



An investigation of predictive factors of the orphanages' psychological well-being in Terengganu, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate the predictor factors (e.g., life satisfaction, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem) on psychological well-being among orphans. This survey used the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Satisfaction with Life Scale, Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Scale, and Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale. This study uses a sampling method to involve 103 orphans in PERKAYA Orphanage, Marang aged 18 years and below. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) version 23.0 using descriptive and inferential analysis. The findings of the study indicate that the psychological well-being of orphans is at a high level. Also, the study found that there was a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being. Besides that, life satisfaction and self-esteem were not significantly related to psychological well-being. Multiple regression analysis showed that emotional intelligence and self-esteem were predictor factors of psychological well-being among orphans. In conclusion, the findings of this study can serve as a starting point for developing programs or module that emphasizes aspects of emotional intelligence and self-esteem in strengthening the psychological well-being of orphanage.

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1. Introduction

Children are the future assets of the country that need to be shaped in the best way to be a productive pulse to the future of the country. As emphasized in the National Child Protection Policy, children are an important human capital in achieving national aspirations. As many as 10.5 million (37.9%) in Malaysia out of 27.7 million Malaysians are children (DSM, 2018). In line with this, several policies such as the National Child Policy and the National Child Protection Policy have been enacted to ensure the interests and well-being of children. Ironically, although the state has strived to fight for the rights and privileges of children, some are still considered less fortunate and need more support to defend the plight of such orphans. Orphans are children under 18 who have lost (died) a parent or both of their

parents and live in an orphanage (George, 2011; Navpreet et al., 2017). The bitter experiences they go through indirectly create internal conflicts that can threaten their psychological well-being. Zhao et al. (2010) described that an orphan who can accept himself positively feels himself growing and developing. She added he/she could make their own decisions, have good relationships with others, controls the environment, and have life goals as a child who achieve a good level of well-being. Therefore, the Ministry of Education Malaysia has drafted an Education Development Plan 2013-2025 to ensure the psychological development of children is at a more optimal level. The development of the psychological well-being of children, especially children, is an important aspect in potentially helping children function fully and cope with the challenges ahead.

In general, several past studies have proven that life satisfaction, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem are important predictor factors of an individual's psychological well-being (Arafa et al., 2003; Batool and Shehzadi, 2017; Wang and Castañeda-Sound, 2008). Wahyuni and Maulida (2019) emphasized that high life satisfaction allows an individual to perform psychological functions

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fully. Next, emotional intelligence is an ability to curb negative emotions such as anger and doubt and focus on positive emotions such as self-confidence. Next, [Yasin et al. \(2018\)](#) also stated that a person with high self-esteem will not rely on the acceptance of others and is confident and trusting in oneself. This concept is consistent with elements in psychological well-being, where individuals with high autonomy will be able to make decisions and escape social pressures without evaluating themselves through the views of others ([Ryff, 1989](#)). Therefore, these three components are crucial in predicting good psychological well-being among orphans. Overall, emotional intelligence and self-esteem were used as predictive factors (criterion variables) for psychological well-being (dependent variables) among orphans.

Psychological well-being carries a significant influence on every individual regardless of that individual's background. Apart from adult individuals, children also face issues involving psychological well-being. In Malaysia, [Mohammadzadeh et al. \(2018b\)](#) revealed that mental health problems are widespread among adolescents in orphanages. A child who loses a mother, father, or both will indirectly suffer from a lack of attention, love, finances, education, and spiritual aspects. This scenario will cause children or adolescents with orphan status to experience life dissatisfaction, emotional intelligence, and low self-esteem, thus affecting their psychological well-being ([Atwine et al., 2005](#); [Mohan, 2020](#); [Mosinki, 2012](#)).

