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Mazli Sham Abdullah, Saemah Rahman

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## The Relationship Between Decision Making Skills and Students' Behaviour Management

Mazli Sham Abdullah<sup>1</sup>, Saemah Rahman<sup>2</sup>  
Educational Faculty Universiti Kebangsaan, Malaysia  
Email: <sup>1</sup>mazli123@yahoo.com.my, <sup>2</sup>saemahukm@yahoo.com

### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between decision making skills and students' behaviour management. The study was conducted at secondary schools in Kuala Lumpur by utilising a quantitative survey design. The samples of the study were 557 Form Four students who were selected based on random stratified sampling technique. As for data collection process, questionnaires with high reliability index were distributed to the respondents which covered student demography, decision making skills and students' behaviour management. Data were analysed descriptively and inferentially by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 24.0). Results from descriptive analysis indicated that students' decision making skills level was average (mean=3.45, SD=0.51). The same was also found for students' behaviour which was also reported as average level (mean = 3.61, SD = 0.68). Findings from inferential statistics by using Pearson Correlation revealed that decision making skillshad significant relationship and highly correlated with student behaviour management ( $r = 0.758$ ). This study indicated that when students had high decision making skills level, their behaviour management was also high. It is hoped that this study could contribute to the theoretical and practical aspects for relevant parties so that they would concentrate on decision making skills factor in producing the next generation.

**Keywords:** Students' Behaviour Management, Decision Making Skills.

### Introduction

Student behaviour management is one of the aspects that should be given more emphasis at school. This is because students who are involved in behaviour problems at schools are alarming. It was proven when 80 per cent of teachers' time was spent on resolving students' behavioural problems (Zainal & Hasan, 2009). Behaviour problems occur when there are delinquent acts amongst teenage students as observed by Tan, Kadir, Noah, & Baba (2013). There are various types of behaviour problems at schools and these include crime-related behaviour, obscenity, indecency, vandalism, truancy and other delinquent behaviour. Students' behaviour problems still indicate fluctuations and it has yet to show a constant decreasing rate and have yet to be resolved effectively. This implies that student is still not able to manage their behaviour well. These scenarios suggested that individual behaviour management need to be given attention. Since 2010, behavioural problems

concerning obscenity and students' delinquent acts have increased. Behavioural problems concerning obscenity increased from 2163 cases in 2011 to 3378 cases in 2012. Similarly, student delinquent problems increased every year from 2010 to 2012. Student behaviour management problems' analysis from 2008 until 2012 shows that students' delinquency rate is still high.

There are many factors which cause students to be delinquent. Amongst the identified factors are themselves, peers, school and family (Maynard et al., 2013; Ward & Seager, 2010; Zainudin & Roslan, 2011). However, studies in Malaysia indicated that self was the key factor that influenced students to be involved in delinquent problems compared to peer, school and family factors (Zainudin & Roslan, 2011). This shows that all the problems that happened were due to low individual behaviour management. Most delinquency cases happened during teenage period because teenage years are the time when teenagers explore their life choices and determine their own identity (Veloo & Kim, 2014).

Decision making skills education is an element that is also being emphasized in the process of teaching and learning (T&L) in Malaysia (Hamzah, Isa, & Janor, 2010). The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) includes elements of Islamic and Moral Education as well as the inculcation of moral values in all subjects in Malaysia education system (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2012). This was included to produce individuals who have a balanced and holistic development in terms of physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual based on their faith and obedience to God. However, it was reported that student decision making skills level is still low and average (Mokhtar et al., 2011). This was demonstrated through the various negative issues reported on teenage students' behaviour which has diverted from their religion. Razak (2013) highlighted the issues and amongst them were sexual promiscuity, baby abandonment and some of these students were also involved in criminal activities such as stealing, robbing and others. In fact, decision making skills is one of the controlling factors in life in order to avoid inverse behaviour (Jamilah, 2014). Serious attention has to be given especially towards teenage students. Moreover, students have to possess decision making skills values so that they are aware of any actions which are deemed as contradictions to the religion (Razak, 2013; Zainal & Hasan, 2009).

