

## EXAMINING STIGMATIZATION TOWARDS PEDOPHILIA AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

Stigmatization restricts people's opportunities in life and has severe consequences on mental health and psychological well-being. Level of stigmatization towards pedophilia is a concerned issue in the society as there are several high-profile cases highlighted have brought much attention for the past years. The present study examines on stigmatization level towards pedophilia among university students. In addition to that, it also tries to examine the relationship between parenting attachment, mental disorder, emergent of the internet and their stigmatization level towards pedophilia. A cross-sectional survey among university students was employed for the purpose of this study. A quantitative method was used in this research and out of 400 questionnaires distributed only 370 were useable. Results found that majority of the students in UKM showed moderately high level of stigmatization towards pedophilia. The findings depicted that parenting attachment, mental disorder, and emergent of internet were significantly associated with the level of stigmatization towards pedophilia. Thus, this study contributes a greater understanding of pedophilia especially for university students as they have received proper education that will influence others' perception on pedophilia. It is crucial for the university's management to formulate effective campaigns and social work programmes to raise awareness on pedophilia issue.

**Keywords:** Stigmatization, pedophilia, parenting attachment, emergence of internet, mental disorder, university students

## INTRODUCTION

Pedophilia has become a topic that gains interest, awareness, and concern for both medical community and public at large. The national concern on pedophilia has increased due to high profile cases of child abuse, abduction, and cruel murder. Based on American Psychiatric Association: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (2013), pedophilia can be referred as sexual inclination to minor or prepubescent child. Pedophilia is sometimes used to refer to sexual attraction that has a relation with mental health of some individuals who do sexually abuse to children or teens (Barazeni, 2015). Pedophilia is not a new dilemma that bombards all over the world. As reported by Houtepen, Sijtsema and Bogaerts (2017), the study revealed that up to 38 percent of women were molested before turning 18 years old. The same study also found that up to 16 percent of boys were molested before they turned 18 years old. Dr. Russell also discovered that only 5 percent of child sexual abuse had been reported to the law enforcement (Houtepen et al. 2017).

According to Shukor, Shah and Musa (2017), Malaysia is also not excluded from this alarming issue. In 2016, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development received 824 reports of child sexual abuse. These reports have shocked our nation regarding this pedophilia nightmare. Moreover, these reports reflect a weak nation's legal system and become opportunities for the convicts to commit more crimes. Furthermore, the number of reported cases were concerning especially when considering that there are many unreported cases due to hesitation of the victims' parents in reporting. As mentioned by a former Minister of Women, Family and Community Development, Datuk Rohani Abdul Karim, 70 to 80 percent of the time, the victims recognized their predator and those who knew the predators did not report the cases.

The most tragic case of pedophilia in Malaysia to date is Nurin Jazlin Jazimin's case in 2007 (Shukor et al. 2017). An eight-year old student of Desa Setapak Primary School was first reported to be abducted. However, the long-awaited return was greeted with the news that the deceased body was found in a gym bag in front of a shop at Petaling Jaya Utama. Her death was classified as an abduction and sexual abuse. The case remains unsolved due to insufficient leads and the criminal remains free until now. Once again, Malaysia was startled by the case of Richard Huckle, an online pedophile from Ashford in Kent, who held a position as an English teacher and philanthropist in a poor Christian community in Kuala Lumpur (Shukor et al. 2017). The British man was sentenced to 22 life sentences because of 71 charges of sexual abuse on children in Malaysia aged from six months to 12 years old.

As a result, Nurin Jazlin and Richard Huckle cases have become a wake-up call for the society to be more alert on the seriousness of this issue. These pedophilia issues must be a primary concern of the society and further research to curb this issue. Therefore, every facet of society must take an integral role in tackling pedophilia issues in the country because this nightmare gives huge implications on society as a whole. Henceforth, this will help to prevent children from becoming the next victims of pedophiles. Therefore, the study aims; (i) to examine the levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia among university students; (ii) to determine the associations between parenting attachment, mental disorder, emergence of internet, and levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia among university students. (iii) to propose several recommendations to promote pedophilia

awareness among the public especially university students.

## **PEDOPHILIA AND ITS STIGMATIZATION**

Over the past few decades, many researchers have conducted numerous studies on the attitude towards sexual offender in various contexts but less discussion on their implications (Harper, Houge & Bartles, 2017). Clinically, attitudes or stigma may influence the treatment outcomes, risk judgments, social acceptance, and play an important key role in reintegration of the sexual offender or PWP. The most current diagnostic definition of pedophilia comes from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (Berlin, 2014). The term pedophilic disorder is defined as not only simply sexual interest in prepubescent children but also the presence of significant distress, interpersonal impairment, or other difficulty as a result of these sexual interests. International Classification of Diseases (ICD) (2010) defines pedophilia as a female or male that is diagnosed with psychological disorder and is sexually attracted specifically towards children in pre-pubertal or early pubertal age.