Empirically, although there are studies that examine psychological well-being among orphans, most of these studies in Malaysia focus more on aspects of clinical psychological well-being such as stress, anxiety, and depression only ([Mohammadzadeh et al., 2019](#); [2018a](#); [Sahad et al., 2018](#)). Moreover, studies that examine the relationship between life satisfaction, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem with psychological well-being are also very little studied by researchers in Malaysia and overseas ([Batool and Shehzadi, 2017](#)). In addition, there are still no previous studies that combine these three important components (life satisfaction, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem) as predictor factors of psychological well-being among orphans.

2. Literature review

2.1. The psychological well-being of orphans

[Ryff \(1989\)](#) conceptualized psychological well-being into six essential elements: Autonomy, personal growth, positive relationships with others, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, and purpose of life. However, in general, orphans are reported to have low levels of psychological well-being ([Batool and Shehzadi, 2017](#); [Pilapil, 2015](#)). Moreover, they are more prone to various emotional disorders such as depression, anxiety, and stress ([Azid and Yaacob, 2016](#)). Next, a study by [Karfe and](#)

[Matsayi \(2019\)](#) related to adolescents' psychological well-being in Nigeria using a sample of 312 adolescents aged 12 to 18 years showed that the psychological well-being of adolescents with parents was higher than adolescents with orphan status. Moreover, two different studies conducted in India also reported that orphans have negative psychological well-being compared to adolescents who have parents. The absence of parental and family support has provided major life changes, thus interfering with their psychological functioning ([Dey and Beena Daliya, 2019](#); [Khan and Jahan, 2015](#)).

In addition to comparisons with non-orphans, [Malla et al. \(2019\)](#) have conducted a comparative study of psychological well-being between orphans whose mother or father dies with orphans whose both parents die. The study revealed that there was no difference in overall psychological well-being between orphans and orphans. However, in terms of dimensional comparisons in psychological well-being, orphans had higher positive relationships and self-acceptance than orphans. Consistent with the study of [Hailegiorgis et al. \(2018\)](#), orphans are more prone to negative psychological well-being with lower self-acceptance than non-orphaned adolescents. However, orphans have high well-being and they can manage their strengths and weaknesses, be independent in managing themselves, relate well, adapt to others well, and have clear life goals.

2.2. Life satisfaction and psychological well-being

Life satisfaction is how individuals evaluate their lives based on self-determined criteria ([Shin and Johnson, 1978](#)). In other words, life satisfaction is dependent on how individuals assess the life they own. Orphans are reported to have lower levels of life satisfaction compared to non-orphans ([Mosinki, 2012](#)). However, [Zhao et al. \(2009\)](#) reported that orphans living in government-supported group homes were more likely to have improved lives and be positive about their lives than orphans living in orphanages. Further, several past studies have revealed that life satisfaction has been a predictor of psychological well-being ([Arafa et al., 2003](#); [Rathore et al., 2015](#)).

As [Rathore et al. \(2015\)](#) reported, physicians who can develop a positive attitude and always be optimistic about life to maintain life satisfaction will indirectly improve their psychological well-being. In addition, a study in Indonesia also supports the findings, that students with high life satisfaction will feel happy so that they can comprehensively perform psychological functions such as good emotional management, good relationships with others, and accepting their situation ([Wahyuni and Maulida, 2019](#)).

H1: There is a relationship between life satisfaction and psychological well-being.

2.3. Emotional intelligence and psychological well-being

Mayer and Cobb (2000) have defined emotional intelligence as an individual's ability to process information related to emotions and define it by perception, storing, and handling feelings and attitudes. Past researchers have reported that children living with parents have higher emotional intelligence than orphans (Hussain, 2017; Ghanbari and Moghadas, 2011; Shulga et al., 2016). Bhat (2014) reported orphans to have lower levels of emotional intelligence and higher levels of depression than non-orphaned adolescents. Furthermore, several past studies have revealed that high emotional intelligence has had a positive effect on the psychological well-being of adolescents (Augusto Landa et al., 2010; Guerra-Bustamante et al., 2019). In the context of orphans, Batool and Shehzadi (2017) have proven that emotional intelligence (intrapersonal and interpersonal) is an important predictor of psychological well-being among orphans and non-orphans in Pakistan. The study also reported differences in terms of emotional intelligence and emotional stability between children living with both parents and those living in orphanages. Moreover, a study by Atwine (et al. (2005) showed that the level of negative emotions in orphans is higher than the level of positive emotions that cause well-being.

