

**SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING AND ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT
AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS.**

Mariani Omar^a; Nur Fadhilah bt Abdullah Fauzi^b
Department of Usuluddin, Faculty of Islamic Studies,
Kolej Universiti Islam Sultan Azlan Shah,
Bukit Chandan, 33000 Kuala Kangsar, Perak, **Malaysia**
E-mail: mariani@kuisas.edu.my
Email: fadhilahfauzi@kuisas.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Spirituality is increasingly awareness of well significance within the field of counseling. This study attempts to promote greater understanding of the relationship between spirituality and academic achievement. Total number of respondents involved in the study were 350 (177 males; 50.6% and 173; 49.4% females) which were recruited for the study from 4 campuses of Universiti Kuala Lumpur. This study investigated the relationship between spiritual and academic achievement among Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL students) using the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982) and grade point averages (GPA). Results showed significant correlations between the scores on the measures as a whole and among the subscales. This indicates that there is a relationship between spiritual well-being and academic achievement as related in this population.

Key words: Spiritual well-being, Academic achievement

Introduction

Spirituality and religion have relation with cognitive, emotional, behavioural, interpersonal and psychological facets that make up as a holistic approach to understand individuals.

Many researches have covered the religion and spiritual well-being have influenced in human lives. Earlier researches have shown that those who are more religious or spiritual, and use their spirituality to cope with life, experience many benefits to their health and well-being (Pargament & Park, 1997). Indeed, spiritual or religious belief has been acknowledged as support in dealing with many negative influences such as illness, stress and unhappiness (Harrison, Koenig, Hays, Eme-Akwari & Pargament, 2001). Since that researchers around the world have conducted many studies on various issues relating to spiritual or religious beliefs. Studies in western culture did show that there were relationships between religion and happiness as documented by Francis et al., (2000), however, in local context, not many studies have been conducted in relation to this issue.

This study focused on the relationship between spiritual well-being and academic among low achiever UniKL students. Spiritual well-being has been focused due to its effectiveness of influencing students to handle their life. The study was concerned with the relationship between spiritual study conducted by Ratliff (2005) indicated that more students left their college without finishing a degree. Nearly 2.8 million students who entered higher education for the first time, over 1.6 million left their college or university. Thus, it is very essential to understand the complex issues that students' commitment to meet individual goals and the willingness to fulfil with the academic and social demands of the institution. These related to the behaviours and habits as students pursue their personal goals (Corey, 1996). The greatest aspect of spiritual well-being is being able to give oneself strengths in various aspects of life. Spirituality is one component of faith development. The Islamic belief is based on the spiritual connection which is ultimately between Allah and servant. The Muslims who live a life of faith and good deeds validate

the purpose of the present life here and after for the good pleasure of Allah.

Previous studies related to this psychological and spiritual well-being in college students (Fehring, Brennan, & Keller, 1987) studied the relationship between spirituality and psychological mood states in response to life change. The results of the study found that spiritual variables had influence psychological well-being. Richter (2001) has also done a study about the correlation of psychological well-being and Christian spiritual well-being at a small Christian Liberal Arts College in the Urban Midwest showed the significant results.

Moreover, there were some studies which focused on religiosity and belief towards college student adjustment. The findings also showed religiosity and its association with positive and negative emotions among college students in Algeria (Abdel-Khalek and Naceur, 2007). Other study examined the religious belief change and its relationship to religiosity and coping variables (Edmondson & Park, 2009) the relationship between spiritual well-being and college adjustments in first year college students at a South-eastern University (Ratliff, 2005).

The focus of the study was to examine the relationship between spiritual well-being and academic achievement. Spirituality was measured by the Spiritual well-being scale and academic achievement was measured by GPA. In Malaysia specifically study on Muslim students is essential due to less research on the topic. Therefore, we embarked on this research to examine the relationship between spiritual well-being and academic achievement among the UniKL students, in terms of academic achievement.

Spirituality is believed to be at the fundamental of one's existence and affects, connects, and transcends all aspects of being (Abdel-Khalek, A. M. & Naceur, F., 2007). This view is supported by researchers who have established that spiritual well-being was positively related with many aspects of health (Ellison & Smith, 1991; Hackney & Sanders, 2003; Hammermeister et al., 2005). A spiritual process of meaning-making being seeking significance in an event can involve on all aspects of life, including work, interpersonal relationships, general philosophy of living, attitudes, and whatever that person's God may be (Pargament, 1997). Moreover, religious coping has demonstrated associations with a variety of social, personal, and situational factors, as well as links to psychological and physical health (Koenig & Fetterman, 1996). According to Isaia et al. (1999), spirituality allows individuals to find meaning in life, relate to a supreme power, experience, joy, and hope, and develop relationships.

