The Relationship between Spiritual Well-being and the Akhlak of Excellent Muslim Students in South Malaysia

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Abstract: This study investigates the relationship between Akhlak and spiritual well-being among excellent Muslim students. A total of 50 students from one secondary school in southern Malaysia was selected as respondents in this study. Four types of spiritual well-being dimensions were highlighted namely Personal SWB, Communal SWB, Environmental SWB, and Transcendental SWB. The Akhlak questionnaire focused on three domains comprising Akhlak towards Allah, towards oneself and towards mankind. The data was analyzed using the 18.0 SPSS version. Descriptive analysis shows that most of the respondents acquire moderate level of Akhlak. The correlation analysis shows that there is a significant relationship between Akhlak and spiritual well-being dimensions except for personal SWB.

Key words: spiritual well-being, Akhlak, Muslim students

1. Introduction

Ranging from 11 to 19 years old, this subgroup in human development is called adolescent (Rathus, 2013). Primarily, adolescence refers to a stage in developmental process which is full of inner turmoil and stress (Hall, 1904). One of the best ways to nurture adolescents is through education. In the National Education Philosophy of Malaysia (NEP), the Ministry of Education and the Government in general aim for a holistic development of all children, which embraces the development of intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical aspect of the children. The holistic development ensures that the children's growth is balanced, hence allowing them to display a higher morality standard and knowledge competency. In conjunction with the holistic development of all children, the government has recently introduced the National Education Plan 2013–2025 in which the new education plan highlights the importance of spirituality as a part of students' development. Fisher (2011) defined spiritual well-being as a multifaceted construct that comprises four main dimensions — Personal domain in which the person interacts with oneself; Communal domain which is the person's inter-relationship with other people; Environmental domain, which connects with the nature; and Transcendental domain that reflects the relation to some-thing or some-one beyond the human level. The Four Domains are believed to be acceptable from religious to atheistic rationalist spectrum. In addition to that, the theme for Teachers Day 2015 "*Guru Membina Ilmu, Membentuk Akhlak*" shows the importance of Akhlak for students' self-development. Suraya Lin, Faizah, and

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Azian (2013) defines Akhlak in three domains, namely Akhlak towards Allah, Akhlak towards oneself and Akhlak towards human beings.

2. Background of the Study

The increasing numbers of juvenile cases such as bullying, free sex, drug abuse, homosexuality and so on have set an alarm to the society. The negative behaviours conducted by adolescents are believed to be   the result of lower spiritual faith (Green & Elliot, 2010). Ahmed, Fowler and Toro (2011) added that the spiritual engagement whether in private or public brings positive impact to the adolescents' self-conduct, which leads to less tendency to perform delinquency. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relationship between excellent Muslim students' Akhlak and spiritual well-being.

3. Objectives

The specific objectives are:
(1) What is the level of spiritual well-being and Akhlak of the students?
(2) What are the supporting factors contributing to the students' Akhlak?

4. Previous Study

Terreri and Glenwick (2011) in their study of "The relationship of Religious (Religion?) and General Coping to Psychological Adjustment and Distress in Urban Adolescents" show a significant relationship between positive religious copings with psychological adjustment. In the same study, Terreri and Glenwick also highlight the role of religion in determining the result of coping strategies among urban adolescents. They emphasize that religion can either give positive or negative effects depending on how the adolescents incorporate it in their coping strategies. The same result is also supported in Spilka (2005), who argues that adolescents who practicee positive religious copings, such as turning the negative life events into a test from God to get closer to Him, seeking spiritual support to endure life difficulties, or using religion as a tool to have control over own self, will have greater mental health and higher life satisfaction.

According to Ahmed et al. (2011), religiousness is perceived as an element that can have a buffer effect onto stressful life experiences, which will eventually enable an individual to cope with challenges and distress in a more positive way/manner. The study was conducted to 249 homeless African American adolescents to evaluate the multidimensional structure of religiousness towards the psychological adjustment in adolescents who are at risk of poor psychological and behavioural outcome. The findings suggest that church attendance alone is not adequate to be taken as an indicator of religiousness. Thus, the study highlight the importance of private religiousness as a stress-buffer, whereby the respondents claimed to have less problems in psychological adjustment when they take religion intimately.

