

Psychological Well-Being of Adolescents in Selangor, Malaysia

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Psychological well-being is an important measure in understanding the state of happiness and satisfaction of life that leads to the achievement of full potential and optimal level of functioning that determines success among adolescents. This study aims to measure the level of psychological well-being among adolescents of secondary schools from four districts in Selangor state in Malaysia. A quantitative survey design study carried out among 252 adolescents (aged 16 years old) with a mixed sampling method. The Ryff Psychological well-being scales (42 items) was used as the instrument. The data was analysed via *Statistical Package for Social Studies* (SPSS) version 25. Findings shows that majority adolescents in Selangor have moderate level of psychological well-being. The findings of this study gives an understanding on the adolescents' issues in Selangor. The implications of the current study for school level interventions are also discussed. In conclusion, its recommended that there should be more focused attention given to increase the level of psychological well-being among adolescents.

Keywords: psychological well-being, adolescents, well-being, happiness

Psychological well-being of adolescents is one of the dimensions of well-being that has become popular among researchers. Adolescence is a crucial period which marks with development of self-image and negative thoughts which becomes particularly salient in relation to the development mental health problems (Leve, 2015). In the 2015 National Health Morbidity Survey (NHMS) in Malaysia recorded that mental health prevalence at 29.2% compared to 10.7% in the year 1996 among Malaysian population aged 16 and above. On the other hand, the NHMS 2017 reported that the level of mental health related issues of adolescents in the state of Selangor was at 12.8 % and is found to be the second highest compared to other states in Malaysia (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2017).

Since adolescence period is a transitional stage of physical and psychological development that generally takes place, adolescents often associated with involvement in various social problems (Abshah Atiah & Mohamad Isa, 2019). Researchers portray adolescence period as a critical period of life in past studies as teenagers face key stressors like educational stress, relationship issues, socio-economic and social change problems and cultural aspects (Kok & Low, 2019).

Adolescence period is a transitional stage with physical and psychological development among adolescents as it could cause conflicts and influence the future of a adolescents as they reach adulthood (Mohd Suhairi et al., 2020). Psychological well-being refers to the search for quality based on the

acknowledgement of the full potential and optimal level of functioning of individuals (Ryff, 1989a). Psychological well-being of adolescents is one of the dimensions of well-being that has become widely held among researchers.

Psychological well-being among adolescents is influenced by various factors including social support (Mariani, Asnarulkhadi, & Filzah Nashua, 2018), resilience (De Caroli & Sagone, 2016), school climate (Aldridge & McChesney, 2018), religion practice (Abdel-Khalek & Tekke, 2019), health quality (Boehm & Kubzansky, 2012), coping (Greenaway et al., 2015), self-esteem (Bajaj, Gupta, & Pande, 2016). Psychological well-being has also been highlighted as a contributing factor of social and emotional development among adolescents as it attributes to the sense of autonomy, self-acceptance, individual development, determination in life and self-respect of adolescents' (Repetti & Bai, 2015).

The prevalence of high-risk behaviours among adolescents is reported to have been detected in urban areas. The state of Selangor is the central point of urbanization (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2018). Adolescents of Selangor are said to have the possibility of being involved in high-risk behaviour due to high levels of urbanization (Nik Farid et al., 2016). Moreover, there is evidence that parental involvement in Selangor, in terms of home care of adolescents, is at a low level (Sulaiman, Halilli, Khalid, & Saleh, 2017).

Adolescents with higher levels of psychological well-being are expected to see themselves as growing and expanding; open to new experiences physically and mentally; able to develop new attitudes and behaviours (García-Alandete, 2015). Identification of the psychological well-being of adolescents is important to be given enough attention because they

(adolescents) will be contributing to the overall future growth of people in particular and world in general (Nik Daliana Nik Farid, Abqariyah Yahya, Nabilla Al-Sadat, 2016). Thus, there is a critical need for research that elucidates the level of psychological well-being. Therefore, this study aims to identify the level of Psychological well-being among school going adolescents in Selangor, Malaysia.

