

The Integration of Rebt-Tazkiyah Al-Nafs Approach on Emotional Intelligence and Resilience of Undergraduate Students during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Haslinda Hussein, Ku Suhaila Ku Johari, Rorlinda Yusof

Faculty of Education, National University of Malaysia

Corresponding Author Email: kusahaila@ukm.edu.my

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i6/21773>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i6/21773

Published Date: 31 May 2024

Abstract

Emotional intelligence and the resilience of students are essential aspects, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Movement Control Orders have shifted the learning system from face-to-face to remote learning. Psychological services and counselling have also felt the impact of these developments. Therefore, this study aimed to explore undergraduate student's perceptions of emotional intelligence and resilience in facing challenges during the pandemic. The research design used a qualitative approach with structured interview protocols. The study participants consisted of five undergraduate students in their first and second semesters, aged 19-22 years, voluntarily participating in this research at the Teacher Education Institute Campus. Data was analysed through coding and theme generation. The study found that students are aware of the emotions and thoughts they experience. Additionally, students' motivation is derived from social and spiritual support. Furthermore, student teachers build their resilience through three sources: emotional regulation, social relationships, and survivor mentality. The study revealed that emotional awareness and motivation helped students understand emotional intelligence, while resilience helped students face the challenges they encountered.

Keywords: Online Psychological Support Services, Emotional Intelligence, Resilience

Introduction

Online psychological support services are becoming increasingly prevalent in society, especially in the digital age. Online psychological support services refer to services provided through phone calls, video calls, and video sessions only (Malaysian Counsellor Board, 2020). According to the Ministry of Health Malaysia (2020), a total of 122,328 calls were received by June 18, 2021. Most callers using these support services need emotional support and counselling. The Ministry of Health Malaysia provides psychological support services through various platforms, including phone calls, video calls, web chats, messaging, and QR codes.

Psychological and counselling services in the Ministry of Education, especially at teacher education institutes, have also adapted to the ongoing developments. COVID-19 has disrupted many aspects of students' lives, affecting their performance as students and their interactions with lecturers. Teaching sessions cannot be conducted perfectly, and interactions between lecturers and students are limited (Zarien et al., 2019). The Guidelines for Counselling Services During the Recovery Movement Control Order by the Malaysian Counsellor Board (Malaysia) No. 1-2020 outlined that to help students affected during the COVID-19 pandemic, emotional management is reinforced through online psychological support activities aimed at helping students cope with issues such as stress, self-confidence, family relationship problems, and more. Zin (2010) stated that teachers with high emotional intelligence can manage and control any task more efficiently, leading to a more meaningful life. Keong (2011) found that spiritual intelligence contributes to 41.1% of the quality of student teachers at teacher education institute campuses. This study suggests that elements of spiritual intelligence should be incorporated into teacher training curricula, as it has the potential to improve the quality of student teachers.

Literature Review

According to Goleman (1998), emotional intelligence is the ability to control oneself and others in terms of feelings, emotions, and behaviour. It is also the act and intelligence to adapt one's behaviour appropriately to the situation. There are five dimensions in the emotional intelligence construct, namely self-awareness, emotional management, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills. According to Mayer and Salovey (1997), emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to control one's own emotions and those of others, to distinguish between those emotions, and to use that knowledge to monitor one's thoughts and actions.

Ishak et al (2004) stated that there are seven domains and 28 subdomains in emotional intelligence: maturity, spirituality, personal competence (self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation), and social competence (empathy, self-awareness). This study emphasizes three domains: self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-motivation, based on the responses given by the research participants during the interview procedure.

The theory used to explore the issues brought by clients is Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT). According to Ellis (1979), people face problems not because of an event or thing, but because of their views or thoughts about that event. Irrational, unrealistic, and illogical ideas and beliefs cause individuals to experience neurosis or psychosis. Ellis (1979) argued that some of the ideas that frequently disturb human emotions and thoughts include, blaming oneself constantly and overusing words like 'must' and 'should' in an absolute manner.

Emotional disturbances and thoughts can be explained through the A-B-C-D model, which stands for Antecedent (A), Belief (B), Consequence (C), and Dispute (D) (Dryden & Ellis, 2011). Disputation is the process of examining whether the thinking of a subject is rational or irrational. If the thought is irrational, it will be changed to a rational belief, and the individual can handle emotional disturbances more rationally.

The emotional and cognitive disturbances can be explained through the A-B-C-D-E-F concept as follows, according to Bistamam (2006; 2016):

A - Activating event or situation, which refers to the specific event or behaviour experienced by an individual.

B - Belief system held by an individual.

