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Emotional Intelligence and Religious Orientation among Secondary School Students

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to identify the differences of emotional intelligence and religious orientation between students in government secondary schools and religious secondary schools. This study involved 224 respondents that were chosen via purposive sampling technique. The emotional intelligence questionnaire used in this study was based on Bar-On's emotional intelligence theory while religious orientation was measured using the Religion Orientation Scale. Data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 19.0. T-test was used to observe the differences of emotional intelligence and religious orientation between students in government secondary schools and religious secondary schools. The results showed that there were differences in emotional intelligence but no difference was found in religious orientation between students from government secondary schools and religious secondary schools.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, religious orientation, secondary school students

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, parents in Malaysia have various choices when it comes to sending their children to schools. This is because there are various types of schools in Malaysia such as secondary schools organised by Malaysian Ministry of Education or religious secondary schools organised by the state government. Government secondary schools offer subjects that are based in modules set by the Ministry such as Bahasa Malaysia, English Language, Mathematics and Science while religious secondary schools offer subjects such as science, mathematics, al-Quran and hadith studies.

The education system in national secondary schools that are centred on western education indirectly produce students that are different than students from religious schools which are Islamic oriented. It is believed that this different education orientation is able to influence cognitive ability, achievement, behaviour, emotional intelligence, religious orientation and students' quality of life (Gong et al., 2006; Shekerjian, 1949; Marsh, 1991; Watt, 2003; Coleman et al., 1982; Noell, 1982; Morgan, 1983; Carbonaro & Covay, 2010; Che Su Mustaffa et al., 2011; Sarimah Mokhtar et al., 2011). Subjects offered by both schools indirectly provide exposure and increase students' knowledge on lessons learned. This is also supported by a research that found types of school influence students' appreciation on Islamic morals (Sarimah et al., 2011).

In producing adolescents with an outstanding personality, some of the aspects that has to be focused are the emotional intelligence and religious orientation as both aspects have relationship with individuals' well-being (Lourdes et al., 2011; Natalio & Pizarro, 2006; Panboli & Gopu, 2011). According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), emotional intelligence comprises of three categories which are identifying one's emotions, emotional control and using emotions to solve problems. Meanwhile, religious orientation refers to one's

ability to achieve a higher meaning of life, values, purpose and morivation (Zohar & Marshall, 2004).

Goleman (1995) divides emotional intelligence into five dimensions which are self-awareness, emotional management, empathy, productive usage of emotion, and establish good relationship with others. Bar-On (1988) on the other hand has come up with a term for emotional intelligence when discussing the concept of intelligence. According to Bar-On (1988), emotional intelligence refers to individual's ability in handling others and one's emotions. Bar-On (1988, 1997, 2000) has shown that emotional-social intelligenceis composed of a number of intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies, skills and facilitators that combine to determine effective human behavior. In contrast, religious orientation refers to the relationship between mind and deep spirit within the individual (Vaughan, 2003). This relationship involves a deep understanding of the questions that exist and the diversity of awareness in the world. Besides that, religious orientation is said to exist as a deep awareness of life, body, mind, soul and spirit. Allport's (1950) theory states that behind religious behavior there are motives and he categorised it into extrinsic and intrinsic religious orientations. Extrinsic religion is defined as a means of achieving some self-serving end, as a tool that promotes social support, comfort and self-esteem, whereas intrinsic religion is defined as being an ultimate end in itself, for those involved in this type of religion (Darvyri, et al., 2014).

Emotional intelligence and religious orientation were found to be related with delinquent behaviour, academic achievement, mental health, happiness and depression (Lomas et al., 2012; Singh et al., 2010; Jafar Shabani et al., 2011; Babanazari et al., 2012; Pascanu et al., 2012). According to Young (1996), emotional intelligence is social intelligence that involves skills to monitor and discriminate between one's emotions and others' emotions while using the information as a guide towards individuals' thoughts and actions. Emotional

handling skills help individuals to interact effectively, able to control emotions, and indirectly increase individuals' psychological well-being. Individuals with high levels of emotional intelligence and religious orientation are believed to be capable of achieving higher well-being. This is because individuals with high levels of religious orientation will strive to maintain a good relationship with God and other human beings and maintain a good behaviouras it is required by the teachings of the religion and highly desired by the society. Research by French et al., (2011) and Khaidzir Ismail and Khairil Anwar (2011) found that individuals with high religious orientation tend to behave in a good manner when associating with others.

The need to have high emotional intelligence and desirable religious orientation becomes more important among adolescents as many social problems were reported such as issues on teenagers' involvement with misconduct and delinquent behaviour. According to the records by the Department of Social Welfare, the first four months in 2010 showed 111 cases of pregnant adolescents out of wedlock compared to 113 cases in 2009 and 107 cases in 2008. This rises questions whether the education given is insufficient to curb misconduct and delinquent behaviour among adolescents. According to the newspaper Berita Harian dated 22nd March 2011, the National Average Grade of Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) 2010 were the best for five years with 559 students obtaining excellent grades A+ for all the subjects taken. Yet, social problems involving adolescents still persist and shows an increase every year. This shows that having high intelligence is not enough. Emotional intelligence and religiosity was found to have negative relationship with individuals' misconduct (Khaidzir Ismail & Khairil Anwar, 2011; Lomas et al., 2012; Zuraiyah Ramli et al., 2011).