Literature Review

The theoretical model of The Ryff Psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989a) was implemented in this study. Ryff developed indicators of psychological well-being that are consistent with a "eudaimonic" perspective of happiness. Eudaimonic refers to the perception of real-life evaluation of an individual and his/her life functionalities, capacities, performance and social relations (Huta & Waterman, 2013). Taking this stance, Ryff's psychological well-being theory with a six-factor model was conceived by Carol D Ryff. The dimensions include subscales, namely Autonomy (make one's own decisions without relying on, or waiting for, the approval of others), Environmental mastery (choose environments, which align with one's needs and values), Personal growth (continuously grow and develop as a person; working towards optimising one's full potential), Positive relations with others (the capability to develop intimacy and to show empathy with others), Purpose in life (have goals in life and a sense that one's life has purpose and meaning) and Self-acceptance (hold positive attitudes towards self-actualization, optimal functioning, and maturity). The measured dimensions significantly explain the quality of life to the overall variance by revealing whether the level is high or low in the psychological well-being scale. Adolescents with a high score are believed

to be happy and function positively.

Individuals with greater psychological well-being are perceived as those who have a sense of autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance. Individuals who have mastered these subscales are believed to have fulfilment of life and achievement in life satisfaction (Pavot & Diener, 2009; Ryff, 1989b). Adolescents who demonstrate higher levels of psychological well-being are expected to see self as growing and expanding; open to new experiences physically and mentally; and able to develop new attitudes and behaviours.

Happiness is the greatest product of psychological well-being. Happiness is considered as the highest objective of life (Boehm & Kubzansky, 2012). Pleasure and happiness are achieved through the absence of negative effects, aside from the presence of positive affects (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Additionally, Ed Diener & Eunkook Suh, (1997) stated that psychological well-being relates to how individuals judge their life on the basis of their intelligence and affective factors, whether good or bad.

Psychological well-being is directly related to the balance between negative and positive experiences of a person (Bradburn, 1968). Adolescents who go through negative experiences directly and/or indirectly, i.e. have been abused physically or mentally, are exposed to psychological impact (Ghani, 2018).

Method

Since this study involves national secondary school students, the researcher has to obtain approval in the form of written permission from the Malaysian Educational Policy Planning and Research Division (EPRD) unit to conduct data

collection operations within the selected schools. Data findings of this study were obtained through the presence of measurement tools, the researcher gets information of the current situation of the state of psychological well-being among adolescents. Written concern was obtained from the participants and they were assured about the anonymity and confidentiality of the data collection. However, informed consent was applied in this study to enable an understanding among the respondents on the purpose of the study. The establishment of a parental consent form in this study was another effort in maintaining the ethical concern. A short briefing was delivered by the researcher on the purpose of the activity. Respondents were asked to circle the number that best reflected themselves. It took approximately ten minutes for respondents to circle their responses.

Research design

This study is quantitative in nature utilizing a survey design. The researcher gets information on the current situation of the state of psychological well-being among adolescents through measurement tools.

Population

Adolescents whom are (aged 16 years old) studying in form four at national secondary schools in Selangor state are the focus of this study. Selangor is a conurbation which encompasses a large number of people of several towns with the suburbs of a central city (Muhammad Fadzil, 2015).

Sample size

The researcher chose four districts out of ten districts in Selangor with dense populations based on a purposive sampling method, namely; Gombak, Petaling Utama, Petaling Perdana and Klang and the involved schools as to ensure with a good blend of race among adolescents. Total samples needed for the research were

calculated with the use of “G*Power” software; version 2019 which calculated the number of samples based on the number of variables involved in the proposed study. The researcher needed only 252 respondents (N= 84 Malay, N=84 Chinese and N=84 Indian). Researcher used the stratified cluster sampling technique to choose adolescents from Malay, Chinese and Indians from the selected schools. The stratified cluster sampling technique was performed on the population which was divided into subgroups i.e. race.

Research instruments

Ryff’s psychological well-being scale is one of the most broadly used instruments to measure psychological well-being. The researcher selected the 42-item version as it was utilised to assess the psychological well-being of adolescents in Asian schools including Indonesia (Adhyatman Prabowo, 2016) as well as in Malaysia (Roslan, Ahmad, Nabilla, & Ghiami, 2017). This scale was translated into the Malay language by Wan Norhayati Wan Othman, (2014) and has a Cronbach value of .70.