C - Consequence, which is the result of the evaluation of B and A, interpreted by the individual.

D - Debating methods, which include techniques to argue, teach, challenge, and correct the belief systems that lead to disturbances in an individual's emotions and behaviours.

E - Emotions or feelings returning to normal, with rational and positive belief systems and evaluations.

F - Action plan, which encompasses strategies designed to improve the quality of life.

Al-Tazkiyah is derived from the Arabic word "zakka," which means purity. Additionally, al-Tazkiyah also signifies growth, purity, and blessings. According to the Mawrid Dictionary (1997; 313), "tazkiyah" means purifying or cleansing. Meanwhile, "Nafs," according to Al-Ghazali (2005), refers to the ego or the human self. Based on these two definitions, "Tazkiyah al-Nafs" can be defined as the purification of the human soul from all blameworthy qualities (al-Takhalli).

Hamjah (2006) states that Tazkiyah is the process of cleansing the soul from all negative traits or blameworthy character found within an individual. This view is supported by Hamjah (2010); Ahmad (2000), which states that Tazkiyah al-Nafs consists of two main processes: "mujahadah al-nafs" (al-Takhalli) and "Riyadal al-nafs" (al-Tahali).

Hawwa (2008) says that Tazkiyah al-Nafs is the effort to purify the soul from polytheism and its branches, realizing its purity through monotheism, and making the names of Allah as one's character while also practicing perfect servitude to Allah by freeing oneself from acknowledging lordship other than Allah. There are three important stages in the process of Tazkiyah Al-Nafs, which are "Tathahur," the effort to purify oneself through repentance and the promise not to repeat actions that defile the heart; "Takhalluq," the effort to adorn oneself with noble character; and "Tahaquq," the effort to realize praiseworthy character with good names of Allah and emulating the Prophet, achieving the level of perfect servitude.

Zaini and Sa'ari (2016) explains that "al-Tazkiyah" is the purification of the soul from various bad inclinations and sins. This purification process is carried out by developing a good fitrah (natural disposition) within oneself and maintaining efforts to reach the level of a "muttaqin" (God-conscious person).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used in this study is based on the Integration of REBT-Tazkiyah Al-Nafs Approach in providing online psychological support services. REBT is used as a therapeutic approach to assist student teachers in identifying and managing irrational beliefs and emotions. Meanwhile, the Tazkiyah al-Nafs approach, which focuses on spiritual development and purification, is integrated into the process to enhance emotional intelligence and resilience.

The integration of these two approaches aims to provide a holistic and balanced support system for student teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach focuses on

enhancing emotional awareness, emotional regulation, and emotional resilience, which are crucial for coping with the challenges brought by the pandemic.

Methodology

The study is qualitative in nature and participant engagement was voluntary, conducted online using the Google Meet application. The research period lasted for two weeks. The researcher arranged appointments with the participants before the sessions began. At the initial stage of the sessions, participants were briefed on the purpose of their involvement in the study, the ethics of information confidentiality, and what can and cannot be done during the sessions. During the interaction process, participants were given the freedom to express their opinions, and consent to record the sessions was also obtained. Participants were provided with worksheets for each session. At the end of the meetings, participants were asked to reflect on their experiences of participating in the research. Data were collected using the method of Focus Group Discussions (FGD). In this method, the researcher selected a group of individuals with specific characteristics to hold a discussion session. A facilitator, a designated discussion leader, directed the discussion. Everything said by group members constituted valuable data in FGD, and this method provided an opportunity to share and compare participants' experiences and views and allowed for conversations about real-world occurrences. This method was used to gain a deeper understanding of a specific topic. In this study, the facilitator aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of emotional intelligence aspects encompassing self-awareness, self-motivation, and resilience in the research participants. Additionally, data collection was also conducted through participant engagement using the observation method. The researcher directly involved themselves with the research participants to gain a clear understanding of the issues they were facing. In this study, the researcher observed the engagement and behaviour of the research participants. The observation period lasted for two weeks.

Study Participants

The study participants consist of 10 male and female undergraduate students aged between 19 and 21 at the Institute of Teacher Education Campus. The participants are full-time students enrolled in the Bachelor of Education Programme. (PISMP)

Results

Objective 1

To examine students' self-awareness aspects through the Heart Circle activity

The main aim of this objective is to investigate students' self-awareness aspects through the Heart Circle activity, focusing on two main themes, namely Emotion and Thinking. There are two sub-themes under each main theme to be studied, as follows:

Theme	Sub-Theme
Emotion	Positive Emotions,
Thinking	Positive Thinking, Negative Thinking

This objective aims to explore how students experience and manage their emotions and both positive and negative thinking through the Heart Circle activity. The data collected will provide deeper insights into the relationship between self-awareness, emotions, and thinking in this context.

