

# Religion on Psychological Well-Being and Self-Efficacy among Secondary School Students

Charles Ganaprakasam, Fonny Dameaty Hutagalung

Faculty of Education, University of Malaya

DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.8.5.2018.p7708

<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.8.5.2018.p7708>

**Abstract-** In recent years, psychological well-being has been critical element in a students' life. This study has investigated the effect of religious faith on psychological well-being and self-efficacy among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah. Quantitative approaches of survey design were used for this study. A number of ninety four secondary school students comprised from form four, and form five were selected using purposive sampling methods as studied subjects. The modified version of Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire (SCSRFQ), Psychological Well Being Inventory (The Ryff Scale) and Self-efficacy for Self-regulated Learning Scale were administered in this study. The finding of linear regression indicated that religious faith is a significant predictor of psychological well-being and self-efficacy among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah. The finding also revealed that psychological well-being is a significant predictor of self-efficacy among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah. As a conclusion, study disclosed that psychological well-being intensely related to an individual religious faith and proven to lead positive attitude among students in realize their own capability.

**Keywords:** *psychological well-being, religious attitude, self-efficacy.*

## INTRODUCTION

The post-modern society of rising demands on economic stability and social instability instigates the feeling of depression and anxiety (Weaver, 2010). In order to flight from this undesirable bearing many begin to involve in various illegal activities and committed suicide. According to Weaver (2010), adding up to severe emotional maladjustment due to the poor coping strategies, individual inclined to unhealthy life style. Continuous depression and dissatisfaction in life due to the external difficulties devitalize the structural functioning of every individual in society.

Impaired social functioning leads to various misleading actions and elevates risk for suicidal tendencies. According to Dutton, Rojas, Badour, Wanklyn, Feldner (2016), poor social functioning increase the risk for suicidal tendencies. Furthermore, finding also suggested that, family system and power of peer must be a prime focus towards modify the risk for suicidal behavior. Apart from that, researcher also identified deficient problem solving skill and improper social connection has been explained as a major cause for the suicide attempt.

Various scholars has been identified that psychological well-being has been very important element towards to forms suicidal ideation. According to Ryff (1989), psychological well-being refers as an individual capability to elevate his instinctive capability and natural tendency. Study by Jin and Zang (1998) on 1433 respondent in the People's Republic of China found that psychological well-being precisely self-esteem is a tenacious predictor of suicidal thoughts. Moreover, in Malaysia finding has discovered that adolescent who suffering from depression, stress, and anxiety more tend to have suicidal thoughts and unable to cope the frustrations due to the handful of issues (Norhayati, Amit, Suen, 2014). Significantly, suicide rates in Malaysia rise sharply over the years. Adolescent aged between 16 to 19 years old is at high risk of committing suicide (Norhayati et al.,2014).

For many, this sanctuary is found predominantly under the tenet of religion. Religion widely considered being the most important element in human life. By attending religious activities, many found access to huge social connection and provide greater sense of belonging and improve one's psychological well-being. According to the Social Identity Theory proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), individual identification with any association such as religious community or any other institution helps improve their mental and physical health. Social identity is the individual's self-concept emerged from interaction among widening group of in-group members. This connection subsequently, improves positive self-esteem by positively differentiating their in-group from a comparison out-group on several esteemed dimension.

## Religion and Psychological Well-Being

*“Religion necessarily consists in the permanent removal of pain and the realization of bliss or God and the actions that individual must adopt for the permanent avoidance of pain and the attainment of bliss are called religious”- Paramahansa Yogananda, 2012*

Does religiosity contribute to individual psychological well-being? According to Parahamansa Yogananda (2012), a spiritual master explained that religion plays very essential part in human life since the beginning of time as a powerful mechanism to avoid pain and gain happiness.

Recent empirical development shows a growing numbers of literatures investigating the utmost benefits of religion on individual physical and emotional well-being. There are various reasons for an individual to engage in religious activity. Study revealed that while some people involves in religious activity due to eradicate the distressing element of their everyday life, others found immersed in praying in order to eliminate failure and boost their positive declaration to enhance confidence (Reinberg & Weaver, 2010). A study examining the effect of religion on psychological well-being among Greek cancer patient and significant result was revealed between religion and psychological well-being (Kaliampos & Roussi, 2017). The prospective design study with 86 cancer patients shows religion plays very important role in the well-being of cancer patients. Correspondingly, a longitudinal study by Park (2010) also suggested that is true. In his study focusing on religion and spiritual elements on students' psychological well-being, he found that religion and spiritual have critical implication on students' mental health.