The local studies such as Mansor and Khalid (2012) in their study of "Spiritual well-being of INSTED, IIUM Students" and Its Relationship with College Adjustment' show that there is a significant relationship between spiritual well-being and the resilience to the college adjustment. A total of 130 respondents have participated in the study varying from Islamic Teaching course, Teaching English course, and Guidance and Counselling course. The findings reveal the total mean for student's spiritual level was 3.36, which qualifies them as religious. In the

light of the study, a strong relation was found proven between having a clear vision of the purpose of life as a Muslim and the ability of the students to endure challenges in college. Meanwhile, students who score minimum in their spirituality were positively associated with early dropout from college.

Another study was conducted by Suraya Lin, Faizah & Azian (2013) on "The Implication of Parenting Styles on the Akhlak of Muslim Teenagers in the South of Malaysia" involving 92 respondents from Islamic school in the south of Malaysia. In the study, three domains of Akhlak were measured namely Akhlak towards Allah, Akhlak towards oneself, and Akhlak towards mankind. The findings show that Akhlak towards oneself scored the highest mean which is 3.82, followed by 3.51 and 3.38 for Akhlak towards Allah and Akhlak towards mankind respectively.

In addition, a study was conducted to reassess the entrance qualification in MRSM Kota Putra (Ulul Albab). As stated in the study by Siti Solehah et al. (2014), the students who wish to enter MRSM Kota Putra have to meet several criteria that include the ability to memorise the Quran, to write in Jawi, to have good communication skills and to possess good attitude. However, the findings show that although the students have qualified to enter MRSM Kota Putra and are included in the Ulul Albab programme, the students are still having discipline problems and identity crisis.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

This study applies quantitative approach because it specifically involves numerical and computable data that can be changed into numbers. This study is also a correlational study. It is because it attempts to determine the existence and degree of relationship between spiritual well-being as the independent variables with adolescent Akhlak as the dependent variable.

5.2 Sampling and Population

A simple random sampling method is used in selecting the sample for this study. Black (1999) states that this method is used to eliminate bias as it enables every student to have an equal probability to be chosen as a sample. A total of 50 students was identified as sample of this study. This study focuses on Form 4 excellent students from one secondary school in South Malaysia to identify the relationship between spiritual well-being with the adolescent Akhlak based on the sources of Qur'an and hadith.

5.3 Instruments

In this study, the researcher used questionnaire as the research instrument due to its advantages such as easy to be administered, cost effective and easy to be analyzed (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2001). The demographic of the respondents, level of Akhlak and level of spiritual well-being were examined in this study.

6. Findings

6.1 Spiritual Well-being

The highest mean value obtained for Spiritual Well-Being is 2.76 for Personal SWB. This is   followed by mean value 2.74 for Communal SWB. Next, the Environment SWB records the mean value of 2.72. Lastly, the lowest mean value is 2.70 for Transcendental SWB. The findings show that majority of the students have high

personal spiritual well-being, followed by communal spiritual well-being, environmental spiritual well-being, and transcendental spiritual well-being.

6.2 Adolescents' Akhlak

The findings show that the highest mean is "Akhlak towards Oneself" with the value of 2.48. This is followed by the mean value of "Akhlak towards Human Beings" and "Akhlak towards Allah" with the value of 2.40 and 2.30 respectively. The total mean value of the respondents' Akhlak is 2.39. We can conclude that the respondents' level of Akhlak is moderate.

