

STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT IN SABAH

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ABSTRACT

Several studies proved there is a significant relationship among stress with mental health, depression and stress that prolonged. (Abouserie, 1994; Diane & Misty, 1997; Bojuwoye, 2002; Mahadir, Shazli Ezzat, Normah & Ponnusamy, 2004; Najib, Che Su, Zarina & Suhanim, 2005; Najeemah, 2005). The purpose of the study is to create mental health profile among students in Sabah. This research also tends to find out the relationship between stress and mental health among secondary students in Sabah. Furthermore this research also tends to find out the differences of mental health among multi-ethnic secondary school student. There is about 500 secondary students was aged mean 16.06 was taken from Sabah to do survey. Finding indicated that there is a positive significance correlation between stress with mental health ($r = .731$, $p < .001$). Results also indicate there were significant differences among ethnic groups in Sabah ($F(9,490) = 4.625$, $p < .05$). The importance of mental health issues and intervention had been discussed.

Keywords: Mental Health, Students, Ethnic

ABSTRAK

Beberapa kajian membuktikan terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara stres dengan kesihatan mental, kemurungan dan tekanan yang berpanjangan. (Abouserie, 1994; Diane & Misty, 1997; Bojuwoye, 2002; Mahadir, Shazli Ezzat, Normah & Ponnusamy, 2004; Najib, Che Su, Zarina & Suhanim, 2005; Najeemah, 2005). Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mewujudkan profil kesihatan mental di kalangan pelajar di Sabah. Kajian ini juga ingin mengetahui hubungan antara tekanan dan kesihatan mental di kalangan pelajar sekolah menengah di Sabah. Selain itu, kajian ini juga cenderung untuk mengetahui perbezaan kesihatan mental di kalangan pelajar sekolah menengah dari segi etnik. Terdapat kira-kira 500 pelajar sekolah menengah berusia 16 hingga 18 tahun telah diambil dari Sabah untuk melakukan kaji selidik. Hasil dapatan menunjukkan bahawa terdapat hubungan signifikan positif antara tekanan dengan kesihatan mental ($r = 0,731$, $p < 0,001$). Keputusan juga menunjukkan terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan di kalangan kumpulan etnik di Sabah ($F(9,490) = 4,625$, $p < .05$). Kepentingan isu-isu kesihatan mental dan intervensi telah dibincangkan.

Kata Kunci: Kesihatan Mental, Pelajar, Etnik

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is an individual's well-being which is categorized as self-acceptance and the feeling of secure emotion (Strickland, 2001). However, if it not in control, a person's mental health may deteriorate and can influence the productivity of a person, especially in youths nowadays (Thorne, 1995). In line with these issues, relevant government ministry should provide suitable services in order to help students who have problem mentally and combat it before it is too late. The enlisting of schools as an agent to combat these mental problems is a good way to reduce the stress and depression among students (Benton, 2003). As a case to point, in Malaysia, Health Minister Datuk Seri Chua Soi Lek affirmed that 13.7 percent of adolescents in Malaysia, especially secondary school students are facing mental health issues which caused suicide cases and the numbers are increasing. Pressures of love affair and other main factors also contribute to mental health problems such as loneliness, anxiety, insomnia and suicide.

Peters (2010, In Press) suggested that some 1.4 million children in Malaysia have mental health difficulties that interfere with their normal functioning and development. To what extent of stress that can affect mental health is investigated. In light of this, the present research examines the relationship between stress and other contributing factors, and also how to predict the problem of mental health among secondary school students in Sabah. Researchers also hope to explain to what extent other factors such as ethnic, stress, consume alcohol, sexual behaviour and the tendency to use the services of mental health can affect the problem of mental health itself among the students.