Adolescent maintained their religious belief as an integral part of during their development transition. Individual exposed theological based moral values when they attend to their respective religious ceremony. A remarkable finding revealed that aspect of religion has profound tendency to minimize the occurrence of deviant behavior among adolescent (Laird, Marks, & Marrero, 2011). According to Green and Elliot (2010), individual who associated themselves in any religion reported to have greater mental health and happiness. Notably, study shows that people who holds extremist believe less happy than people with liberal religious belief. This group of extremist has narrow understanding of their respective religious text and their every action filled the earth with viciousness, crushed civilization and sent entire countries to despair. For instance, On July 2014, two British men were arrested for their associating with an extremist group in Syria. An investigation found that they had ordered two books from Amazon namely “Islam for Dummies” and “Koran for Dummies”. This phenomena clearly shows that the narrow religious literacy possessed by the individual who joined the groups of extremist (British Terrorist from Birmingham, 2014).

Apart from psychological well-being, other domain that benefits from religious faith is individual self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) defines self-efficacy as people belief about their capabilities to produce designated level of performance that exercises influence over events that affect their lives. Oyewumi, Ibitoye and Sanni (2012) founds that individual with stronger self-efficacy tend to approach difficult task by assuming it as opportunity to test their capability rather than seeing it as threat. Thus, it's also maximized their problem solving capability and leads to life satisfaction. Based on Zohmierz, Wac, Brzozowska, Sak (2017) study on 273 medical students founds that religion plays very critical role as coping strategy for dealing with problem.

Although there is growing body of literature agreed that religion plays the very important role on individual mental health, however there are several other notable finding revealed negative correlation between these variables. According to Dew, Daniel, Armstrong, Goldston, Triplett, & Koenig (2008), plenty of studies using cross sectional data has found negative relationship between religious attendance and adolescent mental health. Nowadays adolescent tended to separate themselves from their religious social support system in order to lead an independent life. Therefore, they receive poor positive social support and likely to struggle with difficulties. Comparatively, numerous studies have shown positive contribution of religion element on individual mental health (Ellison & Levin, 2012; Swinton, 2011). Although most of the study correlates positively concerning religion on psychological well-being, there were only conducted in abroad and very limited study to explore and understand in Malaysian context.

As the result of limited research study, the current study seeks to examine the effect of religious faith on psychological well-being and self-efficacy among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah.

Henceforth, this study aimed to fulfill the following objective:

- I. To identify the effect of religious faith on psychological well-being among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah.
- II. To identify the effect of religious faith on self-efficacy among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah.
- III. To identify the effect of psychological well-being on self-efficacy among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah.

Based on these, three hypotheses were formulated:

- I. Ha1: Religious faith is significant predictor of Psychological well-being among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah.  
Ho1: Religious faith is not significant predictor of Psychological well-being among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah.
- II. Ha2: Religious faith is significant predictor of self-efficacy among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah.  
Ho2: Religious faith is not significant predictor of self-efficacy among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah.
- III. Ha3: Psychological well-being is a significant predictor of self-efficacy among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah.  
Ho3: Psychological well-being is not a significant predictor of self-efficacy among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This research has been designed using the quantitative approach of survey design. Study focuses on investigates the significant effect between religious faith on adolescent psychological well-being and self-efficacy.

### **Population and sample**

In this study the population was includes all form three to form five students from various socioeconomic background. A total number of ninety four (94) participants were involved in this study. The population of this study comprised one of the secondary school at Kulim district, Kedah. The participants have been divided equally according to gender. The number of respondents aged 15 is 18 which equivalents to 19.6% while the number of respondents aged 16 is 42 which equivalents to 43.5% and respondents who aged 17 is 34 which equivalents to 37.0%. Researcher used purposive sampling method to choose sample from larger population. The sample of this study has determined based on the sample size determination table initiated by Krejcie and Morgan's (1970). These groups were chosen because they were considered to be in their adolescent stage and most appropriate for this research. The participants that involve in this study were aged 15 to 17 years old.

