RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT AND SELF-IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Adolescents are susceptible to negative influences and activities via social media, surroundings and peers. Cyberbullying, dangerous online games, accessible pornographic content are some examples of negativities which adolescents tend to be drawn into, either knowing or unknowingly, without giving much thought to the consequences of their actions/engagements. To address this, a self-empowerment program has been developed and tailored for school teens. This program covers faith, positivity, social relationship, role-modeling and self-reflection. A total of 219 teenagers aged between 12 to 17 years old participated in this study. 61 out of the 219 teens formed the control group. Adolescents under the control group did not participate in the self-empowerment program whilst the rest of the 158 teens underwent the program. A survey was carried out to both the control and non-control groups of teenagers to measure the acceptance and the projected impact on the teens who participated in the program. Overall, positive responses were recorded with an average score of 5.10/6.00 for the non-control groups and 4.81/6.00 for the control group.

Keywords: self-identity, self-empowerment, adolescents, social and cyber-crimes.

INTRODUCTION

In the information era, teenagers are more exposed to various negative influences and activities – uncensored content is easily accessible 24x7, the network of friends could include strangers or imposters and even worse, criminal activities such as drugs trafficking, child grooming and dangerous online games/challenges that could lead to self-injury and death. Another concern is the increasing number of juvenile delinquents for the local community (Embong, 1999). According to the routine activity theory (RAT) Abadiyy (1995), three elements are necessary for crimes to be committed are a likely offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian against crime. In our current society where both parents need to work to make ends meet, it is common for kids to be home alone. These kids are referred to as latchkey kids. This is not new and has existed since World War II. Various negative effects have been associated to these latchkey kids. Earlier studies showed that young teens were vulnerable to peer pressure and sometimes lead to undesired behaviours such as smoking, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity (Adams & Gullota, 1989), (Ismail, Mujani, Rahman, & Salahuddin, 2018). Young teens also feel pressured and desire to have space and independence (Ismail, Mujani, Rahman, & Salahuddin, 2018). Another alarming threat in this era of digital economy and industrial

revolution 4.0 is that every household or even every individual is connected to the Internet. Ismail, Mujani and Rahman (2018) has shown that Internet Service Providers (ISP) could harbour abnormally malicious autonomous systems if their infrastructure setup is laxed or worse is when the ISP intentionally allow these malicious autonomous systems to operate in their network. Thus, latchkey kids are exposed to the malicious networks and may potentially get involved in malicious activities such as drug trafficking, child grooming, pornographic content, hacking etc. due to the lack of parental supervision. They may be the victims or the offenders. Another Internet- or cyber-related issue affecting kids and teenagers is cyberbullying, a detrimental practice that disseminates offensive messages, embarrassing photos and videos through social media has become a trend among school (A. M. Ismail, W. K., Mujani, & Z. A., Rahman, 2018). Mustapa, Rahman, Ghani, Saad and Mohamed (2018) findings suggest that important concepts of both identity and behaviour are associated with individual ICT usage preferences.

These kids/teenagers are the future leaders of the nation and if these misbehaviours and/or criminal acts in these adolescents are not addressed, then this will further increase the number of juvenile delinquents, heading towards moral poverty in the future generations. As young teenagers are at the most impressionable age, a self-empowerment program is established to prevent crime among teenagers in school. Previous researcher has identified four different categories of crime and delinquency prevention (Long, Rahman, Razick, & Salleh, 2017). Firstly, the corrective prevention method that aims to prevent crime by improving social conditions that might lead to crime. Next, the punitive prevention method that uses police enforcement and legal method to prevent crime. Thirdly, mechanical prevention method that emphasizes on hardware and security systems. Finally, the environmental prevention method that manipulates surroundings that helps minimize opportunities for crime.

It is learned that a successful security planning and crime prevention method should incorporate the aforementioned elements (Yahaya & Latif, 2006). Social control is one of the approaches proposed by sociologists in order to prevent or correct a deviant behaviour (Barlow, Durand, 2008). The most important element of social control is the process of socialization. Social control is one of the approaches proposed by sociologists in order to prevent or correct a deviant behaviour (Hoesni, Hashim, & Ab Rahman, 2012), (Ismail & Tawil, 2016), (Awang, Khareng, Rahman, Machae, & Ismail, 2016). Social control is divided into two categories: formal social control and informal social control. Informal social control refers to the values set by the local community whereas a formal social control refers to something that has been institutionalized. Reward should be given to an individual that portrays good behaviour whereas a misbehaved individual will get a punishment from his or her community (Awang, Farid, Rahman, Long, & Mustapa, 2018).

