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The Relationship between Psychological Well-Being and University Students Academic Achievement

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Abstract

This study aims to measure psychological well-being and its relationship with academic achievement of the students from Sultan Idris Education University. Information gained through questionnaire distributed to 542 second year undergraduate students in Sultan Idris Education University. Psychological well-being is measured based on Psychological Well-Being Instrument (Ryff, 1989). Academic achievement is measured based on Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA). Descriptive analysis has shown that most students indicate intermediate and high level psychological well-being. The analysis of psychological well-being dimension shows that most students have high purpose in life meanwhile another psychological well-being dimensions which are autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationship with others and self-acceptance are at intermediate level. Correlation analysis indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between psychological well-being and academic achievement. The result of this study shows that there is a significant positive correlation between the dimensions of psychological well-being which are environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationship with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance with academic achievement. In conclusion, this study shows that most students portrays positive attitude as well as accepting themselves, have control over their environment, self-autonomous, able to maintain positive relationship with others, have clear life meaning and goals as well as the presence of continuous personal growth and development. This study implies that university need to design continuous program to help students especially to those whom have low level of psychological well-being due to its relationship with academic achievement.

Keywords: Psychological Well-being, Academic Achievement, University Students.

Introduction

Psychological well-being involves a better life and includes positive feelings and effective functionality (Huppert, 2009). According to Asmawati, Asmah and Zaini (2009) psychological well-being also refers to well-being acquired from various aspects such as social, psychological needs, or the need for freedom that gives impact to personal growth. Park (2004) stated that the well-being perspective is a perspective that involves humanity deeply. Life satisfaction of an individual is a sign

that well-being in life will become the predictor and mediator to the production of self well-being. Compared to individuals whom have high life satisfaction, those with low life satisfaction usually face difficulties in achieving well-being in life especially teenagers. Well-being in life determines and affects daily life either positively or negatively towards psychological development and individual attitude.

Therefore, to conceptualize the multi-dimensional nature of psychological well-being, Ryff (1989) claimed that favorable psychological performance involves various intersecting features that resulted from the incorporation of "clinical, mental health, and life span developmental theories", such as self-acceptance, positive relationship with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. This is based on the core dimensions of psychological well-being and their theoretical dimensions. These dimensions are 1) self-acceptance (state of having positive thoughts and feelings about oneself); 2) positive relationship with others (ability to engage in warm and trusting relationship with others); 3) autonomy (ability to be independent and cope with social pressure); 4) environmental mastery (ability to adapt, change, or create one's environment according to one's needs through physical and mental activities); 5) purpose in life (state of having objectives and goals in life and working towards achieving a goal); and 6) personal growth (continuously growing and developing as oneself).

There are numerous studies that relate psychological well-being with academic achievement. According to Simpson and Weiner (1989) achievement is viewed as an action of accomplishing by effort. In the context of education, achievement test intends to measure systematic education and training towards a conventionally accepted pattern of skills or knowledge. Academic achievement is an important variable to measure students' performance. Bruce and Neville (1979) advanced the notion that academic achievement is measured by standardized achievement test developed for faculty subjects.

A study by Hart (2016) showed that subjective well-being did not have a significant relationship with academic achievement. Wilcox and Nordstokke (2019) indicated that academic satisfaction and school connectedness predicted satisfaction in life, but academic self-efficacy and college gratitude did not, conscientiousness predicted academic self-efficacy, college well-being predicted self-reported achievement, and anxiety predicted achievement but depression did not. Another study by Bukhari and Khanam (2017) showed that academic performance was negatively correlated to depression whereas significantly positively correlated to subjective happiness and life. In addition, a study conducted by Khairani, Idris and Shamsuddin (2018) showed that there was a moderate and positive relationship between social psychological functioning and academic achievement.

Studies related with psychological well-being are very important because if students' psychological well-being is good and prosperous, they can function more effectively and this might influence their academic achievement. According to Amato (1994) teenagers with low psychological well-being can cause unhappiness, dissatisfaction in life and low self-esteem which will bring the implication of them facing higher level of pressure.