H2: There is a relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being.

2.4. Self-esteem and psychological well-being

Self-esteem is an assessment of either positive or negative aspects of oneself (Rosenberg, 1979). Meanwhile, Yahaya et al. (2005) have defined self-esteem as a positive or negative orientation towards the individual and an overall assessment of self-worth. The coping resources for individuals with low self-esteem are limited to support their mental health (Taylor and Stanton, 2007). Self-esteem has been an important predictor factor of an individual's psychological well-being (Akfirat, 2020; Chen et al., 2013; Disabato et al., 2016). Past studies have found that self-esteem has a significant relationship with psychological well-being among communities of different life backgrounds, such as university students, caregivers in welfare homes, and converts (Akfirat, 2020; Asli Azad et al., 2018; Yasin et al., 2018).

In addition, two different studies in Indonesia involving chronic patients also reported that patients with high self-esteem would have better psychological well-being (Islam and Ara, 2017). Nwankwo et al. (2015) studied 350 student-athletes at Ebonyi State University in Nigeria. They revealed that high self-esteem would improve student-athletes psychological well-being, thus leading to better physical health, normal cognitive function,

positive sports attitudes, behavior, and active and progressive sports performance.

In the context of children and adolescents, previous studies have also shown that the higher their self-esteem, the higher their psychological well-being, and vice versa (Du et al., 2015; Fauziah et al., 2018). For example, adolescents living with single-parent families (death or parental divorce) have good psychological well-being because of a positive assessment of themselves (Mohan, 2020). Most recently, a study by Mansor et al. (2021) in Pulau Tioman, Malaysia, found that high self-esteem can cause children living in the interior to be spared from behavioral problems that indirectly improve their psychological well-being. In addition, orphans with high positive self-esteem were also reported to achieve high levels of psychological well-being.

H3: There is a relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being.

H4: Life satisfaction, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem are predictors of psychological well-being.

3. Materials and methods

This quantitative study applies the survey questionnaires and conducts on 103 respondents in PERKAYA Orphanage, Marang. Purposive sampling was used to select the study sample based on established criteria, where only orphans aged 18 years and below were involved in this study. The structure of the questionnaire is divided into some sections. Section A (Demographics); This section is related to the respondents' personal information such as gender, age, race, religion, and siblings. Section B (Satisfaction with Life Scale); Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985; Khairudin 2017) was used in this study to measure life satisfaction. The instrument has five items with seven Likert scales, ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree (Example item: "In most things, my life is approaching a perfect level"). A high score indicates a high level of life satisfaction. Section C (Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Scale); Emotional intelligence was measured using 26 items from the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 1998). This instrument consists of three domains, namely emotion regulation, emotion recognition, and emotion use. Respondents were asked to rate based on five Likert scales between 1=strongly disagree, and 5=strongly agree (Example item: "I choose an appropriate time to tell my problems to others"). A high score indicates a high level of emotional intelligence.

Section D (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale); The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Khairudin, 2017) was used in this study to measure the level of self-esteem consisting of 10 items, namely five items in the positive domain and five items in the negative domain). Respondents were asked to rate based on five Likert scales between 1=strongly disagree, and 5=strongly agree (Example item: "I think I am a person of equal value as everyone else"). Section E

(Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale); A total of 29 items from the Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989) were used in this study to measure the level of psychological well-being. The instrument is divided into six domains: Autonomy, self-acceptance, self-development, environmental mastery, positive relationships, and life goals. Respondents were asked to rate based on five Likert scales between 1=strongly disagree, and 6=strongly agree (Example item: "I am not afraid to voice an opinion even against most others"). The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics involved frequency, mean and standard deviation. Inferential statistics consist of correlation and regression analysis. The analysis was conducted by assisting statistical software, namely SPSS-23.