### **Instrument**

Researcher has used questionnaire which comprised three sections. The first section comprised demographic details such as gender, family income and religion. The second section comprised 10 questions from Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire (SCSRFQ) developed by Plante and Boccaccini in 1997. Response range from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This questionnaire can measure individual religious strength and faith regardless spiritual affiliation and denomination. Significant Cronbach's alpha found ranging from .94 to .97 for this inventory in previous study (Plante, 2010). A second section contained 54 items (medium form) from The Psychological Well-Being Inventory (The Ryff Scale) originated by Ryff (1989). This instrument contained items covered 6 dimension namely Autonomy, Environmental mastery, Personal growth, Positive relation with others, Purpose in life, and Self-acceptance. Significant Cronbach's alpha 0.85 was produced for the scale in previous study (Albina, 2016). The third section contained self-efficacy for self-regulated learning scale originated by Bandura (1989). This inventory contained 11 items to have examined student ability to perceive academic tasks.

### **Method of Data Analyze**

Initially, the researcher obtained permission from involved school administration and then administered the questionnaire to participants in their classroom. The researcher was explained the intention of the study and guide them to complete the questionnaire. The data collected through the questionnaire and entered in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 21.0 and analyzed using Simple Linear Regression test.

**RESEARCH FINDING**

Based on the above, this current study outcome has presented as follows and discussed in detail about the effect of religion on psychological well-being and self-efficacy among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah.

Table 1.0  
*Linear Regression Summary of the Religious Attitude on Psychological Well-being*

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Std. Coefficient Beta ( $\beta$ )	t-value
Psychological Well-being	Religious Faith	0.347*	3.529
	R <sup>2</sup>	.485	
	Adjust R <sup>2</sup>	.112	
	Sig. F	.19.427*	
	R	.639a	

Note: Significant levels: \*p < 0.05

Table 1.0 show that there was a positive linear relationship between the two variables, which were confirmed with a Pearson’s correlation coefficient of 0.639. Simple linear regression was calculated to predict psychological well-being based on religious belief. A significant regression equation was found ( $F(1,91) = 19.427, p < .000$ ), with an R<sup>2</sup> of .485. The result showed that religious faith (beta = .347, p < .05) was found to contribute significantly and positively to their psychological well-being. The finding indicated that religious faith is a significant predictor of psychological well-being among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Table 2.0  
*Linear Regression Summary of the Religious Faith and Self-Efficacy.*

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Std. Coefficient Beta ( $\beta$ )	t-value
Self-Efficacy	Religious Faith	0.319*	0.326
	R <sup>2</sup>	.499	
	Adjust R <sup>2</sup>	.094	
	Sig. F	.19.325*	
	R	.708a	

Note: Significant levels: \*p < 0.05

Table 2.0 shows that there was a positive linear between the two variables, which were confirmed with a Pearson’s correlation coefficient of 0.708. Simple linear regression was calculated to predict self-efficacy based on religious faith. A significant regression equation was found ( $F(1,91) = 19.325, p < .000$ ), with an R<sup>2</sup> of .499. The result showed that religious faith (beta = .319, p < .05) was found to contribute significantly and positively to their psychological well-being. The finding indicated that religious faith is a significant predictor of self-efficacy among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Table 3.0  
*Linear Regression Summary of Psychological Well-being and Self-efficacy*

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Std. Coefficient Beta ( $\beta$ )	t-value
Self-Efficacy	Psychological Well-being	-0.718*	-7.367
	R <sup>2</sup>	.413	
	Adjust R <sup>2</sup>	.387	
	Sig. F	28.627*	
	R	.607a	

Note: Significant levels: \*p < 0.05

Table 3.0 shows that there was a positive linear between the two variables, which were confirmed with a Pearson’s correlation coefficient of 0.607. Simple linear regression was calculated to predict self-efficacy based on psychological well-being. A significant regression equation was found ( $F(1,91) = 28.627, p < .000$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .413. The result showed that psychological well-being ( $\beta = .347, p < .05$ ) was found to contribute significantly and positively to their self-efficacy. The finding indicated that psychological well-being is a significant predictor of self-efficacy among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah Therefore, the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDING**

The finding for the first hypothesis indicates that religious faith is a significant predictor towards psychological well-being among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah.