Problem Statement

White and Jackson (2004) referred to psychological well-being as emotional health based on high self appreciation, positive relationship with others, less worried, not depressed and not behaving delinquently. According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), psychological well-being focused on positive psychology which refers to psychological well-being not just to the presence of pathologies such as depression and sadness, but the presence of positive qualities and strengths. Herzog and Strevey (2008) also contributed to the definition of psychological well-being. It can be defined as the absence of suffering, pain, and stress and the presence of a positive state.

There are studies on university students in Malaysia related to psychological well-being such as stress and depression as well as academic achievement. A study by Ramachandiran and Dhanapal (2018) on 124 university students showed that majority of the respondents, or 78.2% of the respondents, fell under the moderate level of stress category, followed by those in the high level (12.9%) category. Only a small number of respondents (8.9%) fell under the low level of stress category.

A study by Lee and Syaid (2017) on 379 university students indicated that the majority of the students enjoyed normal mental health in the three different mental health states. However, about 11.3% of the students were inclined to need specific intervention for depression, about 22.9% for anxiety and about 4.8% for stress. The findings indicated that the top five dominant factors in descending order were personal health condition, peers, the lost, parents and self-evaluation. Personal health condition in this study refers to bad health habits, for example, smoking and alcohol addiction. The findings also proved that most of the respondents felt depressed when a learning environment was uncomfortable or they were having relationship problems with parents, friends and lecturers.

Shamsuddin et. al., (2013) conducted a study on 506 students between the age of 18 and 24 years old from four public universities where the researchers found out that among the students, 27.5% had moderate, and 9.7% had severe or extremely severe depression; 34% had moderate, and 29% had severe or extremely severe anxiety; and 18.6% had moderate and 5.1% had severe or extremely severe stress scores. Zakaria et. Al (2017) studied the relationship between life satisfaction and academic achievement among trainee teachers. The result indicated that high-achieving students (66.7%) have moderately high level of life satisfaction. Therefore, based on the problem statement, some university students have psychological well-being problem and it might affect their academic performance. Hence, this study will measure the correlation between psychological well-being and academic achievement among university students.

Research Objectives

The objective of this study is to identify the level of psychological well-being and its relationship with academic achievement of students from Sultan Idris Education University.

Methodology

This study is a survey study. Data for this study was acquired using questionnaire. Respondents of this study are second year students who were randomly picked among UPSI students. This study was

conducted in 9 faculties available in Sultan Idris Education University. This study involved 20 Bachelor of Education and non education programs in Sultan Idris Education University. Psychological well-being is measured based on Psychological Well-Being Instrument (Ryff, 1989). This instrument consists of six dimensions which are autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationship with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance with academic achievement. Academic achievement is measured based on Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA).

Findings

A total of 542 second year students answered the distributed questionnaire. Majority of the respondents in this study are female students, as many as 272 respondents (68.6%) and 170 of the respondents (31.4%) are male students.

Descriptive analysis for respondents' psychological well-being shows that 321 respondents (59.2%) have high level of psychological well-being, followed by moderate level as many as 219 respondents (40.4%) and low level, 2 respondents (0.4%). Descriptive analysis for psychological well-being shows autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationship with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance are at intermediate and high level.

Table 1 The relationship between six dimensions of psychological well-being which are autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationship with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance with academic achievement.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Autonomy	1						
2. Environmental mastery	0.097*	1					
3. Personal growth	0.086*	0.478*	1				
		*					
4. Positive relationship with others	0.059	0.366*	0.322*	1			
		*	*				
5. Purpose in life	0.108*	0.502*	0.538*	0.390*	1		
		*	*	*			
6. Self-acceptance	0.333*	0.45**	0.301*	0.347*	0.474*	1	
	*		*	*	*		
7. Academic achievement	-0.004	0.097*	0.105*	0.366*	0.502*	0.091*	1
				*	*	*	

* $p < 0.5$, ** $p < 0.01$

Correlation analysis indicates that there is a significant relationship between psychological well-being and academic achievement, $r=0.131$, $p < 0.05$. Based on table 1, the result of this study shows that there is a significant positive correlation between the dimensions of psychological well-being which are environmental mastery $r=0.097$, $p < 0.05$, personal growth $r=0.105$, $p < 0.05$, positive relationship with others $r=0.366$, $p < 0.01$, purpose in life $r=0.502$, $p < 0.01$ and self-acceptance $r=0.091$, $p < 0.01$ with academic achievement. There is no significant relationship between psychological well-being dimension autonomy with academic achievement.