The response format for all items involved a six-point Likert scale from '1=strongly disagree' to '6=strongly agree'. Items were also categorized according to the six dimensions in this scale. Seven items were designed to measure each dimension or subscale on the six-point Likert scale. The Ryff scale consisted of 20 positive and 22 negative items in order to reduce acquiescent biases in measuring the psychological construct. Negatively worded items were reverse scored so that high values designate greater well-being. For example, if a circled score is 6, the adjusted score is 1. If a shaded score is 5, the adjusted score is 2.

Answers were then totalled for each of the six dimensions. A high score shows that the respondent has achieved greater psychological well-being in that zone in his or her life. The highest score is 252 while the lowest is 42. Conversely, a respondent with a low score reflects that he or she struggles with that particular dimension of psychological well-being. However, there are three ranges of psychological well-being levels identified to explain the psychological aspects achieved by an individual: high, moderate and low as explained in table 1.

Table 1

Psychological Well-Being Levels

Level of psychological well-being (PWB)	Score range	Score
High PWB	185.87 - 221.00	186-252
Moderate PWB	140.15 - 185.86	141-185
Low PWB	140.14 – 112.00	0-140

Data Analysis

The data from the research instruments were numerically scored and quantified with the use of a statistical test. The descriptive analysis, such as mean scores

and standard deviations were obtained through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 25.

Results

The profile of the 252 respondents who participated in this study were 16 years old adolescents who study in general secondary schools in Kelang, Petaling Perdana, Gombak and Petaling Utama; the high dense districts of Selangor state. The sample included 126 boys and 126 girls of

Malay, Chinese and Indian race (84 respondents in each race).

Calculations were done to perform the statistical description analysis in order to explain the psychological well-being level of adolescents in Selangor. The mean score and standard deviations were obtained as the results of the calculations.

Table 2

Mean and standard deviation of psychological well-being (PWB) among adolescents in Selangor

Race	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Malay	84	160.30 (3)	22.93	112.00	221.00
Chinese	84	163.29 (2)	24.03	113.00	220.00
Indian	84	165.42 (1)	21.55	131.00	221.00
Total	252	163.01	22.86	112.00	221.00

As shown in table 2, the total mean score achieved by adolescents in Selangor is 163.01 with a minimum score of 112.00 and maximum of 221.00. The mean score of the respondents according to race shows there were only slight differences. The overall mean was used to compute the range of psychological well-being. The total mean score was added to the standard

deviation within the maximum (221) score to determine the high level of psychological well-being. Additionally, the total mean score was subtracted from the standard deviation within the minimum range (112). Table 3 explains the levels of psychological well-being and the score range supported with percentages involved. Further analyses were carried out to analyses the level of psychological well-being among adolescents in Selangor.

Table 3

Level of Psychological well-being among adolescents in Selangor

Level of psychological well-being (PWB)	Score range	N=252	%
High PWB	185.87 - 221.00	43	17.06 %
Moderate PWB	140.15 - 185.86	171	67.86 %
Low PWB	112.00 - 140.14	38	15.08 %

The majority (67.86% -171) of the respondents fall under a moderate level Psychological well-being. Only 17.06%

(43) respondents reported to have achieved a high level of psychological well-being. Meanwhile, it was also shown that 38

respondents (15.08%) demonstrated a low psychological well-being level.

Environmental mastery, Personal growth, Autonomy and Self-acceptance.

The differences between the means found on the basis of each dimension among adolescents in Selangor were shown in Table 4 according to the hierarchy of the highest to the lowest mean score in brackets with numbers (). The findings show that the highest mean score has been reported for Positive relations dimension and followed by Purpose in life,

Table 4

The Psychological well-being on six dimensions of The Ryff Theory among Adolescents in Selangor.

Dimensions	Positive Relations	Purpose of Life	Environmental Mastery	Personal Growth	Autonomy	Self-acceptance
Mean	28.1706 (1)	27.8095 (2)	27.3968 (3)	27.0556 (4)	26.4286 (5)	26.1508 (6)

() mean position is in the bracket .

