
Psychological Resilience, Bullying and Mental Well-Being Among Malaysian Juveniles

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Abstract

The study is to determine the psychological resilience as mediating factor between bullying and mental well-being among Malaysian juveniles. The research samples comprised juveniles in Malaysia Henry Gurney School at Melaka, Sabah, and Sarawak. Based on previous literature and underpinning models and theory, this study proposed a framework relating to mental well-being. Subsequently, the independent variables, namely bullying, were employed, followed by a mediating variable, psychological resilience. Accordingly, these variables are associated with positive or negative mental well-being. Four hypotheses were eventually proposed based on the outlined conceptual framework.

Keywords: *Psychological resilience; Bullying; Mental well-being; Juvenile; Bullying victimisation; Henry Gurney*

I. INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, like other countries, the phenomenon of bullying in the circle intern centre is a familiar issue. Bullying behaviours are present in different form in various countries and regions [1]. Over the past three decades, bullying research has significantly increased [2] and involving the juveniles as the respondents. Juveniles refer to young people aged 14 to 21 who have been convicted by juvenile court for any delinquent behaviour involving certain crimes or behaviours that are not controlled (Section 46, Children's Act 2001) and is undergoing rehabilitation at juvenile rehabilitation centres. Punishment and exclusion temporarily solve disciplinary issues [3].

In rehabilitation institutes, bullying is normal and the biggest problem. It is a global issue that represents aggression. Bullying is defined as a pattern of aggression directed at a victim who is weaker, it is a prevalent issue that must be addressed among young people and adolescents everywhere [4]. Bullying crime is frequently an integral part of a variety of cycles that are inherent to human existence. However, because its consequences are repugnant to society, nations have fought

persistently to control and reduce the level of criminal activities.

There are many types of bullying documented by the previous studies. Among many examples in the literature, a range of reviews related to characteristics of bullies and victims can be found in articles by [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [10]. Physical bullying is an aggressive behaviour that includes physical contact such as punching, kicking, and throwing objects in the direction of the victim. Verbal bullying is an aggressive behaviour that involves words like uttering abusive words, insulting, and demeaning the victim. Sexual bullying is behaviour either physically or verbally contains sexual elements such as forcing sexual activity, obscene and uttering words mixed porn. Stealing is related to aggressive behaviour by depriving belonging to the victim and forcing the victim to give something.

Moreover, bullying psychologically is behavioural aggressive capable of making prey feel threatened and harassed like threats and threatening words. Bullying in a way does not directly involve behaviour act like boycotting the victim, spreading slander about the victim, and gossiping about the victim. All of them such bullying behaviour is not

necessarily recurrent, and incidents of bullying involve at least one bully and a victim [11].

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Previous studies have identified various research questions regarding mental well-being among juveniles. Based on my conceptual framework, the research questions are presented as follows:

A. Research Questions

- i. What is the level of psychological resilience, bullying and mental well-being among Malaysian juveniles?
- ii. Is there any relationship of bullying and mental well-being among Malaysian juveniles?
- iii. Is there any relationship of bullying and psychological resilience among Malaysian juveniles?
- iv. Is there any relationship of psychological resilience and mental well-being among Malaysian juveniles?
- v. Does the psychological resilience mediate the effect on the relationship between bullying and mental well-being among Malaysian juveniles?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Mental Well-Being

Mental well-being is an important aspect of the process of individual adaptation and development. With the improvement of the individual's physical, vital, and mental skills, one can lead a comfortable existence and experience a general sense of well-being as a result of inner growth and development [12]. In the creation of programmes targeting youth, it is worth shifting the focus from deficits and dysfunctions (risk factors) to resources (mediating factors) and seeing juveniles less as a group characterised by specific risk factors but more as a group needing resources that must be developed [13]. For example, studies on encounters with stress and coping show that preliminary positive emotions facilitate adaptive adjustment to stress and assist in recovering from stressful events [14] [15] [16] [17].

Mental well-being has a significant role with the resilience in one's mental well-being. Accordingly, a resilient person will perceive life stressful experiences as "truths and not as threats" [18]. Mental well-being was identified to be the strongest contributor to the occurrence of juvenile delinquency leading to be the best predictor variable to prevent juvenile delinquency among adolescents [19]. Thus, this study will be focusing on the

positive aspects of mental well-being in a group of juveniles in Malaysia.