Siti Lutfiyah (2008) suggested that religious orientation is the measurement of the relationship between human beings and their God. Having a high level of religiosity tends to

influence individuals to be able to control their behavior from things that contradict the teachings of the religion and social norms. A study done by Che Su Mustaffa et al. (2011) also found that emotional and spiritual intelligence among university students are higher as compared to high school students. This difference may be caused by the difference in educational background. In addition, the difference in educational background such as the subjects taken could influence emotional intelligence. A research by Jayawerdana and Jayawerdana (2012) on the differences in in emotional intelligence among students that majored in science, economy and arts found that students who majored in science were higher in emotional intelligence compared to those who majored in economy and arts. Another research on emotional intelligence conducted by Chamundeswari (2013) between high school students and matriculation students showed that students in matriculation institutions have higher emotional intelligence than high school students. Najib Ahmad Marzuki et al., (2012) also investigated emotional intelligence according to types of school and found that students in boarding schools have higher levels of emotional intelligence than students in daily high schools and religious high schools. However, emotional intelligence among religious high school students were found to be higher than those studying in daily schools.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

In general, the objectives of this research was to identify the differences of emotional intelligence and religious orientation between students in government high schools and religious high schools.

METHOD

This study was carried out using survey method in two high schools which are religious oriented and normal government

schools. This survey involved 224 respondents in which 108 participants were from government school and 116 participants were from religious school. In terms of gender, 97 males and 127 female students participated in this study. Apart from that, all respondents involved were those in Form 4 with the age of 16 years old. Respondents were selected via purposive sampling technique.

A set of questionnaire consisting of three parts was used to collect information on emotional intelligence and religious orientation. The first part consisted of demographic information which was related to respondents' background such as gender, age and type of schools. The second part comprised of items that measured emotional intelligence with statements based on Bar-On's emotional intelligence theory. The reliability of this instrument was 0.61. The scale was developed by Afiif (2003) and was modified according to the suitability of the participants. The items were divided into two scales which were intrapersonal and interpersonal. An example for the intrapersonal scale is "It was difficult for me to understand my own feelings when I'm angry". An example for the interpersonal scale is "I am able to understand the emotions of others just by hearing to the tone of their voice"

The scale used to measure religious orientation was the Religion Orientation Scale by Allport and Ross (1967) which was then modified by Gorsuch and Venable (1983) with a good reliability ($\alpha = 0.70$). The total number of items was nine and was divided into two scales namely intrinsic and extrinsic orientations.

RESULT

Difference of Emotional Intelligence According to Government and Religious Schools

Table 1 shows the difference in the mean scores for emotional intelligence dimensions which was intrapersonal with a mean score of 82.95 (SD=6.63) for religious schools as compared to government school with a mean score of 79.33 (SD=7.66). This difference in mean was significant, $t(222) = -3.78$, $p < 0.05$. This shows that students from religious schools have higher levels of intrapersonal dimension than students from government schools.

Table 1

T test results for emotional intelligence and its dimensions between government and religious secondary schools

	School	N	Mean	SD	df	t
Intrapersonal	Government	108	79.33	7.66	222	-3.78*
	Religious	116	82.95	6.63		
Interpersonal	Government	108	27.56	4.19	222	-3.35*
	Religious	106	29.41	4.08		
Emotional intelligence	Government	108	106.89	9.13	222	-4.50*
	Religious	116	112.35	9.05		

*$p < 0.05$

The results also showed significant difference of interpersonal emotional intelligence according to government and religious schools, $t(222) = -3.35$, $p < 0.05$. The mean score for the religious high school was 29.41 (SD=4.08) which was higher compared to government school that showed a lower mean score of 27.56 (SD=4.19). This means that religious

school students were higher in terms of interpersonal emotional intelligence.

The mean score for overall emotional intelligence showed that religious school students scored higher with a mean value of 112.35 (SD=9.05) compared to government school who obtained a mean of 106.89 (SD=9.13). This difference was significant, $t (222) = -4.50$, $p < 0.05$ indicating that students in religious school have higher emotional intelligence than government school students. This also showed that emotional intelligence and its dimensions were significantly different between both schools.

Difference of Religious Orientation According to Government and Religious Schools

Table 2 shows differences in the mean values for religious orientation between the two types of schools. Students from government schools showed a higher mean of 33.03 (SD = 3.93) compared to students from religious schools with a mean value of 32.99 (SD = 3.70). However, this difference was not significant, $t (222) = 0.07$, $p > 0.05$ indicating that there was no difference of religious orientation between students in the two schools.