Literature review on related past studies found that several studies have been done regarding the effects of decision making skills on students' behaviour problems (Buchanan, 2009; Faizal et al., 2016). However, decision making skills aspect and behaviour management have yet to be explored extensively and its categorisation into its sub-constructs is also inconclusive. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to determine students' decision making skills level based on self-awareness, importance of belief in life, spiritual activities and spiritual needs. Second objectives is

to determine students' behaviour management level in relation to planning, monitoring and assessment and last one is to determine the relationship between decision making skills and students' behaviour management.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employed cross-sectional survey design. Cross-sectional survey design is used for collecting information from pre-determined population sample, at a particular point in time. This study design was chosen due to its capability of gathering more samples with similar characteristics in comparison to the targeted study population (Creswell, 2008; Noraini Idris, 2010). This study

required the researchers to gather a lot of students which was 557 students. Hence, this survey design was suitable for this study.

### **Samples of the Study**

Samples were subgroups from the targeted population, identified by the researchers, and the findings of these samples could be a representation of the whole population (Creswell, 2008). In this study, the population used was categorised as accessible population due to practicality in terms of time and money. The population was Form Four secondary students at residential schools in Kuala Lumpur and there were 2583 samples identified. In the samples, 1313 students were male (50.83%) and 1270 students were female (49.17%). The population was divided into three zones: Pudu/Bangsar Zone, Sentul Zone dan Keramat Zone. In addition, this study employed stratified random sampling because it involved different categories based on important characteristics that the researchers wanted to study which was gender. Based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) method and data extrapolation, study sample had been determined as 248 male students and 309 female students and the total sample of the study was 557 Form Four secondary students at residential schools in Kuala Lumpur.

### **Instrument and Reliability**

Questionnaires were developed to collect the data and each questionnaire consisted of three parts. The three parts were Part A (Background of respondent), Part B (Decision making skills) and Part C (Students' Behaviour Management). The questionnaire items in Part B (Decision making skills) were adapted from Assessing Decision Making skills (ADMS) Questionnaires which were developed by Mincemoyer and Perkins (2003). Part B consisted of 5 sub-constructs which were defining the problem skills, identify alternatives skills, risk checking skills, choosing alternatives skills and evaluating alternatives skills. As for questionnaire items in Part C (Student Behaviour Management), it was adapted from a study by Zakri (2014) on meta-behaviour skills. Part C consisted of 3 sub-constructs which were planning, monitoring and behaviour assessment. Each part contained statements with 5-point Likert scale. 5-point Likert scale was selected because its preparation was easy and its method was based on empirical data involving respondents' responses on perception (Cohen et al. 2000). Respondents were required to choose their answers by marking one of the number, from 1 to 5, based on the statement for each number whereby the description for each number was as follows, 1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Not sure, 4-Agree, 5- Strongly agree.

To determine the reliability of the questionnaires, this study utilised corrected item total correlation and Cronbach's alpha. Each sub-construct in Part B (defining the problem skills, identify alternatives skills, risk checking skills, choose alternatives skills and evaluating alternatives skills) obtained corrected item total correlation with total scores more than 0.3 which was between 0.44 and 0.68 with Cronbach's alpha value exceeding 0.89. This indicated that each item used in measuring student decision making skills had high reliability. The same was also applied to each construct in Part C (planning, monitoring and assessment) and the obtained corrected item total correlation had a total score more than 0.3, which was between 0.41 and 0.66, and the Cronbach's alpha value exceeded 0.81. This indicated that each item used in measuring student behaviour management had high reliability index.

## Data Analysis

Collected data were later processed (scoring and data cleaning) and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 24.0 (SPSS version 24). Each item was given scores from 1 to 5, in tandem with the respondents' responses according to Likert scale. Subsequently, data were analysed descriptively and inferentially. Descriptive analysis included frequency, mean and standard deviation (SD). Frequency was used to identify respondents' gender profile. Mean and standard deviation analyses were used to determine the decision making skills and behaviour management levels. Decision making skills and behaviour management levels were categorised into three levels which were low, moderate and high based on the mean obtained. Mean 1.00 – 2.33 was identified as low level, mean 2.34 – 3.66 was identified as moderate level and mean 3.67 – 5.00 was identified as high level. The inferential analysis used in this study was Pearson Correlation in order to determine the relationship between decision making skills and behaviour management. Pearson Correlation use the correlation coefficient value ( $r$ ) in determining the strength of the relationship with significant level less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

## Findings and Discussions

### Respondent Profile

Initially, 593 respondents were selected through stratified sampling for this study. However, the data in this study only involved 557 respondents (93.93%). This was due to 36 respondents who did not completely answer the questionnaires. The demographic profile is shown in Figure 1.