Discussion

The findings of the research show that the majority of adolescents who were involved in this study possessed rather moderate levels of overall psychological well-being, followed by a small percentage of adolescents were categorized as having high levels of psychological well-being. The remainder of the adolescents from Selangor involved in the study fell under the lower-level psychological well-being group.

Psychological well-being is perceived as a process which lies between management and compromise of positive and negative emotions as a reaction to external stimuli. This study’s findings are in line with the findings of earlier studies which describe adolescents whom are from different

environments have differences in terms of quality of the living (Bakar, Osman, Bachok and Ibrahim, 2016), parenting style (Moreira, Gouveia, & Canavarro, 2018) and peer attachment (Gini, Marino, Pozzoli and Holt, 2018) that are expected to have different levels of psychological well-being.

The statement of Deci and Ryan, (2008) about medium scores in psychological well-being dimensions prior to the understanding of adolescents in fulfilling human potential also supports the findings of this study. Adolescents in Selangor are in developmental stage in most aspects of life as they are still collecting data to be interpreted related to social behaviour. The findings of this study are in line with the statement of Silk, Steinberg and Morris,

(2003) as the adolescent period is viewed with complications and difficulties due to confusions held after the physical and emotional changes. This study also agrees that psychological well-being is highly unstable as adolescents have very little information on ideal functionality and positive development as discovered by Gilman, Scott Huebner and Furlong, (2009).

The researcher agrees with the findings on academic stress and its association with psychological well-being by Liga et al, (2020) who described that parents used to demand perfection and high levels of achievements via psychological control of adolescents that leads to emotional and psychological dependency on the parent. In addition, the researcher also supports that adolescents in Selangor is with academic stress is related as it has a significant relationship with coping behaviours. Adolescents should be exposed to coping behaviours as it would enhance greater psychological well-being (Kuo, Soucie, Huang, and Laith, 2018).

Great psychological well-being is about lives going well. It's about having a combination of good feelings and effective functioning which involves the development of one's potential, having some control over one's life, experiencing positive relationships and have live goals (García-Alandete, 2015). Meanwhile, the researcher revealed that only a small number of the adolescents in Selangor have achieved high levels of psychological well-being in this study. Thus, the researcher supports that the statement on the stability of psychological well-being during the period of adolescence depends on the balanced development of the adolescent through the quality of the life events perceived or ventured. This finding is in line with the research findings of Freire, Ferradás, Valle, Núñez, and Vallejo, (2016) which revealed that high psychological well-being was

distinguished by higher coping strategies that interacted as a resource to minimize academic stress levels.

Thus, interventions should be employed to increase the level of psychological well-being of the adolescents in Selangor in order to support achievement of their life dreams and potentials since the quality of student learning is affected despite the presence of academic stress. Adolescents with high psychological well-being could contribute towards his or her life goals by maximizing potentials as well as be surrounded by positive social supports. It would be very fruitful if the adolescents of Selangor are approached to enhance or improve greater psychological well-being by stakeholders in the education setting. The researcher supports the findings of Norsayyidatina Che Rozubi, (2017) who has performed a psychological well-being program in a school setting and revealed that it is possible to achieve greater scores of psychological well-being.

The results of this study show that 15.08% of adolescents in Selangor reported to be in a low level of psychological well-being. The findings of Nik Farid et al., (2016) delineates that low level of psychological well-being is significant with the wide range of high risk behaviours among adolescents as they may develop high risk behaviours that could affect well-being in later stages of their life. A past study on psychological well-being done by Madon, (2014) reports that a low level of psychological well-being is due to the instability among adolescents in Selangor as a result of physical development, finding self-identity, low level of self-management and low self-autonomy.

Psychological Well-Being as an intellectual paradigm to measure an adolescent's status of feeling good and functioning well (Huppert, 2009). Thus, the researcher also suggests that these low psychological well-being groups of

adolescents need special attention from the community to reach maximum potential and feel good about themselves through happiness. This suggestion is in line with Salgong, Ngumi and Chege, (2016) as they suggested enhancement of a strong relationship between students and counsellors, while teachers and administrators would solve discipline issues in schools. Apart from school-level interventions, parental monitoring should be demonstrated in inhibiting behavioural problems among adolescents (Low, Tan, Nainee and Viapude, 2018).

