

Personality Traits of High-Risk Female Teenagers

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ABSTRACT

Juvenile delinquency involving female teenagers is at an alarming rate. Many negative practices including illicit sex and babies born out of wedlock are on the rise. This paper aims to investigate the personality traits among high-risk teenagers. The sample was purposively selected from 13 high-risk female teenagers who were undergoing a rehabilitating process at a rehabilitation centre in Kelantan. Data were gathered using a set of questionnaires to determine their personality traits. The Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 was used to analyse the data. Results showed that the high-risk female teenagers had dominant negative personality traits including frustration, disappointment, gullibility, and low self-esteem. Aggressive behaviours and violence will be used to cover their inferiority complex if untreated. Serious attention should be given therefore both by parents and the authorities to reduce the rate of juvenile delinquencies among teenagers.

Keywords: psychological problems, high-risk teenagers, adolescents, juvenile delinquency, trait personality

INTRODUCTION

Muslim youth are the survival of the Muslim ummah. They are responsible for bringing goodness to the ummah. However, adolescence can be a period of dramatic changes and challenges. Many adolescents suffer from conflictual relationships with their parents, teachers, peers, or friends in Malaysia (Hashim et al 2016). It is therefore important to observe adolescent development to maintain the security and wellbeing of future generation.

Islam has placed the importance of educating youngsters starting from childbirth. Many of the Qu'ranic verses contained correctives and guidelines for educating a person from childhood to adulthood, and Prophet Muhammad PBUH laid out the methods and principles in educating adolescents. The Prophet himself stated that infants are born clean. Only later, their parents are responsible to shape them to become a Jew, a Christian, or a Zoroastrian (as cited in al-Bukhāri, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri*, Kitāb: *al-Janāiz*, Bāb: (ما قيل في أولاد المشركين), Aḥadith: 1296, volume: 5, p. 182).

Human souls are prone to doing any act, be it good, bad, or vice versa. Human beings are easily influenced to do bad deeds, in which they regret from doing them later. It is a known fact that a human soul is changeable, and it may influence a man to do bad deeds that may go against his sound mind. With Allah's blessings, however, the deep soul may repent to the right path. This phenomenon is exclusive only to human beings and no other living things in this world including animals are endowed with this blessing. A human's soul is able to differentiate between good and bad deeds. A weak soul, however, may not have the strength or fails to evict evil minds (al-Hilali, 1997).

In Islam, a man who has a weak soul is termed as the one who fails to control his passion and desires and has no strengths to deny them (al-Hilali, 1997). A man with a weak soul is identified in the Qur'an as the one who worships his wrongdoings. This is revealed in Chapter 25, verse 45 as follows:

"Explain to me (Muhammad) about the men who are in a negative state, the ones who worshipped their desires? Would you be the guardian (so as not to let them go astray)?"
(Chapter 25: 43)

The age of puberty is a demarcation of teenagers' reaching the age of maturity (mukallaf). Upon reaching this age, they are solely responsible for their acts and responsibilities. In usulfiqh, the term *al-ahliyyah* is defined as the rights of the person to accept and execute all responsibilities placed on them by the syariat. *Al-ahliyyah* means the trust from Allah to the mankind. Allah SWT said:

We have indeed offered the trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains, but they refused to undertake it (religious duties) and they fear will not execute it (because of the weight). However, the mankind could take on the trust. Indeed, they are cruel and very stupid.
(Chapter 33: 72)

The verse informed us that only mankind could take on the trust since he is equipped with the mind and soul, and he knows about Allah's orders with his conscious minds and watchful eyes. Therefore, a man obeys Allah because of his own choice and wishes. He may also disobey Allah because of his own needs. He is indeed fully responsible for his own good and bad deeds for the choices had been made earlier by him.

There is a growing concern over delinquency and crimes such as alcohol, drug, and sexual abuse among adolescent students in Malaysia. Understanding the psychological state of adolescents who committed these negative actions is as important as understanding the causes of the actions as well as preventing them. This study attempts to uncover the personality traits of high-risk female adolescents in Malaysia who were at risk as a means of understanding their state of minds and personality and diminishing the rates of negative behaviours among teenagers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Personality traits

Personality generally means a set of distinctive traits and characteristics. Within psychology, personality is defined as "the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristics behavior and thought" (Allport 1961: 28). It is also referred to as "a response function that maps personality traits to measured (manifest) personality" (Borghans, Golstyen, Heckman, & Humpries, 2011: n.p). Both of these definitions informed us that personality is an internal process that guides behaviour. But what are personality traits? A personality trait is a characteristic that is distinct to an individual. According to Roberts (2009: 140), personality traits are "the relatively enduring patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that reflect the tendency to respond in certain ways under certain circumstances". By this definition, personality traits can be claimed as both cognitive and behavioural.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework used in this study was social cognitive theory. Bandura (1977) stated that behavior is learned through a process by observing the environment. In Bandura's (1977) illustration of human behavior, personal factors, environmental factors, and behaviors all have a direct impact on each other. According to social cognitive theory, people learn not only from their own personal experiences, but also from the experiences of other individuals and the consequences associated with them. The quality of teenagers' lives is both an individual and a societal matter. In order to diminish the rates of negative behaviours among teenagers, it is essential to address the traits or attributes of high-risk teenagers. Social cognitive theory can be valuable when applied in the Malaysian community in order to decrease the cases of illicit sex and pregnancy or other negative behaviours among female adolescents.