A pedophilia issue is a worldwide issue and with the influences of negative stigma in handling these issues, it will worsen the current situation. Stigma against people with a mental illness is a widespread problem with serious adverse consequences for the stigmatized individuals including most notably, reducing quality of life and self-esteem and creating an obstacle for high quality health care (Goode, 2010). Several statistics were obtained by a survey conducted by Jahnke, Imhoff and Hoyer (2014). The research was conducted in the Eastern part of Germany from October 2012 to December 2012. The study involved 405 people or specifically, pedestrians. The result of the study showed that 14 percent of the participants agreed that PWP should be executed and 39 percent of the heterogeneous Germany citizens suggested imprisonment even though they are not likely to have any criminal record or intention to harm any child whereas only three to five percent agreed to treat them similarly as the alcohol abusers (Jahnke et al. 2014). Thus, it can be concluded that almost half of the Germans have high level of stigmatization towards PWP and the perception is destructing.

Generally, negative stigmatization and thoughts happen because of lack of information about the subject. However, a study in Germany revealed that bad stigmatization is also present among the professionals. Based on a study conducted by Glenn (2010) in Germany, negative feelings and attitudes toward PWP patients are the reasons that 95 percent of psychotherapists were unwilling and unwelcoming to patients with pedophilia. Alanko, Haikio, Laiho, Jahnke, and Santtila (2014) revealed that this stigma also happened in Finland in a recent public health survey. The public health survey involved 352 clinical practitioners such as the psychotherapist, psychologist, medical doctor, and other healthcare personnel. Majority or 65 percent rated their skills and knowledge and 38 percent rated their personal attitudes as poor or insufficient concerning the treatment for PWP. Conversely, in a survey conducted and published by a US-based network of mental health specialists and people with a sexual interest in children, a large number of PWP named the expectations to be treated in a stigmatizing way by the professional as one of the primary reasons for their previous reluctance to seek help (Kramer, 2011). Therefore, reducing the stigma against PWP among healthcare professionals must be considered as an important prerequisite for timely child sexual

abuse prevention and treatment targeting PWP.

Apart from that, Harper et al. (2017) in their study exposed that bad stigmatization is also presented among the police officers. In his study, he stressed that police officers show the harshest attitude, followed by prison officers, probation officers, and prison psychologists. Blagden, Winder and Hames (2016) consistently suggested the relationship between positive attitude towards sexual offenders and exposure to sexual offenders within a work environment especially treatment is based on work. People who hold less negative attitude towards sexual offenders are drawn to jobs that involve working in therapeutic or supportive roles within this population. However, after sitting for more than 30 hours of training to work and therapeutically, it has been found that sexual offenders improved their attitude relatively cooperative (Simon & Arnaut, 2011). Thus, it was proven that handling sexual offender cases with high understanding and moral support will help to improve the sexual offenders' attitude and lowering the crime rate in the world. The precise psychological processes responsible for this attitude change have not been robustly examined although some authors have suggested that the dispelling of social myths and stereotypes about sexual offenders play important key roles (Sanghara & Wilson, 2006).

## **EMERGENCE OF INTERNET**

The emergence of the Internet opens the door for the pedophiles to approach their targeted victims. It is similarly viewed by Cano, Fernandez, and Alani (2014), the online exposure of children to pedophiles is one of the main raising issues on social media. Pedophiles' common attack is called as online child grooming. They reported that online child grooming can be viewed as adults connecting with children through social media to exchange sexual content. Furthermore, the internet provides online pedophiles a wealth of information regarding their targeted victims. Previous study indicated that online pedophiles are people who use chat lines and members' profiles to locate their potential victims, sometimes pretend to be young in order to build a bond (Fried, 2002). A previous study conducted by Rahpaymaelizehee, Fallahi, Rabbani, and Pourrajab (2013) has revealed that Facebook is one of the social media mediums that makes it easy for pedophiles to determine their potential victims. This is because it has a lot of users ranging from youngsters to teenagers.

According to Wolak, Evans and Nguyen (2012), most predators took time to build relationship with their victims. Previous researches have shown that there are several grooming stages performed by predators in online child grooming (Cano, et al. 2014). Deceptive Trust Development is the first stage used by predators to gain access to a child (Cano et al. 2014). During this stage, the predators will build a trust relationship with the children. This stage is where the predators exchange personal information such as age, likes, dislikes, and former romances. On top of that, when predators succeed in building a trustworthy relationship, they move to Grooming Stage (Cano et al. 2014). This stage is called as cycle of entrapment. During this stage, the victim begins to trust the predator (Cano et al. 2014). The final stage is called as Physically Approach where the predators gain victims' information such as their parents' schedules and minors' locations (Cano et al. 2014).