B. Psychological Resilience

Adolescence is a crucial period when cognitive and emotional skills develop for successful transition into adulthood [20]. However, research has shown that children and youth in the criminal justice system are more likely to experience delayed cognitive development, evidenced by factors such as poor emotional regulation [21]. In other words, without necessary skills to manage emotions or achieve goals/basic needs via conventional channels, youth may utilize unhelpful methods to meet these needs such as through violence and/or gang membership. Research suggests that the concept of psychological resilience and its development during adolescence may serve as a mediator factor in those who experience trauma that do not offend [22]. The concept of psychological resilience followed in this study comes from a theoretical model incorporating stress, emotions, and behavior whereby processes of belief, appraisal, and coping mediate the stress responses arising from the individual's environment.

Consequently, this may lead to low levels of psychological resilience, e.g., inability to successfully overcome difficulties [23]. Further, measures of re-offending and resilience do not always go hand in hand, meaning the relationship between psychological development/resilience and reduced offending is unclear [24]. Therefore, incarceration for youth who may already lack resilience may further delay psychological growth, hindering normative adolescent development and potentially contributing to difficulties transitioning to adulthood [23]. This predicts that delinquent behaviour occurs when there are disconnections between common goals and the availability of legitimate ways of reaching those goals. In other words, without necessary skills to manage emotions or achieve goals/basic needs via conventional channels, youth may utilize unhelpful methods to meet these needs such as through violence and/or gang membership. However, not all children and youth who experience significant childhood trauma will go on to engage in anti-social behaviours. Research suggests that the concept of psychological resilience and its development during adolescence, may serve as a mediating factor in those who experience trauma that do not offend. The concept of psychological resilience followed in this research comes from a theoretical model incorporating stress, emotions, and behaviours whereby processes of belief, appraisal, and coping mediate the stress responses arising from the individual's environment.

Findings from resilience research acknowledge that resistance to adversity may derive from a range of

physiological or psychological coping processes rather than external mediating factors [25]. That is, the extent to which youth develop psychologically during the critical period of adolescence may be paramount to how well they are able to create and take advantage of mediating factors in times of adversity [26]. The increases in positive affect and coping and decreases in negative affect and aggression positively related to reduced re-offending. The mechanisms by which these changes take place appear to include cognitive function such as positive self-concept and reduced negative attitudes. These processes may be in turn be instrumental in supporting a successful transition into adulthood. Resilience is considered a dynamic process whereby individuals bounce back despite experiencing significant adversities or traumas. Focused on how to capture perceptions of safety and explore how youth habitually navigate high-crime environments while demonstrating resilience [27].

IV. UNDERPINNING THEORIES RELATED TO MENTAL WELL-BEING

A. Stress Coping Model

As described by researchers such as Lazarus and Folkman, stress coping involves a more specific process of cognitive evaluation to determine whether an individual believes he or she has the resources to effectively respond to the challenges of a stressor or change [28] [29]. The literature on evaluation describes the response or coping process in terms of problem-focused or emotion-focused coping [30] [31]. When confronted with a challenge, an individual first determines whether the challenge is threatening or not, and then considers whether he or she has the resources to effectively respond to or cope with the challenge. In a similar vein that a single coping strategy may target both the problem and emotions [32].

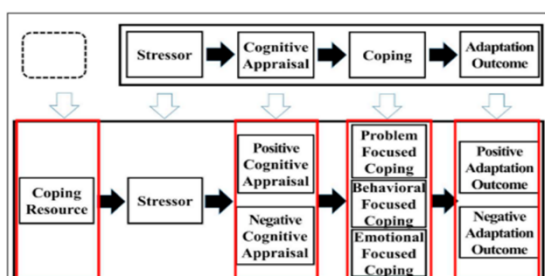


Figure 1 Multi-dimensional stress coping model

Positive emotions resulted from successful outcomes, whereas distress resulted from unsuccessful resolution of the situation, which prompted further evaluation and coping strategies. However, the revised theory proposes that unsuccessful coping and the resulting distress may

trigger meaning-focused coping, especially when stressors are perceived to be overwhelmingly unpleasant and uncontrollable [14] [33]. Meaning-focused coping entails drawing on one's values, beliefs, and goals to reorder life priorities, ascribe positive meaning to ordinary events, and discover and recall the benefits of stress [34] [33]. In turn, meaning-focused coping elicits positive emotions, which restore the resources that influence cognitive appraisals, sustain coping efforts over time, and alleviate distress [33]. Consequently, there are two feedback loops between negative outcomes and distress, one characterised by positive emotions and the other by negative emotions. They can attempt to alter the person-environment conditions that underlie negative emotions or stress (problem-focused coping). They can also relate to internal factors and attempt to reduce a negative emotional state or alter the evaluation of a challenging circumstance (emotion-focused coping).