SELF-EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

The designed self-empowerment program was evaluated by a panel of three experts consisting of one representative each from the Ministry of Education and Royal Malaysia Police Force as well as a headmaster of a local high school. The demographic information of the panel is given in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Demography of the Expert Panel

Demography	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3
Name	Mr A	DSP B	Mr C
Institute	Ministry of Education	Department of Crime Prevention and Community Safety	Principal of High School
Races	Malay	Malay	Malay
Age	46-55	46-55	46-55
Education	Master's degree	Others	Bachelor degree
Working period	21 years and above	21 years and above	21 years and above

The result of the expert evaluation of the program concluded that all the activities designed are suitable and beneficial for teenagers and that the objective of the program is attainable. Furthermore, the panel suggested some improvements in terms of practicality and time management to ensure the activities can be conducted within the allocated timeframe. One of the evaluators, Mr A, commented that the plus point of this self-empowerment program is that the activities in the program can be adopted into the existing school curriculum as a daily reflection activity. As Malaysia is multi-culture, DSP B advised generalizing the program content to take the different races and religions into consideration. Therefore, the content of System of Belief module should be applicable to all races and religions. Apart from the four main components covered in the program, the Mr. C expressed other factors that could also reduce the teenager's involvement in negative activities. These factors include the school environment and the types of punishment meted out at school. Mr. C shared that by having garden in school, the students tend to feel more relax and are excited to come to school. Furthermore, Mr. C has also introduced a unique punishment by substituting the conventional punishment with reading and memorizing Quranic verses.

Considering all the suggestions and comments from the panel of evaluators, the self-empowerment program was further improved and executed in this study as described in Section results and discussions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

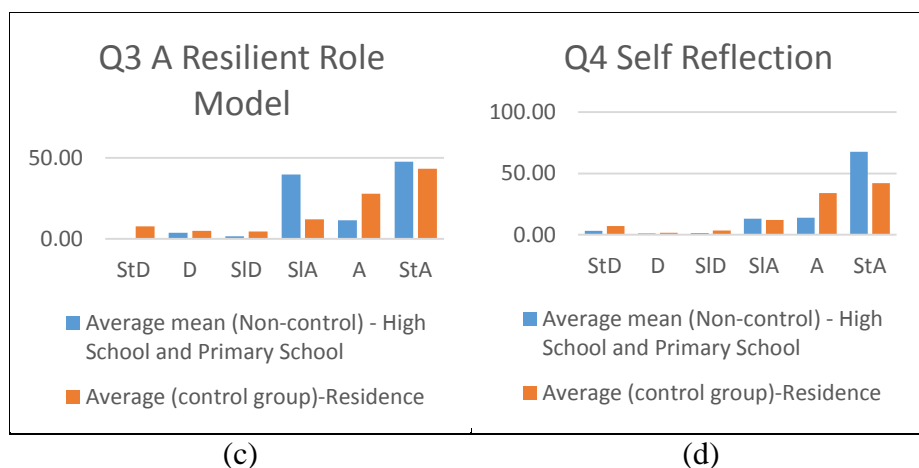The subsequent section details the results and discussion of the Post-Program Survey.