Stress and Mental Health

Stress refers to a situation of tension that affects emotions, thinking processes and conditions of an individual (Handoko, 1997:200). High level of stress will affect a person's ability to face problems. Stress can be beneficial, acting as stimulant to improve work performance. As a result, stress has the potential to induce or interfere with the execution of work, depending on how much the level of stress experienced by the individual (Handoko, 1997:201-201). According to Robbins (2001:563), stress can also be defined as a condition of the psychological state of a person to achieve an advantage in which consists of limitations or barriers. In this research, stress is defined as a condition affecting the physical or mental condition of a person because of pressure from within or from outside a person which interferes with the performance of their work. So, stress can be seen from both sides, positive and negative, and depending on the perspective of a person, stress can be used to solve conditions such as a challenging work and ultimately producing good results or vice versa.

Excessive force also can affect an individual's resilience (Lazarus 1966) such as sad, fear, and excessive anxiety, regretted, self-critic, unwilling to mix around, eating and sleep problem, and abnormality of sex (Atkinson et al., 1990; Kimble, Garmezy & Zigler, 1984; Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978). Pressure, on the other hand, refers to negative feelings such as anger and depression that that is experience by an individual which can be caused by a wide range of circumstance. Women and the younger generation can easily get depression when working long term under pressure (Gruen, 1993).

In addition, the ethnic differences in mental health issues are controversial. Ethnicity factor have been much studied by western scholars, where they emphasis more on black ethnic (Black Caribbean) and minorities ethnic. They found that black people and minorities are more likely to suffer mental health problems than white people (White British) are. The situation however cannot be associated directly to mental health issues of the ethnic groups in Malaysia. This is because; in Malaysia, there are no black people and minority groups. Malaysia is rich with a multiracial society, especially in Sabah and Sarawak. Each ethnicity is different in terms of culture, language, religion and behaviour (Marcus Banks, 1996). Such differences lead question whether ethnic factors lead to differences in mental health problems or not.

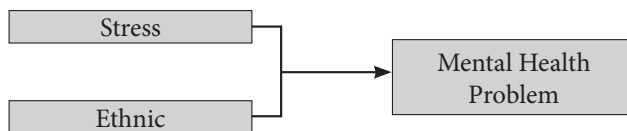
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between stress and mental health among secondary school students in the state. The study also sees the differences in the various ethnic mental healtys.

Framework Review

Researcher build a framework to show the relationship between the variables that involved in the study based on the findings of previous studies and theory.

Figure 1: Framework Review



Based on Figure 1.1, in this study, stress and ethnic are the independent variables while mental health problems as a dependent variable.

Hipotesis

There is no significant relationship between stress and mental health problem among secondary school students in Sabah.

There are no significant differences between mental health problems from ethnicity among secondary school students in Sabah.

METHODOLOGY

Research Designs, Participants and Location

The present research is conducted using a survey method. The participants are those who are in secondary schools: urban and rural areas, which are at aged between 12 to 20 years old and selected through purposive sampling. A total of 13 schools have been chosen around Kota Kinabalu, Tawau and Sandakan, Sabah. In each school, 30-50 students with mental and emotional problem have been identified by each school's counsellors. A total of 500 students were selected as the research samples.

Materials and Procedures

The questionnaires distributed consist of two categories: mental health problem and stress.

a) Symptom Checklist-90 (SCL-90)

Symptom Checklist-90 (SCL-90) is aimed at measuring mental health problems and was created by Derogatis (1973) with 90 items. However, after tested in the Malaysia's context, the present research only extracted 77 items and the other 13 items are excluded being not suitable for the sample's culture. Likert Scales is used with five choices: (1=no, 2=little, 3=rarely, 4=often, 5=always). It was found that the reliability is high in the present research, (Alpha Cronbach = .957).

b) Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS)

Depression Anxiety Stress Scale is extracted from Lovinbond and Lovinbond (1996), which consists of 42 items. However, only 12 items have been selected in the present research to measure stress. Four scales were used to represent the respondent's answer: (0=never, 1=rarely, 2=often, 3=always). The reliability is high even though only 12 items were used instead of the full 42 items (Alpha Cronbach = .860).