B. The Broaden-and-Build Theory

Positive emotions, according to the Broaden-and-Build idea, serve to increase an individual's instantaneous thought-action repertoire. In the late 1990s, psychology professor Barbara Frederickson first proposed the theory. A novel theory of positive emotions, proposing that they serve to expand the instantaneous thought-action repertoires of humans, hence promoting health and functioning [35]. In addition, this idea is used to describe the impact of a person's physical, intellectual, and social resources [35]. It has been demonstrated that maintaining a positive mindset and having pleasant emotions during times of stress protects [14]. A theory associated with the field of positive psychology that investigates the role of positive emotions in building resiliency, those who are resilient naturally experience more positive emotions, such people tend to be more optimistic and energetic, and these positive emotions facilitate upward cycles that help combat adversity through effective coping [36]. Based on the data, this hypothesis proposes that pleasant emotions might have the effect of increasing awareness and reactivity to events, as well as improving resilience and coping abilities.

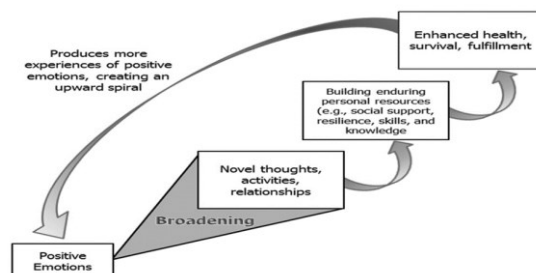


Figure 2 The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions

Positive emotions and broad coping strategies appear to be mutually reinforcing, as suggested by these findings. Positive emotions not only make people feel good in the present, but also increase the likelihood that they will feel good in the future through their effects on expanded thinking. As stress coping strategies are a form of psychological resilience, these findings are consistent with the broaden-and-build theory's prediction that fleeting positive emotions can build long-lasting psychological resources and initiate upward spirals of improved emotional well-being.

C. The Multifactor Model of Bullying in Juvenile Settings

Multifactor Model of Bullying in Secure Settings (MMBSS hereafter), no other secure settings research has tested a theory. More importantly, no attempts have been made to develop a comprehensive theory of bullying in juvenile rehabilitation centres that incorporates and links the results of the existing secure settings bullying research. Bullying in juvenile rehabilitation centres is more complex than bullying at school and needs different theoretical considerations due to the distinctive characteristics of the secure settings environment and the individual characteristics of the juveniles. The current study studies the differences between "pure bullies" and "bully/victims" in a sample of juvenile offenders in terms of their character elements, including characteristic aggressiveness, beliefs, and intentional reactions to aggression. Despite its shortcomings, the study has added to the body of knowledge regarding the differences in bully individual characteristics. Additionally, it was discovered that bully victims adopt a diversity of aggressive responses to perceived threats as opposed to just aggressive ones. These results provide evidence in supports of the Multifactor Model of Bullying in Secure Settings, which proposes alternative victimization pathways for the two bully groups, especially by taking into consideration characteristics that look at individual characteristics.