(a)   (b)
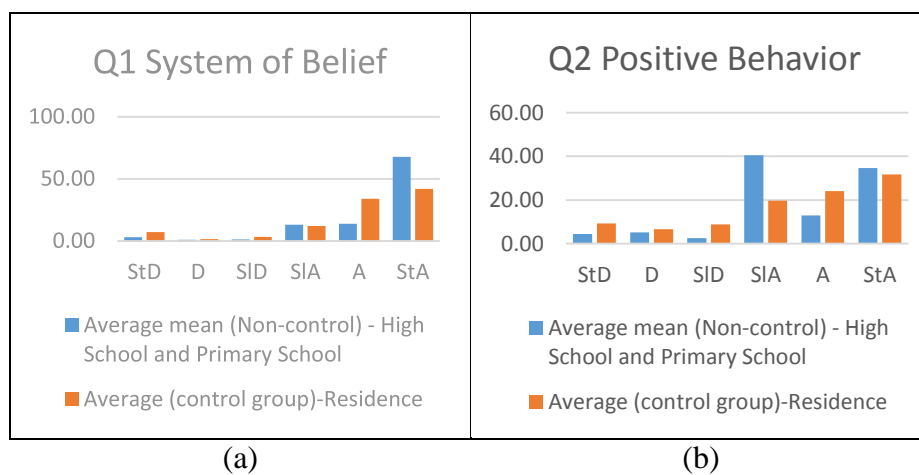
FIGURE 1. Percentage Of Student Reponses Towards The Four Modules In The Self-Empowerment Program (a) System Of Belief (Q1), (B) Positive Behaviour (Q2), (c)a Resilient Role Model (Q3), (d) Self-Reflection(Q4)

The self-empowerment program has been also evaluated on those non-control consisting High and Primary School and control group comprising teenage residence. We constructed two types of questionnaire-based survey (control and non-control group) to measure the effectiveness of the program. The questionnaire used the 6-point Likert scale: Strongly Disagree (StD), Disagree (D), Slightly Disagree (SlD), Slightly Agree (SlA), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (StA). A 6-point Likert scale was used, as opposed to the usual 5-point scale, to prevent respondents from being 'neutral' to get the right results. The results of the survey are tabulated in Figure 1. Therefore, this allowed all the respondents to provide an unambiguous response to accurately reflect the effectiveness of this program to prevent adolescent crimes. At the end of program, the students were asked to complete the questionnaires.

Most of the students reacted positively towards all the activities stated. We conducted a questionnaire reliability test on a small group of students. The Cronbach alpha value of 0.7 is acceptable to be applied on a bigger group of students. For the non-control group, they strongly agreed ($5.48 \geq$ Average mean score ≥ 4.56) that this self-empowerment program strengthened their systems of belief, positive behaviour, taught them to be a resilient role model and to self-reflect. On the other hand, the control group agreed that the existing curriculum in school able to support self-empowerment only the range of average mean score in between [4.38-5.17] which is lower than the control group. Hence, the proposed self-empowerment program shows an impact towards the non-control group.

Referring to Q1 in Figure 1 (a), the results show the effectiveness of the first module on divinity. For Q1, 94.67% of the non-control group fairly agreed that the activity had increased their awareness about God and life where 67.71% strongly agreed, 13.84% agreed and 13.12% slightly agreed. Similarly, for Q1 creation and its creator, the activity had also increased their aware about creation – for every creation, there exist the creator. Unlike non-control group, the control group which are likely to believe that the existing curriculum in school able to increase awareness on divinity or system of believe where approximately 87.98% of total students agreed or precisely 42.08%, 33.88% and 12.02% of the students were strongly agreed, agreed and slightly agreed subsequently. Therefore, this proves that the proposed activity *system of believe* by using guided learning style able to increase the comprehend about God and creation.

For Q2 in Figure 1 (b), the results show the effectiveness of the second module on assertiveness via "Psycho Drama" activity which conducted in experience based learning style. For Q2, about 87.98% of the students from non-control group agreed that the activity had taught

them to positively take a stand where 34.61% strongly agreed, 53.37% agreed and slightly agreed. For Q2, 75.33% of the students from control group agreed that the existing curriculum at school had taught them to say "NO" to vice and/or anything against their principles where 31.69% strongly agreed, 24.04% agreed and 19.67% slightly agreed. On the other hand, there are 12.05% of the students from non-control group who disagreed that positivity activity in self-empowerment program as compared to the control group is approximately 24.59%. In general, we can assume that positivity activity taught in experience learning mode able to instill self-crime prevention element among the students.

