

Difference in Psychological Well-Being Based On Comparison of Religions: A Case Study in Pekan District, Pahang, Malaysia

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Abstract—The psychological well-being of a family is a subjective matter for evaluation, all the more when it involves the element of religions, whether Islam, Christianity, Buddhism or Hinduism. Each of these religions emphasises similar values and morals on family psychological well-being. This comparative study is specifically to determine the role of religion on family psychological well-being in Pekan district, Pahang, Malaysia. The study adopts a quantitative and qualitative mixed method design and considers a total of 412 samples of parents and children for the quantitative study, and 21 samples for the qualitative study. The quantitative study uses simple random sampling, whereas the qualitative sampling is purposive. The instrument for quantitative study is Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale and the qualitative study involves the construction of a guidelines protocol for in-depth interviews of respondents. The quantitative study uses the SPSS version .19 with One Way Anova, and the qualitative analysis is manual based on transcripts with specific codes and themes. The results show non-significance, that is, no significant difference among religions in all family psychological well-being constructs in the comparison of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism, thereby accepting a null hypothesis and rejecting an alternative hypothesis. The qualitative study supports the quantitative study, that is, all 21 respondents explain that no difference exists in psychological well-being in the comparison of teachings in all the religions mentioned. These implications may be used as guidelines for government and non-government bodies in considering religion as an important element in family psychological well-being in the long run.

Keywords—Psychological well-being, comparison of religions, family, Malaysia.

I. INTRODUCTION

PSYCHOLOGICAL well-being in a family is on the whole, a very subjective matter for evaluation [1], [2]. However, every family consistently hopes for psychological well-being in succeeding as a happy family. Well-being among parents and children greatly influences the family's achievement of happiness, whether in the aspects of relationships, communication, the expression of feelings and spending time together, as well as in their daily lives. Various elements, such as marriage, friends, food, physical activities, sleep, and the performance of religious activities are measures of a family's

psychological well-being [1].

Physical well-being does not, on the whole, portray psychological well-being among members of a family. Everything depends specifically on the individual's perception of the matter. The same is true of the comparison of religions, whether they are teachings in Islam, Christianity, Buddhism or Hinduism, which have specific beliefs on the achievement of happiness in the world [3], [4]. The existence of a deep psychological well-being in an individual is greatly influenced by averting physical and mental illness, including the health of a family [5], [6]. The health of a family is closely associated with the role of religion which influences the well-being of a family, and the breakdown of a marriage is greatly associated with an extremely low level of religious faith [7].

The teachings in every religion view piety as an important element towards the making of well-being among its members. A family that is functional and enjoys well-being is said to be a family that practices the religious precepts of a particular faith [8]. Islam perceives a good family as one that is based on its members, if the parents are good, then are their children [4]. Christianity views this element through the concept of unity, that is between humans here (in the world) in God's surveillance in the hereafter (after death) [9], whereas Hindu teachings focus on good karma during one's lifetime which frees a person from the cycle of rebirth [10]. Finally, Buddhist teachings are based on safeguarding the family well as proof of the principle of psychological well-being as a major practice among its followers [11].

Therefore, strong adherence to religion and observance of every teaching opens wide the opportunity for goodness in the direction towards individual psychological well-being, and at the same time towards the achievement of family well-being [6]. This comparison of religions forms the most important measure in this study, whether it involves the teachings in Islam, Christianity, Buddhism or Hinduism, to observe the aspect of psychological well-being in a family.

II. OBJECTIVE OF STUDY AND HYPOTHESIS

A. Objective

This study aims to identify differences that exist among religions in psychological well-being by comparing the teachings in each of the religions of Islam, Christianity and Buddhism and Hinduism.

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B. Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in psychological well-being based on a comparison of the religions of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism.

III. METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

This study uses a framework of mixed methods, between quantitative and qualitative methods [12]. A total of 412 people were used for the quantitative study, and 21 for the qualitative study comprising parents and children from the district of Pekan, in the State of Pahang, Malaysia. The quantitative study uses simple random sampling whereas the qualitative study uses purposive sampling by setting specific justifications in the selection. The parents were selected using the list of names of PUSPANITA (Association of Wives and Women Members of Public Services) in the district of Pekan, based on random number criteria. The children were chosen from the list of names of pupils studying at Ahmad National Secondary School and Tengku Abdullah National Secondary School. Both groups were attending a Parenting and Emotional Excellence Practices Program which were designed for them. Justification for selection of this district is based on the reason of Palace supervision of the people and the practice of harmonious and good relations in the society [13], [14].

Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale [15] is used for quantitative study, whereas the more detailed interview method is based on the protocols constructed for qualitative study. The SPSS version .19 analysis method is used to consider statistical inference, that is, the One Way Anova for the quantitative study, whereas the content analysis uses a coding based on results of specific themes from manually conducted in-depth and face-to-face interviews [16].