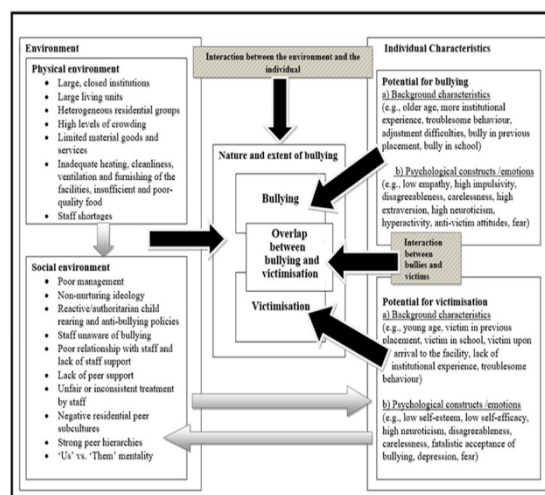


Figure 3 The Multifactor Model of Bullying in Juvenile Settings

Juveniles were more fearful because they were less secure in their chosen approach and less likely to believe it would work than true bullies. The Multifactor Model of Bullying in Secure Settings, which emphasises the importance of both cognition and emotion in one of the pathways leading to bullying perpetration, is related to this as well. The "desensitisation" pathway may help to understand bully-victims and the role that environment, cognitions, and emotions play in determining how they react to bullying [37]. In contrast, the "environment and prior characteristic" pathway may be used to explain how true bullies develop aggressive responses after their previous personality traits are encouraged by their environment. The "environment and individual characteristic" pathway is the designation of the second pathway. The connection between prisoners' stable individual characteristics and the institutional environment is considered in this pathway. It only explains "pure" bullying by focusing on consistent individual characteristics. It indicates that those juveniles who are obvious bullies have a more enduring tendency for aggression, which is likely to show both inside and outside of institutions, with the environment of such enhancing these characteristics. Thus, this study will only be focusing on the individual pathway that is very significant with the psychological resilience factors for juveniles in coping strategies with their stress adversity.

V. PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the literature review, we propose a conceptual framework in Figure 4. The variables that we will employ is bullying as independent variable. Meanwhile, psychological resilience is considered the mediator and mental well-being as the dependent variable.

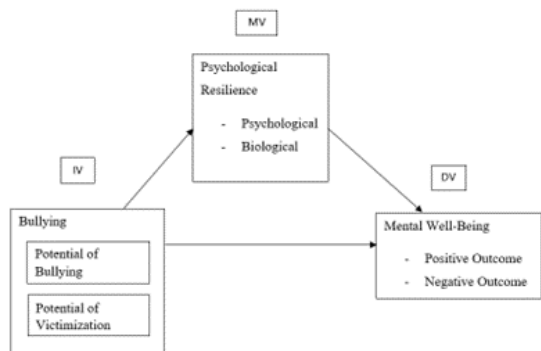


Figure 4 The Conceptual Framework

H1: Bullying does significantly influence the mental well-being among Malaysian juveniles.

H2: Bullying does significantly influence the psychological resilience among Malaysian juveniles.

H3: Psychological resilience does significantly influence the mental well-being among Malaysian juveniles.

H4: Psychological resilience mediates the relationship between bullying with mental well-being among Malaysian juveniles.

VI. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This research will be conducted using quantitative research to test the objective theory by measuring the relationship of the variables.

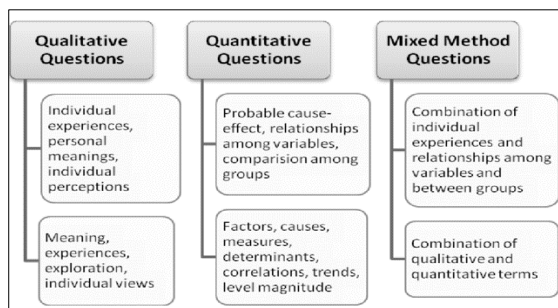


Figure 5 Strategies to Choose the Research Design

This study will be conducted using questionnaires among Malaysian juveniles in Malaysia Henry Gurney School. Subsequently, the researchers will choose simple random through face-to-face survey because of the high risk of administrating and higher chance of reaching a larger population. A population can be defined as a group which interests the researcher, and the study results will be generalized ideally [38]. Additionally, this method is advantageous for experience and timesaving,

convenience in reaching specific populations, and others.

B. Research Instrument

The questionnaires are divided into four sections, where Section A comprises demographic profile questions. Meanwhile, Section B consists of the mediating variable of psychological resilience. Finally, Section C encompass their bullying and victimisation as the independent variable, and Section D is considered their condition of mental well-being.

Variable	Questionnaire	Number of Likert Scale	Number of Item	Source of Questionnaire's Items
Respondent Background	Section A		3	
Psychological Resilience	Section B	5	24	The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale
Bullying	Section C	5	66	Direct and Indirect Prisoner Behaviour
Mental Well-Being	Section D	5	14	Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale
Total			104	

Table 1 Sources of the Questionnaires

VII. CONCLUSION

The study attempted to examine the condition of mental well-being among juveniles in the Henry Gurney School in Malaysia. A conceptual framework is proposed with Psychological Resilience, Bullying and Mental Well-Being as variables of this study. Furthermore, the expected results to be consistent with previous research and will be the aim of the research output. However, certain limitations become a potential challenge to this type of research, i.e., the cooperation among juveniles. Overall, this study contributed to the well-being of juveniles in the Henry Gurney School in Malaysia. The findings from this study can serve as a reference among practitioners in juvenile system in understanding the effective action in a social rehabilitation centre should take is to diagnose and identify a wide range of juveniles, followed by the development of an appropriate intervention programme based on the idea where they can assess in a suitable environment.

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