The findings of this study indicate that student teachers are aware of the emotions and thoughts they experience, which is a crucial aspect of emotional intelligence. They acknowledge that online psychological support services have helped them in understanding and managing their emotions and irrational beliefs.

Respondent 1: I am tired but happy.

Respondent 2: Happy.

Respondent 3: I'm excited to participate in counselling sessions.

Respondent 4: Happy to have eaten outside food.

For the sub-theme of negative emotions, it can be observed from the following statement:

Respondent 2: I feel unsure.

As for the thinking theme, there are two sub-themes: positive thinking and negative thinking.

Positive thinking can be seen in the following statements:

Respondent 2: I don't know anything.

Positive thinking sub-theme can be observed in the following statements:

Respondent 3: I am always positive in everything.

Respondent 4: Excited to learn new things.

Objective 2:

To explore students' self-motivation through the "My Source of Strength" activity.

Theme	Sub-Theme
Social Support	Parents, institutions, trusted individuals
Spiritual	Relationship with God, practices

Moreover, the study reveals that students' motivation during the pandemic is derived from both social and spiritual support. Social relationships, such as support from family and peers, play a significant role in motivating students to overcome challenges. Additionally, spiritual development through the Tazkiyah al-Nafs approach has helped students find inner strength and resilience.

As for the sub-theme of institutional support, it can be identified through the following statement:

Respondent 1: Support from mother and siblings

Respondent 2: Parents, siblings

Respondent 4: Father and mother

Respondent 4: Teachers and lecturers

Regarding the spiritual theme, two sub-themes can be recognized, namely the relationship with the Creator and practices. The sub-theme of the relationship with God can be seen through the following statements:

Respondent 1: Belief in Allah

Respondent 2: Allah

Respondent 4: Allah SWT

While the sub-theme of practices can be observed through:

Respondent 3: Parents' prayers, teachers' prayers

Objective 3

Exploring aspects of resilience through the activity "The Stories of the Ulul Azmi Prophets"

Theme	Sub Themes
Emotional Regulation	Inner strength
Social Relationships	Trusted individuals
<i>Survivor Mentality</i>	Optimism

The research findings above indicate the resilience of students at the teacher education institute campus. Three themes have been identified, namely emotional regulation, social relationships, and survivor mentality. For the emotional regulation theme, the sub-theme identified is inner strength. This can be observed from the following statement:

Respondent 1: The tests that Allah bestowed upon the Prophets show that we also need to be steadfast and patient when facing upcoming challenges.

As for the social relationships theme, the sub-theme identified as role models. This can be seen from the following statements:

Respondent 2: The stories of the prophets serve as a guide for life.

Respondent 3: Drawing lessons and teachings from the stories of the Prophets.

The next theme is survivor mentality. The sub-theme identified is optimism. This can be observed from the following statements:

Respondent 4: The Stories of the Ulul Azmi Prophets taught me that no matter what happens, we must believe that Allah is always there to help us.

Respondent 5: Behind hardship, there is ease. Success can be achieved after going through difficult times.

Discussion

The research findings indicate that the study participants are aware of their self-awareness, which involves identifying different emotions and their categories. Two sub-themes have emerged from the aspect of self-awareness, namely positive emotions, and negative emotions. The identified positive emotions include happiness and excitement, while the identified negative emotion is feeling conflicted. The findings suggest that individuals experience both positive and negative emotions as a response to various events, a view supported by Carbanac (2002), who states that emotions are bodily reactions to specific situations. There is no exact definition of emotions, but they are often described by referencing a list: anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise.

Moreover, emotional awareness can also be viewed from a religious perspective, as it can be detected through the character displayed by an individual. This can be observed in the Hadith about the heart mentioned by the study participants, such as the Hadith of Tirmizi, which states that Allah does not look at a person's appearance or heart but at their heart. Similarly, the Hadith of Bukhari and Muslim states that a person's goodness or badness lies in their heart. This view aligns with a study by Sulaiman et al (2013), which suggests that noble character is the true result of faith because one's faith is not complete without noble

character, as depicted in the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW when asked about Deen (religion). He replied by saying, "(Deen is) good character."

The research findings also show that support from family members, especially parents and siblings, serves as an external source of strength that helps individuals overcome challenging situations. A study by Mustapha and Masdin (2014) states that closeness to the mother is correlated with students' longing for their hometown and the joy they experience during their university studies. At the same time, closeness to the father and peers is correlated with longing and life satisfaction.