4. Results

4.1. Demography profile of respondents

Table 1 shows that 65 people (63.1%) were male respondents and 38 people (36.9%) were female respondents. Most respondents involved in this study were 16-18 years old, 101 people (99.0%), while the rest, which is two people (1.9%), are respondents aged 13-15 years. Further, many respondents were Malays. A total of 102 patients (99.0%) and only one (1.0%) were found from other races. Therefore, all respondents in this study, which is 103 people (100%), are Muslims. In addition, a total of 80 respondents (77.7%) reported having several siblings of four and above, 18 people (17.5%) had three siblings, four respondents (3.9%) with two siblings, and only one respondent (1.0%) was an only child.

Table 1: Demography profile of respondents

	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	65	63.1
	Female	38	36.9
Age	13-15 years old	2	1.9
	16-18 years old	101	99.1
Race	Malay	102	99.0
	Others	1	1.0
Religion	Islam	103	100
Number of siblings	1 sibling	1	1.0
	2 siblings	4	3.9
	3 siblings	18	17.5
	4 siblings and above	80	77.7

4.2. Level of psychological well-being of orphans

Overall, most respondents have a high level of psychological well-being of respondents, which is 72 people (69.9%). Meanwhile, respondents with a moderate level of psychological well-being were 27 people (26.2%), and only four (3.9%) respondents had a low level of psychological well-being (Table 2).

In addition, this study also reports the result of the psychological well-being level dimension-based. The result of psychological well-being levels is shown in Table 3.

Table 2: The result of psychological well-being levels

Level	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	4	3.9
Moderate	27	26.2
High	72	69.9
Total	103	100.0

Table 3: The result of psychological well-being levels

Dimensions	Mean	S.D.	Level
Autonomy	2.52	0.684	Moderate
Environmental mastery	2.52	0.608	Moderate
Personal growth	2.77	0.504	Moderate
Positive relationships	2.54	0.607	Moderate
Purpose in life	2.65	0.518	Moderate
Self-acceptance	2.61	0.547	Moderate
Overall average	2.66	0.552	Moderate

Table 3 displays the result of the mean value and standard deviation for the dimensions of the psychological well-being variable. Psychological well-being consists of 6 (six) dimensions: Autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. The minimum mean value is 0.25 (e.g., autonomy and environmental mastery), and the highest mean value is 2.77. The mean value is ranged from 2.34 to 3.66, categorized as moderate. It means overall, the level of psychological well-being is moderate. Thus, it indicated that personal growth factors are the highest contributing dimension to respondents' psychological well-being. The correlation of life satisfaction, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem with psychological well-being is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 indicates the mean value of Life satisfaction is 4.13, with a standard deviation equal to 1.76. On the other hand, the mean value of emotional intelligence is 3.58, with a standard deviation of as much as 0.49. The self-esteem mean value is 1.61 with a standard deviation equal to 0.35. Thus, this study found that Life Satisfaction in orphanages is categorized as high, Emotional intelligence is moderate, and self-esteem is low. In addition, this study shows that Life satisfaction and Emotional intelligence have a positive and significant correlation with psychological well-being. However, Self-esteem has negatively significantly correlated with the psychological well-being of orphanages in Terengganu, Malaysia.

4.3. Predictive factors to psychological well-being

Results of multiple regression analysis showed that emotional intelligence (F=41.08, p<0.01) contributed 28.9 percent to psychological well-being. It proves that emotional intelligence (β=0.530, p<0.01) is a major predictor of psychological well-being. The combination of emotional intelligence and self-esteem (β=-0.24, p<0.01) added another 5.6 percent influence on respondents' psychological well-being. The findings indicate that emotional intelligence and self-esteem are factors that predict respondents' psychological well-being. Moreover, multiple regression analyses also reported that life

satisfaction did not predict psychological well-being (Table 5).