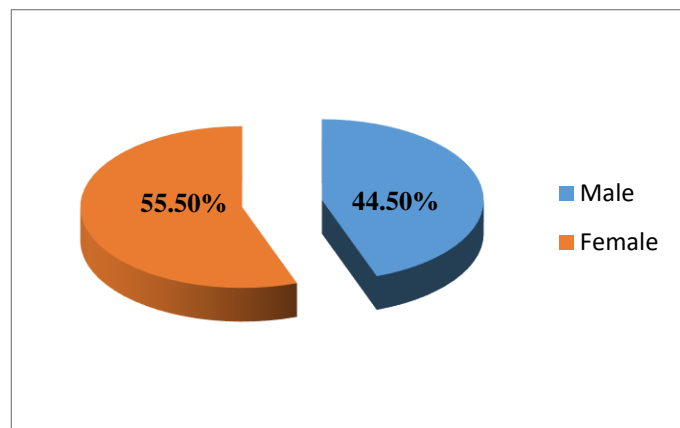


Figure 1 Demographic profile of the study

Figure 1 illustrates the gender profile with 248 respondents (44.5%) were male students and 309 respondents (55.5%) were female students. This shows that although most respondents were female, the selection of respondents for both groups were nearly balanced or the ratio did not exceed 1.5 (ratio 1.24). This ratio was sufficient to conduct a differential analysis (Pallant 2011).



### Decision Making Skills Level

Findings on decision making skills level are displayed on Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Students' Decision making skills level**

No	Decision Making Skills	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1	Defining problem skills	3.36	0.62	Moderate
2	Identifying alternatives skills	3.54	0.67	Moderate
3	Checking risk skills	3.43	0.66	Moderate
4	Choosing alternatives skills	3.45	0.64	Moderate
	Evaluating alternatives skills	3.47	0.71	Moderate
	Overall	3.45	0.51	Moderate

Table 1 shows that decision making skills amongst students was the highest for Identifying alternatives skills Identifying alternatives skills (mean = 3.54 and SD= 0.67). This is followed by Evaluating alternatives skills (mean = 3.47 and SD = 0.71), choosing alternatives skills (mean = 3.45 and SD = 0.64), followed by checking risk skills (mean = 3.43 and SD = 0.66) and the lowest level for decision making skills is defining problem skills (mean= 3.36 and SD=0.62). Overall, it shows that students' decision making skills was on moderate level (mean = 3.45 and SD = 0.51).

Table 1 shows that almost all constructs were on moderate level because the mean scores obtained were less than 3.67. Meanwhile, identifying alternatives skills were on high level. This showed that most students were aware of how to find alternatives to solve their problems. Based on the mean score obtained, identifying alternatives skills were the highest decision making skills dimension compared to other dimensions such as defining problem skills, checking risk skills, choosing alternatives skills and evaluating alternatives skills.

The results of analysis also revealed that the risk checking skills and choosing alternatives skills had nearly same mean score. This meant that both dimensions were interconnected. Consequently, defining problem skills obtained the lowest score compared to the rest. This implied that secondary school students' defining problem skills are still alarming because they cannot identify their main problems.

These findings are worrying as students' perceptions on moderate indicated that their skills to understand the problems was low. This was supported by David and Maiyo (2010). Ay et. al., (2015) and Snyder et. al., (2008) study who claimed that defining problem skills need a systematic goal, problems study and react to the situation. The findings shows that the students' skills to plan their goal systematically and react to the situations was at moderate level.

Based on the results of descriptive analysis, the study found that students' decision making skills were at moderate level. This was shown by obtained mean 3.45 (SD = 0.51). This indicated that students have less defining problem skills. This was supported by David and Mayo (2010). The findings are the students need to have the defining problem skills themselves and cannot always ask for other people ideas or explanations. This findings also finds that the cause of this issue are lack of social interaction among the students and their environment.

Identifying alternatives skills, according to the students, were at high level. This was shown by mean 3.54 (SD = 0.67). Based on this study, identifying alternatives skills in obtaining ideas of problem solving alternatives were at a high level. Students' have many ideas for their alternatives but they cannot understand the main issue of the problem needs in life. It also happen because the

students like to think before they make a decision or discuss with others. The findings of this study Findings of this study were parallel to Carter et al., (2011); Ay et al., (2015); Mulnix (2012).

In general, findings show that students' decision making skills was at moderate level. This was shown by mean 3.45 (SD = 0.51). The five decision making skills dimensions were defining problems skills, identifying alternatives skills, checking risk skills, choosing alternatives skills and evaluating alternatives skills were found at moderate level. However, students' identifying alternatives skills dimension was at high level. Moderate students' decision making skills should have been given a serious thought by all parties.