Procedure

After a preliminary study was made, the actual study was initiated by obtaining permission from the Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia (KPM) to conduct a study in each school. The researchers sought help from the counsellors to identify troubled students to assemble them in a place before the study started. During the actual research conducted, the researchers explained the purpose of the study to the students and give instructions on how to answer the questionnaire. Each students was given sufficient time to answer the questionnaire. The researchers collected the completed questionnaires. Some respondent personally delivered the questionnaires to the researchers. The collected data were analysed by SPSS version 16.

RESULT

Descriptive Analysis

Level of Mental Health Problems Among Secondary School Students.

Mental health problems measured by summing the scores of the total 77 items and it was used as a determinant to measure the level of mental health problems among secondary school students in the Sabah. The researchers use the determinant degree that discussed in the marking scheme (chapter 3) to classify level of mental health problems. Table 1 describes the frequency and percentage of students suffers from mental health problems based on a mental level, gender and ethnicity.

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Students Who Experience Mental Health Problems Based on Level, Gender and Ethnicity

		Mental Health Problem (Level)							
		No		Low		Average		High	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender/ Ethnic									
Male	Bugis	30	6.0	34	6.8	1	0.2	-	-
	Sungai	3	0.6	2	0.4	1	0.2	-	-
	Suluk	13	2.6	10	2.0	1	0.2	-	-
	Kadazandusun	4	0.8	14	2.8	-	-	-	-
	Bajau	31	6.2	40	8.0	1	0.2	-	-
	Melayu	7	1.4	8	1.6	-	-	1	0.2
	Cina	24	4.8	10	2.0	-	-	-	-
	Others	29	5.8	25	5.0	1	0.2	-	-
Female	Bugis	14	2.8	26	5.2	7	1.4	1	0.2
	Sungai	2	0.4	3	0.6	-	-	-	-
	Suluk	2	0.4	9	1.8	-	-	-	-
	Kadazandusun	7	1.4	9	1.8	1	0.2	-	-
	Bajau	9	1.8	21	4.2	8	1.6	1	0.2
	Melayu	4	0.8	8	1.6	5	1.0	-	-
	Cina	19	3.8	7	1.4	-	-	-	-
	Others	20	4.0	23	4.6	4	0.8	-	-
Total		21	43.6	249	49.8	30	6.0	3	0.6

Based on Table 1, it was found that many students experience mental health problems at lower levels, 49.8% of the students achieved a score between 154 to 231. Analysis shows that only three students reported that their mental health problems are high. 218 students are considered as not experiencing mental health problems.

In terms of ethnic, 61 Bajau students recorded suffering from low mental health problems followed by 60 Bugis students. 9 students from Bajau ethnic experiencing mild mental health problems. Meanwhile, 43 Chinese students reported that no mental health problems.

Inferential Statistic

The results below indicate the relationship between stress with mental health problems among secondary school students.

Table 2: Correlation of the Factors and the Mental Health Problems among Secondary School Students.

Factors	N	Mental health (N=500)
Stress	500	.731**

** $p < .001$ (2-tailed)

Table 2 shows that the correlation between factors associated with mental health problems. It clearly indicates that there is a significant relationship between stress and mental health ($r = .731$, $p < .001$). Null hypotheses 1 is rejected, therefore it signifies that there is a strong relationship between stress and mental health among the secondary school students. There was no significant difference in mental health problems in the terms of ethnicity among high school students in the state.

Hypothesis 2 was created to see whether ethnic factors make a difference to mental health problems among secondary school students. The researchers have used a one-way ANOVA analysis to test this hypothesis. The results for this hypothesis are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of one-way ANOVA for Mental Health Problems according Ethnicity

Ethnic	df	MKD	JKD	F	Sig
Between Group	9	8077.48	56542.38	4.625*	0.000
In Group	490	1746.56	859306.0		

* $k < 0.05$

The results in Table 3 show that there are differences in mental health problems according to ethnic ($F(9, 490) = 4.625$, $k < .05$). Therefore, the hypothesis that states “there is no difference in mental health problems in terms of ethnicity among secondary school students in the Sabah” is rejected.

