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Students Perceptions Towards Spiritual Practice in Learning Process

Tengku Mardhiah Tengku Jalal^{1*}, Fadila Amira Razali², Nor Hidayah Hassim³

¹⁻³ Faculty of Computer and Mathematical Sciences, Universiti Teknologi MARA Pahang,
Raub Campus, 27600 Raub, Pahang, Malaysia
dhiah.tmj@gmail.com, fadilamirazali@gmail.com, hidayah2102@yahoo.com

* Corresponding Author

Abstract: From Islamic perspectives, spirituality is one of the important factors towards the individual achievements. This is because individuals with good spiritual practice will have a good attitude in every aspect including their attitude towards study. Therefore this study was conducted to identify relationship between perception towards spiritual approach and spiritual practices. In addition, relationship between spiritual practice and academic achievement was also examined. This study also wishes to investigate the relationship between perception towards spiritual approach and academic achievement. A cross-sectional study was conducted among students in UiTM Cawangan Pahang Kampus Raub. Sample of 108 respondents were selected randomly using Simple Random Sampling Technique where each respondents have to answer a set of questionnaire. Results showed that a significant positive relationship was observed between the spiritual practice and the perception towards spiritual approach. However, there were no significant relationship could be conclude between the spiritual practice among students and their academic achievement. The relationship between the perception towards spiritual approach and academic achievement were also has no significant correlation. As a conclusion, the applications of spiritual practices among students in UiTM Cawangan Pahang Kampus Raub were related to their perception of spiritual approach. In order to generate students with good spiritual practices, their perception towards the effect and important of spiritual practices in improving their academic achievement should be strengthened.

Keywords: Correlation, Spiritual Approach, Spiritual Practice, University Student

1. Introduction

Spirituality in Islam can be defined as the presence of a relationship with God in such a way that affects the individual's self-worth, sense of meaning, and connectedness with others and nature Nasr (1987). According to Khan (2015), spirituality can be developed by the spiritual practices and peoples can feel its extra ordinary effects by regularly practicing it. Like other faiths, Islam, stresses the importance of education and strongly encourage male and female Muslims to study and learn. Students who take the time to commit to spiritual activities enhance their ability to excel academically (Hosseini, 2015). As a result, researchers made an idea to see the influence of Islamic spiritual practices on student learning process. For this purpose, the study was carried out on UiTM Raub students since majority of the students are Muslim. The objective of this study was to identify relationship between perception towards spiritual approach and spiritual practices. In addition, relationship between spiritual practice and academic achievement was also examined. This study also wishes to investigate the relationship between perception towards spiritual approach and academic achievement.

Several studies indicate that spirituality can has impact on students learning process. According to Walker and Dixon (2002), students who involve in spiritual practice tend to had better academic performance. Similarly, a study on the medical students of Qom Medical University, Iran showed that there is also a positive relationship between spiritual health and academic success (Maryam Tabibi et al., 2011). Meanwhile, a study by Herdon (2003) discovered that spirituality can act as resilience factor because religious activities such as prayer and attending religious services can help students to cope with their stress resulting from academic and social barriers. When students committed with their religion, they tend to have a good behaviour and a better academic performance in school (Jeynes, 2002). Nevertheless, the

most interesting finding was found in Hodge (2007) who found that students who absent from classes to attend spiritual activities do not gain lower academic scores for missing their classes.

2. Methodology

This study was conducted in UiTM Cawangan Pahang Kampus Raub where the population were all of the Muslim students in this campus. Sample size was calculated using PS Software and a sample of 108 students were identified using simple random sampling technique. Students from various faculties and semesters in UiTM Cawangan Pahang kampus Raub were selected by using random numbers generated by computer. The non-Muslim students were excluded from the study.

Each respondent were provided a set of questionnaire to be filled in. The reliability of the constructed questionnaire has been measured during the pilot study and the Cronbach alpha obtained was equivalent to 0.614. The questionnaire involved three different parts which were demographic characteristics, spiritual practices and the student's perception towards spiritual approach. Questions for the spiritual practices and perception towards spiritual approach were designed in 5 level of Likert Scale. For the academic performance, it has been measured by using the student's Cumulated Grade Point Average (CGPA).

IBM SPSS version 22 has been used for the analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were included in the analysis. For the demographic characteristics, the mean and percentage (%) for the gender of the respondents were presented since it is a categorical variable. Meanwhile, for the numerical variable, the mean and standard deviation (SD) were presented for the CGPA of the students. The normality assumption for spiritual practices, student's perception towards spiritual approach, and their academic achievement (CGPA) has been checked. It has been found that the normality assumption for the variables were not violate. Then, the mean difference of the spiritual practices among the students between different genders has been checked by using the independent t-test. The same test was also used for checking the mean difference of student's perception towards spiritual approach between the genders. Meanwhile, Levene test have been used in order to check the assumption of equal variance for both spiritual practice and perception towards spiritual approach. Based on the tests, the assumption of equal variance were not violate for both variables. Lastly, the correlation between student's spiritual practice, their perception towards spiritual approach and their CGPA were examined by using Pearson Correlation Coefficient.