The research findings indicate that the aspect of resilience can be learned through the Stories of the Ulul Azmi Prophets. The social relationships aspect with individuals seen as role models can serve as guidance and instruction. Bandura and Ros (1963) suggest that humans learn through classical and operant conditioning, but learning can also occur through observing the behaviour of others. This demonstrates that attitudes can be shaped through imitation based on that model. Imitation is more pronounced if the individual closest to the child, especially the parents, is the model. However, imitating the wrong model further strengthens incorrect habits and behaviour formation that can be harmful. This view is supported by Putrawan (2021), who studied the approach of da'wah (preaching) by the Ulul Azmi Prophets and states that Prophet Ibrahim always presented himself as a good example to follow, and it became the fundamental approach in his da'wah. Qudwah means an example for something to be imitated and referred to in order to become like it. This means that qudwah is a condition in a person that becomes an imitation for other people, whether it is good or bad, beneficial or harmful. Allah S.W.T also chose him to be the reference and model for the prophets and messengers. He also becomes a qudwah and a model for preachers in conveying Allah's message.

Additionally, the Stories of the Ulul Azmi Prophets also teach about survivor mentality. The aspect of survivor mentality can also be learned from the stories of the Ulul Azmi Prophets. Survivor mentality refers to a mindset that encourages self-empowerment and an individual's ability to overcome traumatic events with focus and the ability to keep on living. This aspect can be observed through the unwavering attitude of the Ulul Azmi Prophets. This attitude can be applied in the lives of student educators to face the challenges of life. Duckworth et al (2007) studied grit, which is one of the personality traits that explains a person's ability to maintain determination and motivation over the long term, even in the face of failure or hardship. This study aligns with the research by Mustaza and Kutty (2021), which states that grit personality and the subjective well-being of students are important because they provide insight into students' ability to continue learning throughout the challenging pandemic period.

Emotional regulation is essential to help individuals control their emotions and respond effectively to unpleasant matters (Sawai et al., 2020). This view is supported by Bosse (2017), who states that emotional regulation is a crucial skill that helps individuals function well in their social environments. The aspect of emotional regulation can also be observed in the Stories of the Ulul Azmi Prophets. Zubaidillah's study (2023) mentions that the element of adversity intelligence in the stories of the Ulul Azmi Prophets is transcendental. The trials faced by these prophets include trials of desires, social trials, natural trials, and physiological

trials. From these trials, it is found that the aspect of emotional regulation lies in monotheism, trust, patience, gratitude, positive thinking, hard work, endeavour, optimism, and perseverance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research findings have addressed all the research questions. The study participants are capable of identifying aspects of self-awareness, such as recognizing the emotions and thoughts they experience and categorizing them as positive or negative. Additionally, participants can list their sources of motivation, whether they come from social or spiritual support. Through the activities conducted, aspects of resilience that can be learned by the students have been identified.

The research has explained the aspects of emotional intelligence, especially self-awareness and self-motivation, among student educators at the Institute of Teacher Education (IPG). These findings can serve as a foundation for counsellors to plan appropriate interventions to enhance the psychological well-being of student educators, particularly in mental health care for academic excellence. The research findings are consistent with studies by Andrews & Wilding (2004); Dusselier et al (2010); Stewart-Brown et al (2000), which found significant differences in the distribution of mental health and academic achievement.

Moreover, the Malaysian Institute of Teacher Education can develop training and interventions for counsellors at IPGs to help improve counsellors' competencies in managing the psychological well-being of student educators, especially in mental health care. This statement is supported by Rigotti et al (2020); Zacher & Rudolph (2021); O'Connor et al (2020), who stated that good mental health is essential to ensure that students can continue learning, even online, and adapt to new norms.

References

- Ahmad, A. A. M. (2000). *Ihya' 'Ulum-al-Din*. Cairo: Dar al-Taqwa li al-Turath
- Aminuddin, Z. N., Sabil, M. A., Jamian, R. A. (2019). *Understanding of Lecturers' Verbal Interaction in Teaching of Malay Language at Institute of Teacher Education*. International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development, 8(4), 997–1003.
- Andrews, B., & Wilding, J. M. (2004). *The Relation of Depression and Anxiety to Life-Stress and Achievement in Students*. British Journal of Psychology.
- Ba'albaki, R. (2007). *Al-Mawrid: Qamus' arabi-inkilizi*. Dar al-'Ilm lil-Malayan.
- Baharuddin, M., Zin, M. (2010). *The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and Reading Interest Among Students*. Master's thesis, Universiti Utara Malaysia.
- Bandura, A., Ross, D., & Ross, S. A. (1963). *Vicarious reinforcement and imitative learning*. The Journal of abnormal and social psychology, 67(6), 601.
- Bistamam, M. N. (2006). *The Effect of Group Counseling on the Adjustment of At-Risk Adolescents* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation). National University of Malaysia.
- Bosse, T. (2017). *On Computational Models of Emotion Regulation and Their Applications Within HCI*. In: Jeon, M. (ed.), *Emotions and Affect in Human Factors and Human-Computer Interaction*. Elsevier.
- Cabanac, M., Guillaume, J., Balasko, M., and Fleury, A. (2002). *Pleasure in Decision-Making Situations*. BMC Psychiatry, 2:7.