In addition, Kuhn and Dean (2004) and Mincemoyer and Perkin (2003) finds that students' decision making skills is related to observing and interpretation skills in choosing alternatives This finding parallel to Amri (2010); Caroll and Kirkpatrick (2011); Kumalasari et al., (2012); Aziz (2014) Sahlan (2012); Suriani (2011); Tekin (2011) also remarked that students' decision making skills was in moderate level. The students' decision making skills aspects could contribute to effective learning. It is related to the mental activities. Decision making skills preparation includes all the thinking activities and systematic goal setting. These actions have to become a routine for those who want to succeed in life. Therefore, students' decision making skills should have become ingrained in teenage students' lives.

### Behaviour Management Level

Results on behaviour management level are displayed in Table 2.

**Table 2: Behaviour management level**

No	Behaviour management	Mean	Standard deviation	Interpretation
1	Planning	3.56	0.65	Moderate
2	Monitoring	3.56	0.66	Moderate
3	Assessment	3.70	0.68	High
	Overall	3.61	0.68	Moderate

Table 2 reveals that the highest behaviour management amongst students is in assessment construct (mean = 3.70 and SD = 0.68). This is followed by planning (mean = 3.56 and SD = 0.65) and monitoring (mean = 3.56 and SD = 0.66). Generally, it shows that behaviour management amongst students was on moderate level (mean = 3.61 and SD = 0.68). Description on decision making skills for each dimension is provided in Figure 3.

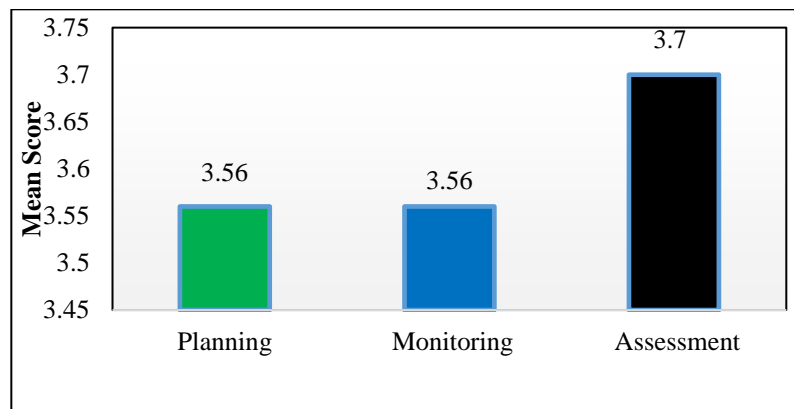


Figure 2 Behaviour management level

Figure 2 shows that planning and monitoring dimensions were at moderate level while assessment dimension was considered high. This indicated that most students were able to assess their behaviour well. Therefore, the assessment dimension was the highest dimension in behaviour management compared to other dimensions like planning and monitoring. Results of analysis also showed that planning and monitoring obtained same mean scores. This implied that both dimensions were interconnected.

This study found that student behaviour management in terms of behaviour planning dimension was at moderate level. This was shown through mean 3.56 (SD = 0.65). This result was consistent with studies by Frias-Armenta et al., (2012), and Carter and McCullough (2013) who also found that students' skills in possessing planning behaviour was moderate. Students act naturally based on their thinking and environments. The moderate level obtained in this study was due to students' planning was moderate in setting their goals on actions that they wanted to carry out, organizing particular steps in ensuring their goals were fulfilled, questioning oneself before doing something that had never been done before, getting religious advice before doing something, planning the ways to show appropriate behaviour in particular situations and planning behaviour based on set of rules. This shows that most actions by students were spontaneous and Nooruddin and Sharifullah (2014) concurred that teenage students' actions were unplanned, unlike adults.

Based on the results of the analysis, this study found that monitoring was at moderate level. This was demonstrated through mean 3.56 (SD = 0.66). These findings were supported by Zainudin and Roslan (2011) as well as Best et al. (2015) studies which reported that students rarely monitored their displayed behaviour. This is because teenage students rarely think to monitor their behaviour and adjust it to their targeted goals.