The many researchers have also integrated the religiosity and spirituality into psychosocial models of adjustment. For instance, Ellison & Smith (1991) indicated that individuals recording high in spiritual well-being also have a trend to score high on psychological and relational scales. According to Hammermeister, J., Flint, M., El-Alayli, A., Ridnour, H., & Peterson, M (2005) had reviewed a number of literature and concluded that spiritual well-being had positive influenced on most aspects of health. Recently, Mohan, Sehgal, and Tripathi (2007) found significant positive correspondences between measures of spiritual well-being and psychological well-being among samples of adolescents. Miller and Thoresen (2003) exposed spirituality, religion, and health with three broad areas: the link between spirituality and physiological processes, epidemiological evidence linking morbidity and spirituality, and advances in the assessment of spirituality related variables; which demonstrates a consistent relationship

between religiosity or spirituality and various measures of health.

In counseling practices, the researchers also measured religion and spirituality in their studied (Burke, Hackney, Hudson, Mirianti, Watts, & Epp, 1999; Faiver, Ingersoll, O'Brien, & McNally, 2001). They concluded that spirituality was the main component of counseling and psychotherapy to make the process more effective. Hall, Dixon, & Mauzey (2004) also decided that religion and spirituality were important issues for the counseling profession. Miranti and Burke (1995) have contended that the challenge for counselors is not whether the issues should be addressed, but that they are addressed by well-prepared and sensitive professionals. Therefore, researchers have proposed that spirituality and religion should be included in the counseling process (Powers 2005; & Young, Wiggins-Frame & Cashwell, 2007) because counselors have an ethical imperative to completely raise the value of and recognize the opinions of their clients (Ruffin, N. R. & Wickman, S. A., 2011)). Consequently, the American Counseling Association began sequence of talks among professionals specializing in the topics of spirituality, religion, and counseling. Therefore considering ways that all counselors can address their training by association spiritual, ethical, and religious values in counselling needs was important (Burke, et al., 1999; Hinterkopf, 1998; Young et al., 2002).

In order to gain more understanding of spirituality and counsellor's development, research has generally integrated spiritual and religion into counselling (Ruffin, N. R. & Wickman, S. A. (2011). The findings had reinforced the needs for a religious and spiritual course in counsellor education programs. Additionally, professional counselors who fail to address these important identity constructs for clients are thus

partially promoting absence of wellness by ignoring client strength resources. Moreover, other study by S. S. I mam, Noor Harun A. K., Nor Radziah J., Nor Ehsaniah M. (2009) investigated the relationship between religious commitment, spiritual well-being, and psychological well-being in 278 undergraduate students. Their findings revealed a positive relationship between spiritual well-being full Spiritual Well-Being Scale, Religious Well-Being and Existential Well-Being. Other research studies of spiritual well-being and mental health among Malaysian adolescents, found the importance of spirituality as a resilience factor might help children to cope with physiologic, physical and psychological changes through adolescence, successful (Nurizan, Y., Yadollah Abolfathi Momtaz, Mumtazah O., Norhasmah S., & Farhan M. A., 2012). Kelly (1995) also discussed the core shared meanings and the distinction between the terms spirituality and religion in counseling and psychotherapy. He indicated that beneath the common understandings of the term spirituality, there is affirmation of transcendence or otherness. Although this transcendence is reflected within the boundaries of everyday culture and manifested in identifiable religious forms, it points beyond the boundaries of the ordinary and tangible. More recently, Corey, G. (2012) stated that "Religion and spirituality are often part of the client's problem and it can also be a part of the client's solution".

For the purpose of this study, the concept of spirituality was not measured, only the concept of spiritual well-being as operationalized by the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) (Ellison, 1983). The measures of spiritual well-being are general indicators and helpful estimates of the underlying spiritual state of individuals.

Statement of the Problem

Recently, the institutions of higher education were concerned with providing with effective counseling services to students

to improve the quality academic and life in campus. Regarding that research studies had noted the unwillingness to seek help from counselling services among university students (Salim, 2010) was very high. Indeed the students with estimate one third of students who could benefit from receiving actually counselling but not doing so. The service gap' concluded that some students are struggling through issues without receiving the potential benefits of counselling (Creamer, 1999). In the statement of not receiving support among students can cause students' continued distress, and poor academic performance or withdrawal from university becoming big issue. Therefore, spiritual and religious could be one of the solutions for help students to deal effectively with the challenges. Much of research focused between spiritual and religious and the psychological health. There is a little or no research found in the literature that investigates the relationship between spiritual well-being and academic in Malaysia.