6.3 Correlation between Adolescents' Akhlak and Spiritual Well-Being

	Akhlak	Personal SWB	Communal SWB	Environmental SWB	Transcendental SWB
Akhlak	1				
Personal SWB	.205 .154	1			
Communal SWB	.341* .015	.422** .002	1		
Environmental SWB	.400** .004	.660** .000	.707** .000	1	
Transcendental SWB	.330* .019	.443** .001	.434** .002	.503** .000	1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

7. Discussion and Recommendation

In general, the total mean value shows that the students obtained medium level of Akhlak with the mean of 2.39. However, according to each construct, the students score medium level (mean value 2.30) in Akhlak towards Allah, medium level (mean value 2.40) in Akhlak towards Human Beings, and also medium level (mean value 2.48) in Akhlak towards Oneself. Thus it shows that Akhlak towards Oneself obtains/attains the highest mean value.

This finding is similar with the findings from Suraya Lin (2013) whereby her findings show that the highest mean value was also reported in Akhlak towards Oneself (mean = 3.82). In the study, Suraya Lin conducted the research in SMKA Johor Bahru with a total of 92 respondents. Her study suggests that the students has one of the criteria to be a good Muslim. This is also parallel with Al imam al-Ghazali in his book, Ihya' Ulumuddin. He had mentioned in detail about the importance of an individual to always take care of himself. According to al-Ghazali, a person has two parts which are the physical part and the spiritual part. Each person is accounted to take care of both parts according to Allah's rule. Therefore, the need to look after one's health and hygiene is a part of Akhlak that is compulsory in order to become a good Muslim.

Personal SWB is reported to obtain high mean value among the four domains. Fisher (2011) defines Personal SWB as self-consciousness in which the feeling is manifested through the act of joy, fulfilment, sense of identity, etc. Thus, this shows that the students have high self-consciousness. This finding is in line with a study from Ahmed, Fowler and Toro (2011) in which they found that private religiousness inversely correlated with stressful life events. However, based on the SWB model proposed by Fisher, one spiritual domain cannot stand alone or be separated from the other domains. Hence, if we refer to the findings, there is only a slight difference in the mean value of the four domains. This reflects that even though the students have high Personal SWB, they also possess

high Communal SWB, Environmental SWB and Transcendental SWB.

Akhlak and Spiritual Well-Being are distinguishable but cannot be separated because in Akhlak, there must be spirituality since spirituality will produce Akhlak. The finding reports that the students' akhlak has moderate positive correlation with Communal SWB, Environmental SWB, and Transcendental SWB. However, the statistical analysis shows that there is a weak positive correlation between students' Akhlak and Personal SWB. This finding is very interesting to be discussed as the result reports a unique relationship between Akhlak and Personal SWB. Based on Adlerian theory, people's views about themselves and the world and their distinctive behaviour will shape their lifestyle (Corey, 1996). Thus, it can be assumed that the students in this study do not have the right self-view which hinders their practice of good Akhlak. Whilst in many of the hadiths, one of those narrated by An-Nu'man bin Bashir says "There is a flesh in a body if it becomes good (reformed) the whole body becomes good but if it gets spoilt the whole body gets spoilt and that is the heart" [Sahih Bukhari]. Thus, this hadith shows the importance of having the right "self-awareness" according to Allah's description and not from other sources.

On the other hand, practicing good conduct can also appear as a form of disguise whereby people perform good deeds to get appreciation from others, to be accepted to certain groups, or to prove that they are better than the others. Thus, that is another possibility that may explain the weak connection between the students' Akhlak and Personal SWB. This is supported by a study from Shima Mashayekhi et al. (2011) whereby the researchers stated that there are two parts of self, namely true-self and ideal-self. The true-self is defined as who the person really is, a part where people usually hide it from the mass, whereas the ideal-self is defined as who the person wants to be portrayed as and the ideal-self is the one that is often displayed to the public. Hence, the good conduct as in Akhlak can be manipulated to gain respect from the public.

In conclusion, all parties including parents, school, and the ministry must work hand-in-hand in order to nurture the adolescents' Akhlak since character building does not happen overnight. The spirit of the National Education Philosophy and Education Blueprint must be embraced by all parties to ensure the effectiveness of our education program in producing holistic students.

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