The results of Q3 in Figure 1 (c) show the effectiveness of the third module on "resilience". In response to Q3, 95.58% of the students from non-control group agreed that the activity conducted in vision learning mode had increased self-resilience where 46.55% strongly agreed, 10.32% agreed, and 38.71% slightly agreed. However, there is 4.51% of the students for non-control group who were disagreed. For Q3, 83.06% of the students from control group agreed that the activity had taught them the importance of self-resilience where 43.17% strongly agreed, 27.87% agreed and 12.02% slightly agreed. Apart from that, there is an increment approximately 16.94% of the students from control group who disagreed that the existing curriculum at school able to uphold their self-resilience behavior. Eventually, it is notable that the self-resilience activity in the self-empowerment program able to enhance the student's skill in protecting themselves from committing crimes or negative attributes.

The effectiveness of the fourth module on self-reflection is shown by the results of Q4 in Figure 1(d) is fully supported the students with a 97.16% agreement from the non-control group. For Q4(a), 69.81% strongly agree that out of these activities they can apply manners in relation to God, self, parents and society and the remaining 13.52% and 13.84% simply agreed and slightly agreed correspondingly. For Q4, 91.8% of students from control group agreed on the self-reflection activity giving the impact to instil student's awareness on self-crime prevention. Merely 69.81% of them were strongly agreed that they can empower the virtuous traits in relation to God, themselves, parents and societies and the remaining 13.84% and 13.52% simply agreed and slightly agreed to the question. Eventually, we can highlight that the self-reflection activity in the self-empowerment able to nurture students into enhancing their responsibility and sensibility to God, people and society.

Figure 2 (a), (b) and (c) also show the average mean percentages for the effectiveness of each modules on the students. Tentatively, the average mean score for non-control group (5.09 ±0.17) outperform control group (4.81±0.11). We can conclude that the students from the non-control group are agreed that they able to develop and nurture their self-identity gradually among teens through the Self-empowerment program. On the other hand, the control group falls under slightly agreed that existing curriculum at school able to increase understanding about the importance of self-empowerment program. We can observe that Q2 factor namely, *positivity* activity gained the lowest scored among both non-control (4.56) and control groups (4.38). The students may think that saying "NO" as their colleague provoking to do negative attitude is the toughest as compared to other factors such as system of believe, resilience and self-reflection. Furthermore, positivity was performed in phsyco-drama activity or in experience based learning mode. Perhaps, this activity can be further upgraded into video editing reflection activity which may be more interesting.
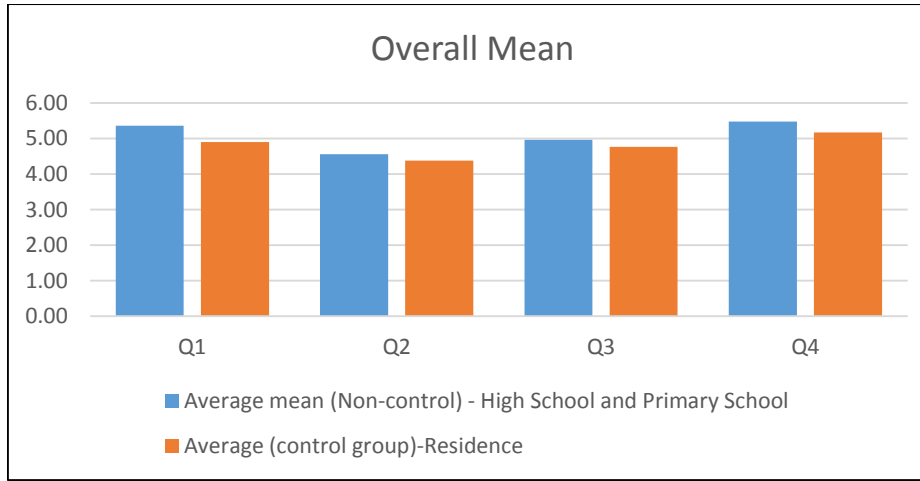
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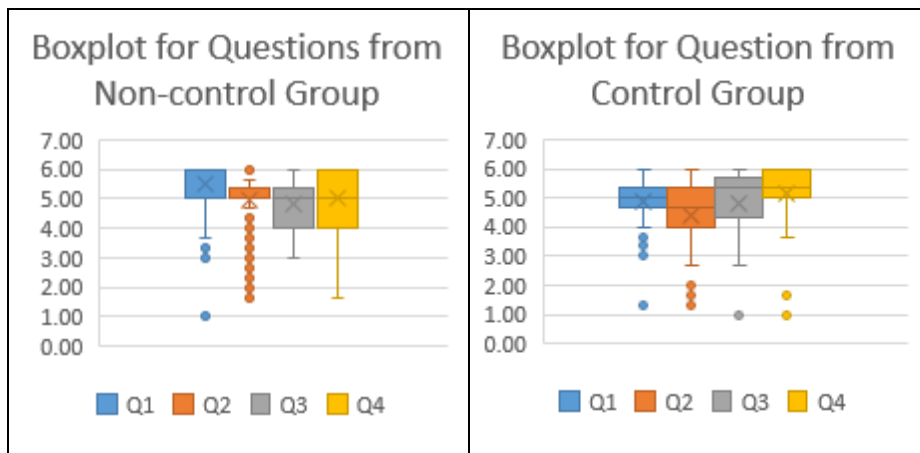
(b)