The students sample comprised different religious denomination namely Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Buddhism. A set of question from Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Instrument is appropriate and able identified the faith of an individual from various religions according to Plante & Boccaccini, (1997). The finding of the study identical with numerous works of literature, for instance, these values correlate favorably with Kaliamos & Roussi, 2017 and also confirms previous finding stated by Leondari and Gialamas (2009). Further study carried out by Ismail & Desmukh (2012) confirmed the finding of our study. According to their study with the sample of 150 Pakistani Muslim participants revealed a strong positive relationship between religion and life satisfaction. They assumed that this positive relationship due to the individual tendency to attribute everything that happens to the will of God. This types of attitude minimize regrets in life and maximize life satisfaction. This implies that religious faith have utmost tendencies to escalate the positive outlook of an individual. As is well known, individual with a religious faith likely to associate with respective religious community and this gigantic positive social system helps them providing social, emotional and psychological comfort. Other than that, our finding would seem to show the importance of religious faith in eliminating suicidal tendencies among students. The protective function of religion nurtured individual against suicide and act as reinforcement. The word “religion” itself derived from the Latin ‘*religare*’, to bind. The word ‘bind’ ascribed to the word religion because it’s profound capability to grouping all particular religious people together in one place to perform rituals or prayers. Health behavior researchers suggested that social belonging, appraisal and appropriate supports from one’s social network associated with several health behavior (Tang, Brown, Funnell, & Anderson, 2008). The finding of this study would have possibility to create awareness among school community concerning the utmost important of religion in student’s life.

It is important to highlight the fact that religious belief has massive influence in Malaysia. Almost 98 percentage of Malaysia identified them in any religious denomination (Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2011). Therefore, their belief system shows very promising repercussion on their way of thinking and behavior. Furthermore the result of this study in good agreement with the theoretical framework of our study and substantiate with Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological System Theory (1992). Bronfenbrenner (1992) claimed that various microsystem such as religious institution influence heavily on individual development. Bronfenbrenner (1992) explained ecological system in his theory to describe how settings and their developmental importance change over time. He traces the advance of religious institution by stating its crucial aspect in human life that would impact their social functioning. Furthermore, as reported by Ellison and Levin (2012), the evidence we found points to individual psychological well-being based on religious faith have vast similarities. They suggested that individual began to assumed God as their sole protector and commit their struggles to Him. Their praying intensity was stronger enough to maintain their level of self-esteem and also psychological stability. The result now provides evidence concerning the privileged aspect of religion on human life and plays as unifying element and massive force. The result for the second hypothesis shows that religious faith is a significant predictor towards self-efficacy among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah.

The result suggested that individual with religious belief has profound capability to control their life event and facing challenges in a positive way. The finding extends the benefits of religion on enhance and encouraged an individual positive coping strategies because

of having faith at heart. Every individual ultimate motive of the removal of pain and the attainment of happiness is looked under the tenet of religion. Therefore, every action that individual adopts in order to attain that happiness is called religious. The superiority of religion not only preaching positive thought among believer but also develops gradually the intensity of capability to comprehend the ability to process and overcome different situation and stress factor.

Our result has a similarities with Hegarwati, Pratiwi, Kahfi, & Sofyandi, 2016; Koenig, Carson and King, 2012; Levin, 2010. According Koenig et al.,(2012) stated that people reduce their feeling of hopelessness by praying and attending to worship house and seek external force to support. Additionally, this result also ties well with previous studies wherein study on examining the role of religion on self-efficacy revealed remarkable finding concerning the utmost benefits of religiosity in a student's life. Study conducted by Żołnierz, Wac, Brzozowska, and Sak (2017) on 273 medical science students age between 19 and 27 points that religious individual has extraordinary capabilities to overcome struggles related to their academic and life events. Apart from numerous psychological benefits from religiosity, the evidences also had shown the essential element in developing positive view regarding one's self capabilities. The content of this study also illuminated the previous finding by Bigdeloo and Bozorgi (2016). According to their study, religion remained appropriate in developing self-efficacy. Result showed the meaningful association between religious belief and self-efficacy. People with high self-efficacy more likely believe their high level of self-confidence and life satisfaction and less feel stress or anxiety as the health threatening factors. Self-efficacy depends on controlling the stresses, high self-esteem, physical and mental health, and higher adaptation and high resistance to the severe diseases. Self-efficacy improves the capability of individual competencies and helps maintaining the proper balance of desirable outcome in interpersonal and intrapersonal elements in life. Result of the current study so far shows very promising alternative which should implement by school community in order to nurture the innate ability. In general, this finding lead to conclude that every religious community should move forward to organize more faith based motivational and academic program to students in order to enhance social and individual self-efficacy.