High-Risk Teenagers

High-risk teenagers are those who originally have a low risk to become delinquents, but are inclined to become high-risk due to the negative influences and lack of supports received from the parents. High risk female teenagers are submissive to the sweet promises given by their irresponsible male friends, and they are also less tactful in their judgements. Some of the factors that cause negative activities include unstable family, poverty, negative environments in the neighbourhood, and the pressure received in an academic institution. These antecedents are normally supported by the teenagers' low academic achievements and lack of participation in school activities. They were also absent from school, and will look for ways to escape from friends and school administration. They usually adopt a different lifestyle than normal school teenagers. High risk teenagers are seen as those who have the potential to get involved in many negative activities if no prevention and supports are given (Al-Zarrād 1997; Martha et.al 1998).

Fariza (2009) examined adolescents' emotional development from the perspective of Islamic psychologists. At the adolescence stage, a person is claimed to be experiencing rapid changes in biological, physical, mental and emotional as well as roles and responsibilities. Those who are unable to adapt to these changes may experience psychological disorder causing tension and stress. Consequently, teenagers may become aggressive, rebellious, snappy, or depressed. They would substitute these feelings by getting involved in social problems such as smoking in order to release their stress. These show the internal conflicts among high-risk teenagers.

Talib et al (2012) claimed that there is a considerable number of sexually active teenagers and teenage pregnancy in Malaysia. According to the authors, 43% of youth respondents had started to have dates as early as their ages of 13-15. At the age of 16-17, 35% of them had begun to caress and kiss their partners. In particular, teenage pregnancy has emerged to be a significant social issue, as its prevalence is increasing in the country (Tan et al. 2012). The prevalence among 4,500 teenagers (12-19 years old) had increased to 5.4% in Negeri Sembilan (Lee et al. 2006). A similar study was conducted by Anwar et al. (2010). He reported a much higher prevalence - 12.6% among 1,139 students (15-20 years old) in Pulau Pinang. The discernible factors leading to these negative acts are neglect (family is not a source of strength or not close enough), unemployment, and lower levels of educational and socioeconomic status (Tan et al. 2012). Research carried out by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Malaysia also revealed strong evidence that teenage pregnancy is associated with higher rates of poverty, with teen mothers ending up either unemployed or in low paid jobs (Mohd Suan et al 2015).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was designed as a descriptive research. The survey instruments used was a set of questionnaires which consisted of two sections. The first section asked about the respondents' profile, while the second section investigated the respondents' personality traits. The 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 for 'Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 'Disagree' (D), 3 'Neutral' (N), 4 'Strongly Agree' (SA), and 5 'Strongly Agree' (SA) was used to measure the respondents'

personality traits. The items used in the questionnaire were adopted from Costa and McCrae's Five-Factor Model (1985).

The respondents were 13 registered teenage occupants of a rehabilitation centre (Bimbingan Remaja Puteri Raudhatu Sakinah) in Kelantan, Malaysia. They were a group of teenagers who were receiving a one-year treatment and rehabilitation at the centre after being caught pregnant or giving birth to babies out of wedlock. Some of them were placed there out of their parents' consent and request. The parents had lost hope in providing care for their pregnant daughters. Prior to the study, an informed consent from the respondents was asked. The consent was also requested from the parents of the teenagers aged below 18 years. All of the data collected were then analyzed descriptively using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 showed a demographic profile of the respondents. It was observed that nine (69.2%) of the high-risk female teenagers aged from 15 to 18 years. Meanwhile, 11 (84.6%) of them had their former education from several religious schools in Kelantan. 8 (61%) of them received education at the lower secondary school level (PMR). Seven (53.8%) of the respondents had a range of six to eight siblings.

Seven of the respondents (53%) resided outside Kelantan, and 11 (84.6%) of them stayed with both parents. 10 (76.9%) of them resided in an urban area. One respondent (7.7%) stayed only with the father, while one respondent (7.7%) stayed only with the mother. Four of the respondents (30.8%) were self-employed, while the other four (30.8%) worked in the governmental sector. Seven of the respondents' mothers (53.8%) were the housewives. Six (46.2%) respondents had the father's income ranging from RM1000 to RM 3000. The income of the mother of all respondents ranged from RM0 – RM500.

Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondent

Items	Frequency	Percentage%
Age		
15-18 year	9	69.2
19-22 years	4	30.8
Total	13	100
Siblings		
1-4 persons	4	30.8
6-8 persons	7	53.8
9-12 persons	2	15.4
Total	13	100
Current Residence		
Kelantan	6	46.2
Outside Kelantan	7	53.8
Total	13	100
Area of Residence		
Urban	10	76.9
Suburban	3	23.1
Total	13	100
The Person to Stay		
Both parents	11	84.6
Father only	1	7.7
Mother only	1	7.7
Total	13	100
Father's Occupation		
Government	4	30.8
Private	2	15.4
Self-Employed	4	30.8
Jobless	1	7.7
Others	2	15.4
Total	13	100

The findings clearly supported Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory that behavior is learned through a process by observing the environment. A majority of the high-risk teenagers had witnessed marriage failure in their life, as evident in a majority of them stayed with a single-parent. They had lack of two parents' love, which is a key to a stable family. In return, many female teenagers sought solace from male friends for supports. Dishonest and deceitful male friends used the opportunity to take advantage of the female teenagers, thus leaving the teenagers to produce babies out of wedlock.

The results obtained in this study were similar to the findings obtained in some of the empirical studies. Tan et al. (2012) reported that low academic achievements, family instability, and financial hardship were closely associated with high-risk teenagers in Malaysia. Meanwhile, Mohd Suan et al (2015) related the high-risk cases in Malaysia to poverty. Many of the teenage mothers were reported to be unemployed and had low paid salary.

Table 2 showed the personality traits of the high-risk female respondents. Ranked from the highest to the lowest top five personality traits, the most selected items are item 17 (*You feel regretful with your life now*), which received a mean score of 4.38; item 9 (*You are very disappointed*), which had a mean score of 3.76; item 14 (*You feel yourself to be deceived by others*), which obtained a mean score of 3.46; item 6 (*You like getting praise from others.*), with a mean score of 3.38, and item 4 (*You are a person who likes to deceive others.*), with a mean score of 3.30. It was evident that the dominant negative traits possessed by the high-risk teenagers were frustration, regret, gullibility, and low self-esteem.

Table 2: Personality traits of the respondents

ITEM	STATEMENTS	FREQUENCY/PERCENTAGE (%)					MIN
		SD	D	N	A	SA	
1	You are a person who likes to boast about your strengths.	1 (7.7)	7 (53.8)	3 (23.1)	2 (15.4)		2.46
2	You feel proud of what you have done in the past.	1 (7.7)	5 (38.5)	6 (46.2)	1 (7.7)		2.53
3	You are not ready to accept advice from others.	2 (15.4)	3 (23.1)	7 (53.8)	1 (7.7)		2.53
4	You are a person who likes to deceive others.	4 (30.8)	3 (23.1)	3 (23.1)	3 (23.1)		2.38
5	You easily revolt if reprimanded by others.	2 (15.4)	4 (30.8)	5 (38.5)	2 (15.4)		2.53
6	You like getting praise from others.		2 (15.4)	6 (46.2)	3 (23.1)	2 (15.4)	3.38
7	You like it very much if you know the good deeds of others.	3 (23.1)	4 (30.8)	1 (7.7)	3 (23.1)	2 (15.4)	2.76
8	You like if your bad deeds are known to others.	6 (46.2)	5 (38.5)	1 (7.7)	1 (7.7)		1.76
9	You are very disappointed.	1 (7.7)		3 (23.1)	4 (30.8)	2 (15.4)	3.76
10	You are the one who likes to get the attention of others.	1 (7.7)	4 (30.8)	5 (38.5)	2 (15.4)	1 (7.7)	2.84
11	You're the one who are hard to admit the mistakes that have been made.	2 (15.4)	5 (38.5)	3 (23.1)	2 (15.4)	1 (7.7)	2.61
12	You are not interested in helping others.	5 (38.5)	6 (46.2)	2 (15.4)			1.76
13	You want your good deeds are rewarded.	4 (30.8)	4 (30.8)		3 (23.1)	2 (15.4)	2.61558

The fact that high-risk teenagers had unstable emotion was supported by Akell and Jordan (2011) in their study involving pregnant African American teenagers aged 13 to 19 years. The results obtained from the in-depth interviews which had been carried out in the respondents' schools revealed an unstable emotion experienced by the respondents about their unwanted pregnancies and labour including stress, regret and trauma. The respondents had very low self-esteem, especially when they knew that their parents could not accept the pregnancies and babies born out of wedlock. The authors also stated that there is a direct correlation between poverty, education and culture of the teenagers and the occurrence of adolescent pregnancies.

CONCLUSION

This study had identified some dominant negative traits of high-risk female teenagers including regret, frustration, gullibility, and low self-esteem. Lack of self-esteem may develop violence and aggressive behaviours in the high-risk teenagers since they may use them to conceal their inferiority complex. The negative psychological traits that the high-risk teenagers possessed indicated their troubled personalities. Supports both from parents and the community are therefore urgent to reduce the rate of unwanted pregnancies among female and poor teenagers.

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