The results of this study showed that the majority of the adolescents in Selangor are at a moderate level of psychological well-being. This situation elaborates that adolescents in Selangor most likely need to improve their lifestyle. This is because the higher the level of psychological well-being, the fewer social problems. A higher level of psychological well-being is the main platform for adolescents to respond to a challenging environment. Lower psychological well-being was proven to be associated with environmental mastery. Adolescents with higher psychological well-being would have a better perception of this environment which includes counselling services of the school as a mental health service provider.

The differences of mean score according to the six dimensions has been recorded among adolescents in Selangor. The study noted the highest mean score on (1) positive relations dimensions: high score in this dimension reflects that adolescents in this study had secured parent-child attachments which enable them to develop and explore relationships with others including peers confidently as examined by Jay Belsky, (2016) . In addition, they also have the possession of respect, helping each other and able to tolerate with others in order to maintain relationships. (2) purpose in life: the finding of this study is in line the findings of Manchelah,

(2017) that revealed the impacts of school programs, career fair and motivational activities that bring adolescents closer to realizing their goals of life. (3) environmental mastery: The results indicates that adolescents in this study is are able to understand their social role and physical security gained from the environment (school and home) as it is consistent with the findings of Mazzucchelli & Purcell, (2015) on the environmental influence on the enhancement of psychological well-being. In addition, the results obtained indicates that adolescents have the capability to choose the right need from the environment especially social media as it influences their psychological well-being considering that it formed positive and negative emotions. (4) personal growth: adolescents in Selangor are feeling challenged about the personal thoughts on emotions and emerging physical changes as well as lacks sense of improvement. This findings is similar to the findings of (Yazdani et al., 2018) as they found physical obesity among adolescents leads to lower psychological well-being. In addition, the results of this study not in line with the study of Wischerth, Mulvaney, Brackett, & Perkins, (2016) that reports permissive parenting and emotional intelligence predicts increased personal growth where parents limits emotional growth. (5) autonomy: has been recorded low among adolescents who participated in this study. This is because adolescents are still in parental supervision and psychological control. Research results is similar with findings that adolescents were just poor in decision making as reported by Zainal Madon, (2014). Besides that, some adolescents shift their decision making process involves from parents to their peer support. This finding is constant with the findings of Huang, Wang, & Ringel-Kulka, (2015) that described peer support is significant in predicting higher global life satisfaction (6) self-acceptance: has been reported as

the lowest mean score of all the dimensions. Results reveals that adolescents in Selangor feel dissatisfied or disappointed with their past as well as not confident about themselves and dislike most aspects of their personalities. This statement is similar to the findings of Ghani, (2018) which asserts that life events is essential as it enables an individual to move comprehensively towards self-satisfaction via accumulative life events that happens.

Conclusion

This study includes the perspectives on a whole landscape of psychological well-being on the samples taken in Selangor. According to Ryff Psychological well-being theory, adolescents with higher psychological well-being are described as happy with their life due to the greatest functions in terms of academic, social skills, social support and being physically healthy. It is quite worrisome as the higher and lower levels of psychological well-being among adolescents are still in a small percentage of the sample of the population. The moderate level of psychological well-being adolescents should be given attention as it is proven by past studies that interventions works in enhancing greater level of psychological well-being (Norsayyidatina Che Rozubi, 2017). Hence, focused interventions

should be arranged in the near future as to enhance the psychological well-being of adolescents in Selangor.

As for the implications for the findings of the study, the schools could empower the intervention modules on integrating psychological well-being among adolescents, with the following aspects taken into consideration: (1.) leadership (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013), (2.) resilience (Mayordomo, Viguier, Sales, Satorres and Meléndez, 2016), (3.) decision making (Zakri Abdullah and Rahman, 2015), (4.) life satisfaction (Zainal Madon, Randall Chirng, Haslee Sharil Lim, Abdullah and Lau, (2016) and (5.) critical and creative thinking (Ali and Noordin, 2010). These five aspects would be the vital inputs for adolescents to enhance their psychological well-being.

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