all sorts of things.”</i>
Respondent 4	<i>“Why do you want to be nice to people..if we are difficult, they won’t help us either .. keep looking for the wrong faults only... mind your own business; it’s good.”</i>

The attitude of loneliness and isolation from the outside world and the surrounding society caused the sample to lack motivation and willingness to contribute to the well-being of others and at the same time contribute to unhealthy activities as a way to find pleasure and self -satisfaction. This finding is also supported by Sperry & Binensztok (2018), who state that good social interests help individuals form a better lifestyle.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this study has achieved the objective of exploring the individual and spiritual factors, which are the causal factors to the occurrence of social problems among adolescents. The findings obtained through this study have shown that individual factors such as the formation of personality formed as a result of upbringing and family cluster, extreme feelings of inferiority and lack of social interest have been the cause of adolescent involvement in criminal cases. In addition, the findings of the study also show that spiritual factors in terms of faith and worship are also important factors to this issue occurs. Belief in religion and Allah SWT is the key to holding and strength in oneself to think and do good deeds; even faith and deeds strengthened through worship are the key to the strength of heart and fortification to all behaviours and thoughts did. Therefore, this study has various implications for all levels of society, especially researchers, counsellors and students, to conduct further studies in the future. The findings from this study can be used as a guide and reference for constructing more modules, models and intervention methods involving spiritual aspects mainly to be applied in counselling sessions as one of the efforts to help individuals deal with mental health issues.

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