The result for the third hypothesis concerned the effect of psychological well-being on self-efficacy. Finding shows that psychological well-being is a significant predictor towards the development of self-efficacy among secondary school students in Kulim district of Kedah.

Result suggested that, individual psychological well-being such as autonomy, positive relationship, environmental mastery, purpose in life, personal growth and self-acceptance direct students to gain realize their innate potential and enhance self-confidence to perform challenging task. Poor psychological well-being ended in depression, severe anxiety and helplessness and unable to stay consistent in their life challenges. Secondary school education is very critical part in student's life. That level of education result determined students capability to pursue their further studies in university or college. Therefore, achieving success academically being a key goal of their life. During their schooling time, students exposed to various obstacles and responsibilities such as an individual assignment, group project, and summative examination, interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts. It would be the prime cause for their stress and psychological maladjustment. Student's with psychological maladjustment shows unsatisfactory attendance and behavior delinquency. While there are many students able to cope with difficulties but number of cases these difficulties may have a grave effect on the young person's psychological well-being. This poor psychological well-being leads them to the destructive effect such as poor academic achievement, unable to comprehend individual capability and social interaction challenges.

In our view, the result emphasized that people with positive psychological well-being has a unique approach to view their challenges and set appropriate and attainable target consciously in order to avoid failure and dissatisfaction.

Several study, in good agreement with the current research finding (Siddiqui, 2015; Costa, Ripoll, Sanchez, Carvalho, 2013). This study also shares identical result with Caroli & Sagone, 2014. The finding in the literature explained that high level of psychological well-being influence students' active participation in academic tasks and develop positive outlook that led to academic goals. As anticipated, result suggest that highly efficient individual tend to view their daily hassles in a positive lens and adapting all kind of life event in order to gain mastery to overcome and managing their external factors. They also exposed to new experiences and with a sense of realizing their individual potential, and were able to admit numerous and diverse facets of self-image. Apart from academic success, greater psychological well-being also influence an individual to hold more flexible and resilience approach in a problem solving and prevent from engaged in various immoral activities for instance committing suicide. With the appropriate comprehension concerning their capability and knowledge they able to choose proper strategies to overcome life struggles. Our finding appeared to be shown that, school counselor or any other related field teachers should organize mental health week or campaign to raise awareness and promote activities that release stress and anxiety.

#### **IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY**

Current research finding contributed to the growing body of literature which measuring the influence of religion on human psychological well-being and self-efficacy. The present finding of this study might contributed to school counselor and body of NGO to implement various awareness program at a school level targeting students to enhance their understanding concerning the utmost role of religion. Apart from that, authors also suggested in future it would be more benefits the community if therapist utilize individual religious social network as an element to receive immediate protection in many cases involve social deviants, disease and

addiction. This could potentially improve the social functioning of an individual to recover with assistance and support from each religious community. We believed that our result may improve the knowledge of practicing religion as one's shield to protect themselves from evil thoughts and action.

### LIMITATION AND SUGGESTION

Our work clearly shows some limitation. This study aimed to investigate the role of religion on psychological well-being and self-efficacy. As mentioned in a methodology section, respondent of this study were selected just from particular secondary school in Kulim district of Kedah. Given the small sample size, the finding of this study might not be generalized to the entire population. Therefore, we hope future study should comprised large sample at different level.

Secondly, this survey study just predicted the relationship of studied variables. Thus, to understand the causal relationship between variable a longitudinal research design is needed. Obviously, longitudinal study provides unique insight and useful to discover changes in development over time.

Thirdly, other than the religious factor, spiritual element, family socio-economic status, parenting style and national policy must take into consideration to examine its role on nurturing psychological well-being.

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#### AUTHORS

**First Author** – Charles Ganaprakasam, M.Ed (Educational Psychology), and ganaprakasamcharles@gmail.com

**Second Author** – Dr.Fonny Dameaty Hutagalung, University of Malaya.

**Correspondence Author** – Charles Ganaprakasam, [ganaprakasamcharles@gmail.com](mailto:ganaprakasamcharles@gmail.com). /contact number:60-0164323453