In order to understand what keeps students from not seeking help, this research come forward to examine the relationship between spiritual well-being and academic achievement as the solution to the problem.

Researcher found that religion was basically related to personal and cultural identity, motivation, purpose and hope among the university students. Overall, UniKL students have possessed unique background characteristics such as needs of social support, increased distress and needs of social integration could lead to influence help seeking behaviour. Most the respondents are Malays as the dominant race (97.4%) and Islam religion is an essential part of their cultural life and only 1.4 per cent Chinese, Indian 0.9 per cent and others races 0.3 per cent. Although previous research has found connections among spiritual and religious and psychological health, but terms spirituality was utilized in many research studies have different meaning and aspects.

The UniKL low achiever students and spiritual well-being has directly predicted the intention to seek help.

Methods

Participants

The main reason UniKL was chosen as the population of this research was due to the students from UniKL can represent the dynamic of university students who were unique. Spiritual well-being among the students can be assumed from the development of Islamic values of campus life. The total 350 students were chosen through convenient sampling procedure; 71 students from UniKL MSI, 90 students from UniKL MIMET, 92 students from UniKL BMI and another 97 students from UniKL MFI. This study was intended to examine the significance of the spiritual well-being among low academic achievement students will indirectly predict intention to seek help. The participants were meeting on a weekly basis for ongoing counselling programs. They also were participants who walked in to see counsellors some for motivation advisory. The researcher was informed by the counsellors that their students had joining the group the intervention program. Therefore, it is safe to assume that the members who participated in this study were highly active and aware to participate in the study.

Instrument: Spiritual Well-Being Scale

The Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) established by Paloutzian and Ellison in 1982. The study has adapted Malay version of Spiritual Well Being scale developed by Imam, Karim, Jusoh and Mamad (1999). Previous studies reported high test-retest reliabilities ($r = .73$ to $.99$); internal consistency reliabilities ($r = .78$ to $.94$); construct validity and two-factor structure of the scale (Ellison & Smith, 1991, as cited in Imam, et al., 1999). The SWBS consists of 20 items. Ten items are designed to measure Existential Well-Being

(EWB) and the remaining 10 items measure the dimension of Religious Well-Being. Responses range from strongly agree to strongly disagree on a 6-point Likert scale. The instrument and the subscales have high reliability.

Procedure

A convenience sample from UniKL four Campuses was recruited. The number of participant was chosen were 350 students based on the hypothesized power and effect of the study. The researcher had sent email to UniKL counsellors through the selected campus where the participants were recruited. In order to assure confidentiality and anonymity, consent forms were kept separately from the demographic questionnaire and assessments. Participants were given the questions in English version of the SWBS. In order to minimize researcher influence, only a literal translation of the question was given.

Results

1.0 Demographic data

The sample of 350 participants was included of 177 males and 173 females. Ages ranged from 18 to 19 years (94 participants; 26.8%), 20 to 23 years (217 participants; 62.0%), 24 to 25 years (32 participants; 9.1%) and 26 years and above (7 participants; 2.0%).

Table 1.0: Frequencies and Percentages of Gender

Item	Frequency	Percent (%)
Males	177	50.58
Females	173	49.42
Total	350	100

Table 1.1: Frequencies and Percent of UniKL' students by campus

UniKL campus	Frequency	Percent (%)
MSI	71	20.3

MIMET	90	25.7
BMI	92	26.3
MFI	97	27.7
Total	350	100

Table 1.1 showed the respondents according to UniKL campus; 97 respondents of University Kuala Lumpur Malaysian France Institute (UniKL MFI), 92 respondents of UniKL British Malaysian Institute (UniKL BMI), 90 respondents, University Kuala Lumpur Malaysian Institute of Marine Engineering Technology (UniKL MIMET) and 71 respondents from University Kuala Lumpur Malaysian Spanish Institute UniKL MSI.

Table 1.2: Frequency and percentages range of age

Age ranged	Frequency	Percent (%)
18 -19 years	94	26.80
20-23 years	217	62.00
24-25 years	32	9.10
26 years and above	7	2.00
Total	350	100

Table 1.2 showed frequency and percent of age ranged. There were 217 respondents at range age of 20-23 years, 24-25 years, 32 respondents (9.10%) and 26 years and above 7 respondents (2.0%).