Both the analyses, that is results of the quantitative study and the results of the qualitative study are mutually supportive and complement each other [12]. The validity of the instrument is tested by the validity criterion (related) as the Pearson correlation between subconstructs within the questions are used at a significance level of .01 and .05. To test the validity each of the subconstructs and the validity of the instrument of the Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale involves 5 main subconstructs, which are environmental mastery, personal growth, relationship with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance [15] with a mean correlation value between .244 to .759. Reliability of the Ryff Psychological Well-Being is with the Alpha Cronbach value is .89 at a very high position.

IV. ABS MODEL OF FAMILY PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

The ABS Model looks at elements of family psychological well-being and elements of religion in a family. This model advances the idea of family well-being which combines several theories and is based on family well-being particularly among family members who are parents and children. This Model was introduced by the Australian research on Families Australia and The Australian National University in 2007 which looked at well-being of the family among family

members. Several questions are forwarded to explain this model, that is, what are families like currently, and what could happen in the future to the trend of families that enjoy well-being [17].

Several definitions were made in perceiving the well-being of a family by referring to the state of psychological well-being in the family. Therefore, various concepts were dependant on findings, instruments of measure, values and ideas studied in a family. There is no specific concept stating that a family well-being, since all of it depends on measures assessed [17]. Among of the concept in this model held as beliefs and strengths of a psychological well-being in family among its members are:

- i) Conditions of emotional, social and economic strength of children, parents and family.
- ii) Physical and psychological well-being among family members (parents and children) particularly involving relationships among them and the quality of the relations (parenting skills) as a whole.
- iii) Health, happiness and prosperity within a family unit studied.
- iv) Involvement in acting functionally and practically to achieve benefits among groups and individuals.
- v) Level of need to meet someone in a family situation, used as an indicator of the level of family well-being. A combination of this well-being is a combination of the quality of life of a family.

As an aspect of the comparison among religious, the ABS model relates to the Ecological System Theory which is a major part of this model. The religiosity and belief of an individual is subject to biological, physical, social and environmental needs, which include microsystems, mesosystems, ecosystems and also macrosystems [17]. The role of religion lies in elements of the macrosystem which explain about beliefs and norms that influence the life of an individual and a family particularly in bringing about a conviction towards family and individual psychological well-being [17]. The role and responsibility of religion as a whole has a great influence on structure, social organization, norms and convictions, support either emotional or external as well as a good quality of life on major multidimensional domains [17]. It is this condition which enhances psychological well-being in the sense of a more in-depth understanding of religion, whether in an individual or in a family, involving the religions of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism.

On the basis of the ABS Model of Family Psychological Well-being, it is apparent that the role of religion constitutes an important contribution to the implications of this study as a whole. Disregarding this element, whether directly or indirectly, will influence the condition in non-achievement of a level of psychological well-being on all parties in a family.

V. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are analysed by explaining both the aspects of quantitative and qualitative study, based on a combined study that mutually supports and reinforces the findings. The analysis of statistical inference clarifies more

specifically the quantitative study whereas the results of qualitative study is concluded according to specific themes and codes resulting from more in-depth interviews.

A. Differences in Psychological Well-Being According to Comparison of Religions

The results of the quantitative study in looking at One Way Anova statistical inference shows that all subconstructs of psychological well-being show non-significance and concurrently accept null hypothesis and reject an alternative hypothesis. Also the overall results on psychological well-being show non-significance, that is there is no significant difference in the comparison of religions ($F(3,408) = .512, p > .05$). This proves that there is no significant difference in psychological well-being among the religions of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism. Among the subconstructs in psychology that showed non-significance are environmental mastery ($F(3, 408) = .461, p > .05$), personal growth ($F(3,408) = 2.46, p > .05$), relationship with others ($F(3,408) = .142, p > .05$), purpose in life ($F(3,408) = .562, p > .05$) and self-acceptance ($F(3,408) = .531, p > .05$).

TABLE I
ONE WAY ANOVA ANALYSIS IN PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG THE RELIGIONS

Subcontract of Psychological Well Being	JKD	df	MKD	F	Sig
Environmental Mastery					
Between Group	105.1	3	35.0	.461	.710
Within Group	30984.9	408			
Personal Growth					
Between Group	410.1	3	136.7	2.46	.062
Within Group	22620.6	408			
Relationship with Others					
Between Group	31.3	3	10.4	.142	.935
Within Group	30039.7	408			
Purpose In Life					
Between Group	120.4	3	40.1	.562	.640
Within Group	29146.5	408			
Self Acceptance					
Between Group	52.4	3	17.5	.531	.662
Within Group	13431.6	408			
Total					
Between Group	1329.3	3	443.1	.512	.674
Within Group	352786.7	408			

This suggests that in the aspects of environmental mastery, personal growth, relationship with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance in terms of teachings of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism the religions do not show any apparent differences among parents and children (Table I).