- Duckworth, A. L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). *Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-Term Goals*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(6), 1087–1101.
- Ellis, A. (1979). Rejoinder: *Elegant and Inelegant RET*. In Ellis (Ed.), *Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Rational-Emotive Therapy*. Brooks/Cole.
- Goleman, D. (1998). *Working with Emotional Intelligence*. New York: Bantam.
- Hamjah, H. S. (2008). *Al-Irsyad Al-Nafsiyy Preaching Approach According to al-Ghazali: A Study at the Counseling Center of the Islamic Religious Council of Negeri Sembilan*. Ph.D. Thesis. Malaysia Science University
- Hawwa, S. (1996) *Al-Mustakhlis fi Tazkiyah al-Anfus*. Beirut: Dar Ammar.
- Ministry of Health. (2021). *Initiative for Mental Health Services and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)*.
<https://covid-19.moh.gov.my/current-moh/2021/06/initiative-service-of-mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-mhpss-moh>.
- Ishak, N. M., Ariffin, S. R., & Mahmud, Z. (2004). *"Emotional Intelligence Inventory for Adults (IKEM-D)*. *Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi*. Rigotti, T., De Cuyper, N., & Sekiguchi, T. (2020). The Corona Crisis: What Can We Learn from Earlier Studies in Applied Psychology? *Applied Psychology*, 0 (0), 1–6.
- Keong, M. C. (2011). *Enhancing the Quality of Trainee Teachers Through Spiritual Intelligence: Best Practices in Pre-Service Teacher Training at IPG*. National University of Malaysia.
- Malaysian Counselor Board. (2020). *Guidelines for Counseling Services During the Recovery Movement Control Order*. Vol. 1-2020.
- Mayer, J. D., and Salovey, P. (1997). *What is Emotional Intelligence?* In P. Salovey and D. Sluyter (Eds). *Emotional Development and Emotional Intelligence: Educational Implications*. Basic Books.
- Mustapha, M., & Masdin, M. (2014). *The Influence of Mother, Father, and Peer Attachment on Adaptation in University and Life Satisfaction Among First-Year Students in the Faculty of Psychology and Education UMS Sabah*.
- Mustaza, M. S. A., & Kutty, F. M. (2021) *Grit Personality and Subjective Well-being of University Students*. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)*, 6(9), 129-142.
- Putrawan, D. A. (2021) *Evaluating the History of Preaching Thought in the Era of Ulul 'Azmi Prophets*. *Journal of Da'wah Management*. Mataram State Islamic University.
- Saper, M. N. (2012). *Construction of the 'Tazkiyah An-Nafs' Guidance Module and Its Impact on the Religiosity and Resilience of Adolescents"* (Doctoral dissertation, Universiti Utara Malaysia).
- Sulaiman, H., Yusof, R., Ismail, Z. (2013). *Emotional Intelligence According to the Quran and Sunnah: Its Application in Shaping Adolescent Character*. *The Islamic Journal of Education*, Vol. 1, Issue 2.
- Zahrin, S. N. A., Mahmud, M. I., Mohd, D. N. P., Kari, H. O., Sawai, R. P., Sawai, J. P., & Kinabalu, K. (2020). *Emotion Regulation in Academic Writing and Journal Publishing Among Academics*. *ASEAN Journal of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education*, 12(1).
- Zaini, N. A., & Sa'ari, C. Z. (2016). *Spiritual Therapy Through the Method of Tazkiyah al-Nafs by Syeikh Abdul Qadir al-Mandili in the Book of Healing for the Heart*. *Journal of Aqidah and Islamic Thought*, 18, 35–72.

Zubaidillah, M. H. (2023). *The Adversity Intelligence Education Model Based on the Story of the Ulul Azmi Prophets in the Quran*. Doctoral Scientific Study. Antarsari State Islamic University, Banjarmasin.