Table 1.3: Frequency and percent of Academic achievement Grade Point Average (GPA)

GPA	Frequency	Percent (%)
Below 2.00	83	24.30
2.01-2.50	265	75.70
Total	350	100

Table 1.3 showed that academic achievement through Grade Point Average (GPA). There were about 265 (75.70%) respondents GPA 2.01-2.50 and 83 (24.30%) respondent got GPA below 2.00.

Analysis Data

The highest score for both the Religious Well-Being Scale (RWBS) and for the Existential Well-Being Scale (EWBS) is 60. Thus, the highest score possible for the SWBS is 120. Participants' scores on the RWBS ranged from 29 to 60 with a mean of 53.06 and a standard deviation of 7.35. For the EWBS, the range was also 29 to 60, with a mean of 49.83 and a standard deviation of 7.80. For the full scale (SWBS), scores ranged from 64 to 120 with a mean of 102.81 and standard deviation of 13.92.

Table 2: Corrected Item-Total Correlations (r) and Cronbach's Alpha (α), if Item Deleted ($n = 350$)

Items	r	α
1. I don't find much satisfaction in private prayer with Allah	.44	.67
2. I don't know who I am, where I came from, or where I'm going		
3. I believe that Allah loves me and cares about me.		
4. I feel that life is a positive experience.		
5. I believe that Allah is impersonal and not interested in my daily situations.		
6. I feel unsettled about my future		
7. I have a personally meaningful relationship with Allah.		
8. I feel very fulfilled and satisfied with life.		
9. I don't get much personal strength and support from my Allah.		
10. I feel a sense of well-being about the direction my life is headed in.		
11. I believe that Allah is concerned about my problems.		
12. I don't enjoy much about life		

13. I don't have a personally satisfying relationship with Allah.
14. I feel to have better future.
15. My relationship with Allah helps me not to feel lonely.
16. I feel that life is full of conflict and unhappiness.
17. I feel most fulfilled when I'm in close communion with Allah.
18. Life doesn't have much meaning
19. My relation with Allah contributes to my sense of well-being.
20. I believe there is some real purpose for my life.

$r \geq .06, p < .0001$, Correlation coefficients in boldface type represent religious

In looking at the data in relation to the SWBS, Corrected Item-Total Correlation Cronbach's Alpha (α), if Item Deleted ($n = 350$) the following descriptive data refer to table 2.

Discussion

There was one set questionnaires and two of variables in this study. One set is its two subscales or two independent variables (RWB and EWB). According variables in two variety sets for the data. A correlational statistical analysis order to determine if the relationships between the variables of the SWB significant. All correlations were significant at the .01 level (two-tailed) Rel (RWB), which is significant at the .05 level (two-tailed).

The results also indicate that some variables of the two sets (Spiritual Well-Being and GPA) are more highly associated one another. This indicates that there is a relationship between spiritual well-being and academic achievement to targeted population. Finally there was no significant between spiritual well-being and gender and age.

Limitations

The spiritual well-being in this article was one part of the variables in my research study to look at help-seeking behaviour among low achiever UniKL students. It was only reviewed on specific characteristics of the population utilized in this present study. Therefore, the results can only be applied to a population of UniKL's four campuses.

Conclusions

There is a positive correlation between spiritual well-being and academic achievement (GPA). However age and gender have no significant influence on spiritual and academic achievement. Academic achievement and spiritual well-being positively associated, yet not as strongly as other variables. Active involvement in a personal spiritual well-being has a positive influence on academic achievement. Another interesting result was found between spiritual well-being and academic achievement could be explained by the existential well-being and religious well-being noticed in this group of students. The findings of this study will benefit counsellors, educators, parents and public people.

Recommendations for Future Research

The future research on university students in the area of spirituality and academic achievement is needed. The research on the relationship between Spiritual Well-Being and academic achievement among university students who may not be as active in their counselling is also suggested. Other areas of research might be the examination of university students of another variable.

Finally, qualitative research on the variables studied in this investigation is also recommended. The field may benefit from interviewing university students regarding their experience of the role of religion and spirituality on various aspects associated with their academic achievement and future career. By allowing the voices of university students to be expressed directly and in unstructured formats would create greater depth in the professional understanding of this issue. Furthermore, qualitative research might highlight some previously unrecognized variables for exploration.

In conclusion, the study suggests that counsellors should be educated on religious and spiritual dimensions of individuals from different cultures in order to provide more

understandable toward students spiritual well-being. Furthermore the effective counselling approaches to enhance the individual's potential for growth and well-being. One of the functions of counsellors is to assist individuals in the integration of all the dimensions of the self (body, mind, and spirit) to live more dynamic. In the meantime spirituality has an influential role that enables a person to develop and to speak the same language in counselling.

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