(c)

FIGURE 2. Tabulation Of The Average Mean Score Boxplot Between Non-Control And Control Group In Terms Of (A) System Of Belief (Q1), (B) Positive Behaviors (Q2), (C)A Resilient Role Model (Q3), (D) Self-Reflection(Q4) For Both Non-Control And Control Group

TABLE 2. T-Test: Paired Between Non-Control and Control Groups

Group	Non-Control	Control
Mean	5.0925	4.805
Variance	0.174742	0.108033
Observations	4	4
Pearson Correlation	0.965815	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	3	
t Stat	4.362199	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.011135	
t Critical one-tail	2.353363	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.022271	
t Critical two-tail	3.182446	

Based on Table 2 we also conduct a paired significance t-test on both non-control and control groups to observe the null hypothesis, H_0 that there is no difference between non-control and

control groups after implementing the self-empowerment program. Both one tail and two-tail tests show that $P = 0.011$ and $P = 0.02$ are below than $P < 0.05$. Therefore, we reject H_0 and conclude that there is a difference between non-control and control groups after implementing the self-empowerment program. In other word, that this program able to increase students' ability from committing and preventing crimes among the community at school nor other society.

TABLE 3. Pearson Correlation Coefficient Analysis Between Factors: System Of Belief (Q1), Positive Behaviour (Q2), A Resilient Role Model (Q3) And Self-Reflection(Q4).

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Q1	1			
Q2	0.26	1		
Q3	0.29	0.33	1	
Q4	0.21	0.24	0.26	1

Table 3 shows a correlation analysis is conducted using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient method. Each question of the four modules: system of belief (Q1), positive behaviour (Q2), a resilient role model (Q3) and self-reflection(Q4) has acceptable relationship from 0.21 until 0.33. Positive behaviour (Q2) has the highest correlation (0.33) with the resilient role (Q3). Apart from that, the second highest correlation score which is 0.29 shows that both system belief (Q1) and resilient role model (Q3) are playing important factors to adapt self-empowerment among teens. Other association (0.26 and 0.24 in order) such as positive behaviour (Q2) has a direct impact onto system belief(Q1) and self-reflection (Q4). Therefore, it is notable that four aforementioned components are playing important roles towards achieving self-identity among teens from the proposed self-empowerment program.

CONCLUSION

The designed self-empowerment program consisting of four modules was carried out at a high and primary school for non-control group, to help young teenagers develop their self-identities. Apart from that, the teenagers from a residential area were acting as the control group and they were distributed questionaires to see the effectiveness of the exisiting curiculum at school in developing self-identity. Therefore, the program was evaluated via a pre- and post-program questionnaire-based survey for the control and non-control groups respectively. Overall, the results showed that the program was effective (i.e. higher score for the non-control group as compared to the control group) and achieved its goal to develop self-identity in teenagers and thus empower themselves to do the right things and make the right choices. However, there was a small disagreement shown in the responses of the students for the second and third modules. For the second module (c.f. Q2(b)), 12.02% and 24.67% of students from non-control and control groups in order, disagreed that they were able to say no to vices or things that go against their principles. For the third module regarding improved self-resilience and its importance at the end of the program, 1% of students disagreed to Q3(a) and (b) respectively. Although the number of students who disagreed is small, it is important to further address this as these questions reflects the degree of self-identity and self-empowerment of an individual. The activities should be reviewed to improve their effectiveness. We also intend to conduct this program at more schools.

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