Table 4: The result of correlation for studied variables

	Mean	S.D.	Psychological well-being
Life satisfaction	4.13	1.76	0.289**
Emotional intelligence	3.58	0.49	0.538**
Self-esteem	1.61	0.35	-0.254**

Note: **p<0.01; *p<0.05

Table 5: The result of hypothesis testing

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	SE	Beta		
Constant	2.208	0.454	-	4.867	0.000
Emotional intelligence	0.686	0.105	0.530	6.547	0.000
Self-esteem	-0.433	0.148	-0.237	2.924	0.004
R	0.587		Adjusted R ²	0.332	
R ²	0.345		Std. error of the estimate	0.517	

5. Discussion

The results showed that the orphans in PERKAYA Orphanage, Marang have a high level of psychological well-being with personal growth as the main dimension contributing to their psychological well-being. Orphans are reported to be self-reliant in managing themselves when faced with a challenging and deprived environment, thus enabling them to achieve positive psychological well-being. However, these findings differ from several previous studies that reported that orphans experience negative psychological well-being such as low personal growth and self-acceptance (Menchak and Karfe, 2021). Furthermore, the findings of this study also report that when orphans achieve a high level of life satisfaction, it will indirectly lead to an improvement in their psychological well-being. This scenario can be explained through the findings by Wahyuni and Maulida (2019). They reported that students with high life satisfaction would perform psychological functions holistically, such as good emotional management, establishing good relationships with others, and accepting their situation. Moreover, the study's findings are also supported by several previous studies involving adolescents, in which emotional intelligence is positively related to psychological well-being (Augusto Landa et al., 2010; Guerra-Bustamante et al., 2019). Furthermore, in the context of orphans, the higher the emotional intelligence, the higher the level of psychological well-being they acquire (Batool and Shehzadi, 2017). Therefore, it could explain that when orphans can handle and manage their emotions wisely and positively, they will indirectly acquire a better level of psychological health.

Meanwhile, the findings of this study revealed that the higher their self-esteem would decrease their level of psychological well-being. This finding contradicts several previous studies (Mansor et al., 2021; Mohan, 2020). This situation explains that

orphans experience negative self-esteem, such as constantly feeling failed and useless, thus affecting their psychological well-being. On the other hand, it is proved that positive self-esteem, such as always thinking positively and optimistic, had increased the psychological well-being of orphans in Indonesia. In addition, the findings of the study also prove that emotional intelligence and self-esteem have acted as predictors of psychological well-being among orphans. However, emotional intelligence has been a major predictor in determining the psychological well-being of orphans. Therefore, it suggests that emotional intelligence plays a very important role in maintaining and improving the psychological well-being of orphans. At the same time, orphans who have positive mental and psychological health are also determined by their positive assessment of themselves and their ability to adapt to their environment and experiences. Meanwhile, this study also shows inconsistencies with some of the findings of previous studies (Arafa et al., 2003; Rathore et al., 2015), where life satisfaction does not act as a predictor of the well-being of orphans.

6. Conclusion

The role of emotional intelligence is very important in maintaining and improving the psychological well-being of orphans. Therefore, psychological officers need to take initiatives, such as emotional intelligence training programs for children or adolescents in orphanages. In addition, art therapy focused on developing emotional intelligence skills needs to be diversified to attract the interest and attention of children or adolescents living in orphanages. Therefore, the study findings can be used as a yardstick for the Department of Social Welfare to develop a program oriented to the development and improvement of the psychological well-being of orphans. In addition, this study can also help the management of orphan institutions, especially psychological officers in shelters, be more vigilant and take a proactive approach against changes in the negative behaviors and emotions of orphans that can disrupt their psychological well-being. This study is a quantitative study, where the analysis is limited to the scope of the study only. Therefore, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods needs to be carried out for a thorough exploration to be achieved and to avoid bias issues in data analysis (Dyer, 2006; MacDonald and Friedman, 2002). Next, in a study conducted in the study area, most respondents are ethnic Malays. The lack of other races resulted in this study not seeing the differences in findings based on race. Future studies are recommended to be conducted in locations with multi-racial and multi-religious respondents.

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Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest

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