Table 2

T test results for religious orientation between government and religious secondary schools

	School	N	Mean	SD	df	t
Religious orientation	Government	108	33.03	3.93	222	0.07
	Religious	116	32.99	3.70		

DISCUSSION

Results of this study showed a significant difference of emotional intelligence between high school students from religious and government schools. Results showed that students from religious school scored a higher level of emotional intelligence than students from government school where this is consistent with the study by Mohd Zuri Ghani et al., (2010) and Najib Ahmad Marzuki et al., (2012). This difference may be explained by the differences in personalities and attitudes among students based on the type of schools they were from. As such, the different environment provided by different types of schools may influence students' emotional intelligence.

The approach used in these two types of schools was also different and this may contribute towards the differences in emotional intelligence among students. This statement was also supported by a study done by Sarimah Mokhtar et al., (2011). They explained that those studying in religious school have a deeper appreciation in religion compared to those from normal and non-religious schools. The religious approach used by the school instilled a high religious consciousness among students and helped them to achieve a higher level of emotional intelligence.

This may be different from the approach that is being used by other government schools where they might have less emphasis on religious contents in the curriculum. Emphasis on religion includes al-Quran recital, *zikir* and prayers that can increase emotional intelligence among students. This was also supported by a study by Mohd Sabri Mamat et al., (2009) who explained that daily religious routines like Quran recital, *zikir* and prayers may influence an individual's emotional intelligence. Therefore, this is believed to be the reason for the difference of emotional intelligence among students from the two types of schools.

The emphasis and religious approach may also influence the well-being, self-esteem and emotional intelligence of students. This finding was supported by a study by Garima (2012). In their study, they explained that spiritual intelligence and religious practice have a positive relationship with students' self-esteem. Besides that, a study by Sarita Sood et al., (2012) showed that religious routines may influence an individual's well-being. This shows that religious routines lead to positive well-being, increase self-esteem and influence individual's emotional intelligence. This was also supported by a study by Mavrovelli et al., (2007) in which they explained the positive relationship between well-being and emotional intelligence based on the results of a study done among students. Mohammad Khaledian's et al., (2013) study also showed a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and self-esteem among students which was believed to contribute towards their emotional intelligence. This explains why the approaches that were used by schools influenced emotional intelligence among students in a particular school.

Besides that, the significant difference of emotional intelligence according to different types of school can also be explained by students' social context. Emotional intelligence of students from religious schools was seen to be higher than those from government schools may be due to peer influence in a student's life. This view is parallel with the statement given by Shaffer et al., (2009) who states adolescents usually befriend peers that have a similar behaviour, attitude and identity. This means that students from religious schools have higher emotional intelligence than those from government schools is because they are influenced by peers that may have higher level of emotional intelligence. Students from religious schools have higher level of emotional intelligence than students from other schools because they regularly follow religious routines (Mohd Sabri Mamat et al., 2009; Sarimah Mokhtar et al., 2011). This indirectly means that peers with higher emotional intelligence in religious schools may prompt other students to achieve higher level of emotional intelligence

too. This shows the role that peers hold in increasing or decreasing the level of emotional intelligence in both schools.

As for religious orientation, both schools in the study showed no significant difference. Although religious schools may emphasize on religious routines among students, this cannot be taken as a predictor for religious orientation. This statement is also supported by a study by Khoshtinat (2012) who found that religious orientation was not a significant predictor for religious coping. This indirectly explains why there is no significant difference in religious orientation based on types of schools.

Another reason for this finding is due to the fact that students from goverment schools take Religious Studies as a compulsory subject and it is included in Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examination. Consequently, students will try to master their knowledge in Islamic studies and this indirectly leads to a deeper appreciation of Islam. This is also supported by a study by Abdul Halim Tamuri et al., (2003) where they found that the level of knowledge and appreciation of Islam among high school students in Malaysia were high. As such, it can increase religious orientation among students from both goverment schools and religious schools.

Another reason that can be attributed to the finding of nonsignificant difference is seen in the demographic aspect of the respondents in this study. Those involved in this study were from the same ethnic group which was Malay and all were Muslims. This lessens the differences among respondents as they perfom similar religious routines and the only difference was based on the amount and quality of their performance. This was also explained by Harry and Eunkook (2002) and McGue and Bouchard (1998) who said that individuals that share similar environment, genetics and culture will not show much difference. Therefore, the similar demographic factors of the students may be why there were no significant difference in religious orientation.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to examine emotional intelligence and religious orientation among students from governement schools and religious schools. Results obtained in this study are hoped to provide an overview of emotional intelligence and religious orientation among the students. Besides that, it is hoped that this study may increase the knowledge of the public in increasing well-being of adolescents, and what intervention to be used to treat delinquency in schools. Finally, an in-depth study of emotional intelligence and religious orientation should be carried out to identify factors that could influence the increase and decrease of emotional intelligence and religious orientation.

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