The results were analyzed by using the Post-hoc Tukey test. The result was compared to compare the mental health problems among ethnic in details. Results of Post-Hoc Tukey test are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 : Results of Post-Hoc Tukey Test of Mental Health Problems By Ethnicity

Min	Ethnics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
171.08	Bugis	-	-	-	-	-	-	*	-
153.00	Sungai	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
164.97	Suluk	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
175.74	Kadazandusun	-	-	-	-	-	-	*	-
166.42	Bajau	-	-	-	-	-	-	*	-
182.33	Melayu	-	-	-	-	-	-	*	-
140.28	Cina	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	*
165.23	Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

DISCUSSION

Based on the result, stress is indeed correlated with mental health problems among the secondary school students in Sabah. This is supported by a World Health Organization (WHO) report, which suggested that mental health issues are expected to increase by 15% by 2020. There is a critical need to investigate the increasing issues of mental health and the present research has identify that stress is one of the factors that contribute to mental health problems. Stress is also associated with greater depression, hopelessness and suicidal ideation among people who are high in emotional perception. Daily stress was found to have a positive relationship with suicidal ideation (Ciarrochi, Deane & Anderson, 2002; Nasrin Izadinia et al., 2010). There is no doubt that stress is the predictor to mental health which is also related to depression, anxiety, loneliness (Goede, 1999; Siti Nor Yacoob, 2009).

Adolescents may be confused to in their stage of forming identity may lose the objective of staying alive and therefore identity formation is another factor to cause mental health other than stress (Goede, 1999).

Differences in mental health problems among the ethnic of secondary school students in Sabah.

In this study, one-way ANOVA used to test for ethnic differences on mental health problems. The results indicated that there is significant differences in mental health problem based on ethnic among secondary school students in the Sabah ($F(9, 490) = 4.625, k < .05$). This shows the score for mental health problems for each ethnicity. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

To see the difference in detail, post-hoc analysis was conducted. The results show that the Malay ethnic obtained the highest score = 182.33 followed by Kadazandusun (= 175.74), Bugis (= 171.08) and Bajau (= 166.42). The analysis shows that the Chinese have the lowest mean score (= 140.28) and show significant differences compare to other ethnic. This means that Chinese students are experiencing lower mental health problem compared to other ethnic groups of students. The results also explain that Malay students are experiencing higher mental health problems compare to other ethnic.

Sabah has more than 32 ethnics and culture groups in each ethnic group. Thus, there are different perceptions of mental health problems among secondary school students, which may lead to the existence of ethnic differences on mental health problems (Noradilah Md Nordin et al., 2010). In this study, Malay students are significant in terms of mental health problems, and the researchers believe that there is a need to consult with a doctor or counselor to overcome the problems among respondents (Yeap & Low, 2009).

The researchers also believe that other ethnic groups may not have extensive knowledge on mental health compare to Chinese students. Study shows that most Malaysian students do not have appropriate knowledge on mental health especially Malay, Indian and other compare to Chinese students (Yeap & Low, 2009). Therefore, the researchers believe that there is a need for more research in this area.

IMPLICATION

As suggested by Tahir Mehmood Khan, Syed Azhar Syed Sulaiman and Mohamed Azmi Hassali (2009), the main causes of depression are related to educational and relationship problems. Mental health policies need to be reviewed so as to be able to detect the right time to intervene in adolescent facing mental health problems. Also, Buston (2002) recommended that there is a need to further awareness in the development of empathic communication skills used by health professionals when working with adolescents suffering from mental health problems. Besides that, Yeap and Low (2009) also proposed to enhance the understanding of the knowledge and attitude toward mental health.

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