3. Results

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the 108 students involved in this study. Out of 108 students that have been investigated, 32.4% were male while 67.6% were female students. Meanwhile, the mean CGPA of the respondents were 3.34 with standard deviation equivalent to 0.411.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics

Variables	Mean (SD)	Frequency (%)
Gender		
Male	-	35 (32.4)
Female		73 (67.6)
CGPA	3.34 (0.411)	-

The mean difference between gender for both mean score of spiritual practices among students in UiTM Pahang Kampus Raub and their perception towards spiritual approach have been checked as in Table 2. The mean score of spiritual practices among the students does not

have significant difference between different gender ($t = -0.825$, $P\text{-value} = 0.411$). However, there is a significant difference of the student’s perception towards spiritual approach between the gender ($t = -2.359$, $P\text{-value} = 0.020$). The mean score of the perception towards spiritual approach among female were 4.295 which was higher compared to the mean score of male students (4.014).

Table 2. Mean difference of spiritual practice and perception towards spiritual approach between different genders

	Gender, Mean(SD)		t-statistics	P-value
	Male	Female		
Spiritual Practices	1.189(0.557)	1.285(0.573)	-0.825	0.411
Perception	4.014(0.752)	4.295(0.473)	-2.359	0.020

Table 3 shows the correlation between academic achievement, spiritual practices, and perception towards spiritual approach. Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that there were no significant relationship between the spiritual practices among the students and their academic achievement ($r = -0.052$, $P\text{-value} = -0.595$). The Pearson correlation of the academic achievement and the perception towards spiritual approach were equivalent to 0.050 with $P\text{-value}$ equals to 0.607. This indicates that the relationship between the student’s perceptions towards spiritual approach was also not having a significant relationship with their academic achievement. Meanwhile, there were a significant relationship can be conclude between the student’s perception towards spiritual approach and their spiritual practice ($P\text{-value} = -0.016$). However, the Pearson correlation was equals to 0.232 which indicates that there were weak positive correlation between the two variables. In the other words, it can be concluded that the higher the mean score of the student’s perception towards spiritual approach, the higher the mean score of their spiritual practices.

Table 3. Correlation between academic achievement, spiritual practices, and perception towards spiritual approach

Variables	Pearson Correlation	P-value
CGPA & Spiritual Practices	-0.052	0.595
CGPA & Perception	0.050	0.607
Spiritual Practices & Perception	0.232	0.016

4. Conclusion

This study has found that, there is no significant difference between different gender of the mean score of their spiritual practices. This indicates that, all students regardless of their gender have committed the same of spiritual practice for their daily life. However, there is a significant difference of their perception towards the spiritual approach between male and female student. Female students seem to have a good perception towards the spiritual approach compared to male students, since they have a higher mean score than male. However, previous study made by Francis, (1997) and Stark, (2002) have found contradict result where, women were found to demonstrate greater commitment to religion in belief. Besides, they also found that women are more likely to engage in spiritual practice compared to men. This contradict result obtained among students in UiTM Cawangan Pahang Kampus Raub might be due to the factor of student lifestyle and peer influence that lead to the same behaviour and thinking.

Moreover, the population is very small where the students are tend to be much closed to each other. Thus, it is possible for them to have the same habit and practices.

Several studies have found that, the level of religious involvement and spirituality were contributed to academic achievement among students (French et al., 2008). However, for this study, it was found that there were no significant relationship between the spiritual practice among students and their academic achievement. Meanwhile, the correlation between students' perception towards spiritual approach were also found not to be significantly related to the student academic achievement. In contrast, according to the Salasiah et al., (2012), it was found that there were significant relationship between spiritual practice and academic achievement among students. However, the results obtained were having a weak relationship. The contradict result might be due to the small sample size applied for this study. Instead of the small sample size, this might be due to the other factor that influence to the academic performance that were not be included in this study.

Meanwhile, the student's perception towards spiritual approach and their spiritual practice were found to have a positive relationship. This indicates that, the students that have good perceptions in the spiritual approach were also good in committing the spiritual practice. Similar to a study conducted by Kalkim et al., (2016) among nursing students in nursing school providing degree-level education in the city of Manisa, in the western part of Turkey. The result obtained by the study shows a significant relationship between the nursing students' perception of spirituality and their spiritual care. Thus, it is very important for students to improve their perceptions towards spiritual approach in order to ensure better students with good spiritual practice and habits could be enhanced. Moreover, according to Cynthia, (2010), students who were having good perceptions towards spiritual approach are more sensitive and better in their spiritual practices.

In conclusion, the applications of spiritual practices among students in UiTM Cawangan Pahang Kampus Raub were related to their perception of spiritual approach. In order to generate students with good spiritual practices, their perception towards the effect and important of spiritual practices in improving their academic achievement should be strengthened. Studies regarding this issue were still less widespread. Thus, it is highly recommended for further investigation regarding this issue with larger population, sample size, and more factors included.

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