Student behaviour assessment was at high level. This was shown by mean 3.70 (SD = 0.68). These findings were supported by Bowlin and Baer's (2012) study who stated that some students were used to always assessing every behaviour especially when they committed mistakes. In this study, the assessment level was high due to students who were always assessing their good or bad actions before they did it. Students were also found to have questioned themselves if there were better ways to do something effective and questioned the goals that needed to be accomplished. Although this study found that planning and monitoring behaviour were at moderate level, assessment level was high. However, in general, behaviour management level was at moderate level. This was shown by the obtained overall mean which was 3.61 (SD = 0.68). Moderate behaviour management indicated that students were still unable to manage behaviour well. Although students could assess behaviour well, students were unable to plan and monitor the behaviour.



### Relationship between Decision making skills and Behaviour Management

Results on Pearson Correlation analysis are displayed in Table 3.

**Table 3: Pearson Correlation relationship between decision making skills and behaviour management**

Variables	r	p	Relationship strength
Decision Making Skills	0.758	0.001	High
Behaviour management			

Table 3 shows that there was a significant relationship between decision making skills and behaviour management. Based on the r value, the relationship strength was high. This indicated that decision making skills had strong relationship with behaviour management. The higher the students' decision making skills, the higher the students' behaviour management.

These findings were consistent with studies by Sarimah et al., (2011), Tuah et al., (2012) and Jamilah (2014) whereby they found that decision making skills was associated with behaviour management. The relationship of students' decision making skills could be observed from 5 dimensions which were defining the problem skills, identifying alternatives skills, checking risk skills, choosing alternatives skills and evaluating alternatives skills. These dimensions recorded moderate level and therefore students' behaviour management was also moderate.

Hence, in order to increase student behaviour management, students' decision making skills needs to be increased as well. This was strengthened by Zakri and Saemah (2012). Students' decision making skills needs to be inculcated at schools in order to prevent negative tendencies due to modernisation effects that are occurring in the society today. This notion was also reinforced by Ay et al., (2015) and Abdul Salam (2010) studies who remarked that decision making skills had to be inculcated in school transformations for the purpose of students' personality development.

### Implications of Study

This study offered practical implications to students, parents, teachers and the Ministry of Education Malaysia. This study found that decision making skills and behaviour management was at moderate level and both correlations were significant. Consequently, this provided implications to the students to enhance their decision making skills level which could have an impact on their behaviour management. It could become one of the solutions to delinquency amongst students. Students who are having behaviour problems could enhance his or her decision making skills.

Decision making skills programmes in terms of activities that emphasize elements of decision making skills is one of the initiatives to develop human beings' self-potential. It is vital that each student learns and understands matters related to decision making skills in order to mould students who are balanced physically, emotionally and spiritually. Individuals who are developed physically, emotionally and spiritually are those who could lead themselves and others towards excellence and blessings in this world and hereafter.

To parents, this study provides the implications that they have to become role models and examples to their children in practising decision making skills at home until it becomes a habit to the child. In addition, he or she will also listen to words and advice by their parents.

Teachers possess influence towards their students. Teachers are also the ones who hold the aspiration in producing holistic human capital. Teachers do not just produce excellent students in academic, but it is more towards guiding the students. The combination between the teacher's

knowledge and nobility of character is a complete package that becomes students' role model. Effective teacher's role needs to be elevated in developing and inculcating students' moral and thinking skills. This is because students received official and systematic learning at school. Teachers are change agents and prime movers in developing and inculcating moral and good behaviour values as these traits are getting more important. Teachers' roles in developing and inculcating moral and good behaviour values is also a huge role. Teachers must first practise and observe the skills until the students could emulate it. Teachers have to be role models, mentors, creators and advocates of moral discipline, developing positive moral culture at school and making parents as partners in students' growth.

The contribution of this study towards practicality is also offered to the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE). Decision making skills education is an element that has been emphasized in the teaching and learning (T&L) processes in Malaysia. The MOE has included the thinking skills which is the process of students Education elements in the education system in Malaysia. This was done to produce individuals who are balanced and have holistic potential development in terms of physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual based on their faith and obedience towards God. However, there is a gap between the practice during the execution of the education system and the National Education Philosophy, particularly in the issue of spiritual development domain. A study was conducted by Rohana et al., (2010) to dissolve the philosophy under self-development from decision making skills domain and develop a conceptual model process in developing decision making skills potential through educational process. This is crucial in enhancing the practice of decision making skills element in education.

## Conclusion

This paper has elaborated on decision making skills and behaviour management as well as its relationship. In conclusion, through this paper, it is hoped that it will provide guidance towards the enhancement of decision making skills and student behaviour management, particularly amongst Form Four students. Findings of this study should garner serious attention from relevant parties such as students, parents, teachers and the MOE.

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