According to Hinckle, Wiersma and Jurs (1988) the correlation between psychological well-being and its dimensions with academic achievement is weak. The result of the study indicated moderate correlation between psychological dimension purpose in life with self-accomplishment and environmental mastery. There is a weak and low correlation between psychological well-being and its dimension with academic performance. Table 1 also shows that there is only intermediate level of correlation between personal growth with purpose in life $r=0.502$, $p<0.01$. There is no significant correlation between psychological well-being dimension autonomy with positive relations with others.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The findings of this study show that there is a significant relationship between psychological well-being and academic achievement. This indicates that psychological well-being have affect on academic achievement. Therefore, it implies that when psychological well-being increases, so does academic achievement. The result of this study indicates that there is a significant positive correlation between the dimensions of psychological well-being which are environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationship with others, personal goals and self-acceptance with academic achievement.

Hence, it highlights the importance of psychological well-being; because if students' psychological well-being is good and prosperous, they can function more effectively and this might influence their academic achievement. Students with low psychological well-being may cause unhappiness, dissatisfaction in life and low self-esteem which will brings the implication of them facing higher level of pressure. This situation might disturbs their academic achievement. This study supports a research conducted by Maria Chong Abdullah, Luo Lan Kong and Abd Rahim Talib (2014) which also proved that there is a significant positive relationship among students whom received social suport to adjust themselves in university which related to academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, involvement in university and academic achievement.

Respondents' psychological well-being are at moderate and high level. This shows that they are confident in voicing out their opinions even if goes against the majority. They can make sound judgement based on what they deemed important and does not influenced by others in making decision. They did not feel burdened with various responsibilities and able to manage it well. In addition, they are able to adapat well with surrounding people and community. In term of personal growth, they feel that they experienced continuous process of learning, changes and development that make them more mature throughout their life. Most of them also possess the ability to maintain positive relationship with others. They have purpose in life and like to make plans for their future and they strive to turn it into reality. In term of self-acceptance, they are perceived as confident and have positive outlook towards themselves and satisfied with what they have been through in their life.

According to a study by Ganesan, Talwar, Fauzan and Oon (2018), individuals with good coping strategies such as constantly interacting with others, these individuals possess good psychological well-being. Therefore, the result of this study indicated an inverse correlation where it shows that the undergraduates who possess low stress level were likely to have a better stress coping strategy.

Another study by Sulaiman et. al (2013) proved that there are significant relationships between coping strategy and well-being, as well as social support with well-being. In addition, both coping strategy and social support significantly mediate the relationship between personality traits and well-being.

In conclusion, this study indicates that students' psychological well-being is at a decent level. However, there is a small number of students who might need assistance because they have shown low level of psychological well-being. They are easily stressed, worried and depressed which can cause the deterioration of their academic achievement. Therefore, university need to organize a continuous program to help these students. After students have enrolled in university, they might benefit from programs that support social connection, effective learning strategies for the differing demands of university, and mental health—both fostering mental health and providing help for those who experience mental health symptoms, especially in the areas of depression and anxiety. Moreover, coping behaviors appeared to be related to the students' well-being as well. Hence, counseling service can enhance students' psychological well-being. A counselor can explore different mental processes such as attention, memory, intellectual skills, thinking, personal qualities, self-awareness, ability to make connections and maintain relationships. During the counseling process, a counselor can help to enhance their self-esteem and gain positive world outlook in order to overcome the feeling of hopelessness. This process enable them to acquire the feeling of being in control and responsible for one's own actions, find solutions to everyday problems, identify their own strengths, enhance skills of dealing with stress, negative emotions and attempt to solve interpersonal conflicts.

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