Results of the qualitative study support the results of the quantitative study. Basically, the teaching and practice in every religion do not advocate evil and consistently look for

ways towards good in a family. In this analysis a majority of them state that it is the same for beliefs of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism regarding psychological well-being among parents and children. The teachings of every religion see this situation as providing a wide understanding of psychological well-being in a family. On the basis of in-depth interviews, a majority of the 8 parents or 100% concurred that the religions do not show any difference in terms of psychological well-being. The same applies to children who support the idea that psychological well-being does not show any difference at all in this matter and 100% or 13 children are in agreement. Among extracts are the following:

- *Religion is important because ever since I was a small child I was sent for classes on Muslim laws and obligations and what not. I feel that as Muslims our conviction is a guide for the future.* (Respondent D, Mother, Malay)
- *We believe that whatever happens, problems or anything we have to look at ourselves first. Whatever happens I don't want to look from the negative way or negative part. There is a karma of everything and whatever happens it is no coincidence and this is fate.* (Respondent F, Mother, Chinese)
- *We have to teach religion to these children. The children are okay and parents are okay because the good those children do will come to us.* (Respondent H, Father, Malay)
- *Religion supports family happiness. That is important because this can sow and cause well-being in life in the future. All members have well-being and all religions support it.* (Respondent D, Son, Malay)
- *Religion is the source of family well-being especially in the practice of rituals. Practice of rituals is the parents waking children up at 5.30 in the morning for Qiyamullail prayers. Father scolds us if we don't perform our prayers.* (Respondent E, Son, Malay)
- *If we are bad to our parents we will get the bad thing. I pray 3 times, last night, every Friday and this Sunday. Over here just a little because the temple is small and so is the Deity here. This Deity is for your studies, happiness, riches.* (Respondent J, Daughter, Indian)
- *We have beliefs and a God above too and believe the same thing makes us all have family well-being.* (Respondent K, Daughter, OrangAsli/Aborigine)

All the extracts clearly show that no clear differences exist in the comparison of religions in terms of psychological well-being. Each centres on inward happiness of a family on a long-term basis. Not a single religion exhorts bad deeds and all of them consistently anticipate psychological well-being among parents and children. Both parties place importance on this in attaining family happiness and psychological well-being. However, the rituals of practice are different from each other according to teachings of each of the religions of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism. Thus the objectives and purposes are aimed at family well-being in several aspects of life. In fact, the extent of the application by parents and

children towards their own psychological well-being is based on measures sought in religious teachings to achieve this element on the whole. Therefore results of the quantitative study are fully supported by the qualitative study in reinforcing the results obtained.

The results of this study are consistent with others that explain the importance of religion to psychological well-being by knowing oneself as one important aspect of life [18]. The teachings of Islam base family happiness on psychological well-being through reference to the Quran and recognize this condition as having very high value. It is the same with other religions with each basing certain fundamental beliefs as the objective in achieving psychological well-being in a family. Besides, this study has considered the element of religious beliefs of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism as being in a significant relationship with psychological well-being [19]. Certain elements such as the performance of prayers, reading and reference to religious texts, attending religious talks, meditation, and following religious precepts greatly influence the element of an individual's psychological well-being [19]. Islamic teachings in have their own way, whereas each of the religions of Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism display religious practices in quest of development at an inward level that leads to psychological well-being.

This study also supports other studies that consider the value of marriage for the Malays who practice Islamic teachings, the Chinese with Buddhist teachings, the Indians with Hindu teachings, and the Bumiputera communities of Sabah and Sarawak mainly with Christian teachings, towards the achievement of psychological well-being in a family [20], [21], [22]. The view in each religion does not show any difference towards psychological well-being resulting from characteristics in couples chosen in achieving well-being and lifelong happiness. The similarities among these communities and religions can also be observed from the element of psychology and emotions such as the attitude of give and take, respect, loving and trusting each other in determining the well-being of a family. This necessity has the capacity to avoid all quarrels, even caused by trivial matters [20].

In conclusion, psychological well-being among parents and children through comparison of religions shows no apparent differences. Each places this as a core element and fundamental to the main belief of achieving psychological well-being whether in one's own self, family and society. All of these are strengths in practice and belief according to the particular teachings which are consistent with beliefs held in the religions, whether of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism.

VI. CONCLUSION

On the whole, the results of this study prove that all the religions of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism do not show a significant difference in the aspect of psychological well-being involving parents and children. This fact is apparent in that beliefs in the teachings of every religion consistently search for a point of psychological well-being whether in the aspect of self, family or community. A

family will be successful in achieving psychological well-being if the parents and children practice religious teachings fully. The well-being will become the catalyst in achieving family harmony, happiness and attaining a level of goodness for all parties. The implications of this study provide a guideline to scholars of family psychology and a framework of the family module whether for government or non-government parties, in that the element of religion is important to the consideration of long term psychological well-being of a family. Therefore psychological well-being based on teachings of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism play an important role in the achievement of the aspirations of a family that enjoys well-being.

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