There are two categories of online pedophiles (Fried, 2004). The first category is dabbler offender who is typically an adult that searches for pornography or access into pornography (Fried, 2002). Another category of online pedophiles is preferential offender who is sexually indiscriminate with a variety of abnormal sexual interest for children (Fried, 2004). According to Jalil (2015), a previous study conducted by the Internet Watch Foundation showed that information technology is responsible for the breeding of child pornography into a fast growing problem and there is an evidence to show that the victims of this activity are among children. As supported by Fried (2002), the Internet has become a primary platform for online pedophiles to exchange child pornography images and experiences with other PWP. In consequence, a report in 2008 run by the Internet Watch Foundation has shown that 1,536 children were abused due to domains available on the Internet and 58 percent were hosted in the United States (Jalil, 2015). Based on the above scenario, Almagor (2013) defined child pornography as abusive and coercive by which every depiction of sexual intercourse with children is considered as a criminal act. According to the Council of Europe, child pornography is an audiovisual material of children in sexual content (Almagor, 2013). The pedophile who commits such act is called as online child sex offender. As conforming to Almagor (2013), people who download, watch, store, and share the images of child pornography are called online sex offenders. Due to the emergence of modern technology, this group of people loves to share and spread the images instantly and anonymously to one another (Almagor, 2013). One study in Hong Kong discovered that there was a result shown that children who are often becoming the targets of harassment tend to be older boys from families with high income because they spend a lot of time on social networking sites (Leung, 2011). On the other hand, a study reported that teenage girls got a lot of unwelcome solicitation of personal or private information online (Leung, 2011).

In particular, in the recent case of pedophilia in Malaysia, Richard Huckle has shocked the whole Malaysians about how dangerous the Internet can be when it is being used for child pornography (Shukor et al. 2017). The previous study in 2014 indicated that only one percent of children in Malaysia are exposed to online risk such as risky online behavior (Teimouria, 2014). However, the result was unexpectedly rejected due to high rate of cyber bullying in Malaysia. Meanwhile, in Europe, only 31 percent of European Children are exposed to risky sexual online activities (Teimouria, 2014).

## **PARENTING ATTACHMENT**

Parenting attachment is also among the key predictors of why pedophilia is occurring. These predictors also lead to the level of stigmatization of pedophilia among university students. Attachment theory concerns with the nature of interpersonal experiences in childhood and the impacts on aspects of adult functioning (Bogaerts, Vanheule, & Declercq, 2005). As mentioned earlier, offenders' parent-child attachment relationships are affectionless, have low parental care and high overprotection and control (McKillop, Smallbone, Wortley & Andjic, 2012). Pedophilic attachment began to form based on the closeness and familiarity between their family members (Barazenji, 2015). In particular, children who live with their step-parents are more targeted to be molested than children who live with their real parents (Barazenji, 2015).

According to Leirós, Carvalho and Nobre (2016), PWPs were identified having less emotional warmth towards their mothers compared with rapists. One study also discovered that within a group of pedophiles, incestuous offenders become more insecure with their mother (Bogaerts et al. 2005). Based on the studies above, due to lack of attention and love from parents, the children's adulthood will be affected. Problematic attachment styles play roles in the development of pedophilic behavior (Bogaerts et al. 2005). According to Leirós et al. (2016) child molesters reported that they experience anxious attachment towards both parents while rapists reported that they experience avoidant attachment particularly towards the fathers. For some extent, due to the absence of communicable relationships among family members, television will be effective and become models for the children and their characters are moulded according to the content from the television (Barazenji, 2015). Hence, scenes of rape or sexual violence on television have huge implications in their psychological stability that will lead them to aggressiveness and pedophilic disorder (Barazenji, 2015).

Furthermore, the quality of the responsiveness of the attachment figure is an important key in the regulation of child's emotional experience and child's later interpersonal function (Leirós et al. 2016). Moreover, if the children are lack of parental support and positive parent-child relationships, they will tend to have lack of empathy for women and adult figures (Safitri, Fauzia & Sholihah, 2013). Another point includes previous studies found that parental style behavior, particularly lack of maternal care is an important factor for the symptoms of psychopathology in adulthood (Leirós et al. 2016). In other words, lack of relationship with parents during childhood contributes to the first step to sexual offending. Most sexual offenders started their criminal offenses during young age and sexual abuse by children against children are contributing to sexual crimes (Jones, 2013). Child sexual offenders experienced attachment styles that can be characterized as dismissive, anxious, avoidant, and ambivalent (Bogaerts et al. 2005). In fact, another previous study also reported that sexual offenders have insecure attachment and particularly fearful-avoidant compared to non-offenders (McKillop et al. 2012).

Pedophiles also had insecure parental attachments during childhood that built sequence of failure to build trust among people (Barazenji, 2015). According to Bogaerts et al. (2005), Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) is used to measure parental bonding during childhood with both parents. PBI is a care scale that measures the relationship between the respondents with their parents during childhood and adolescence to identify how much warmth the respondents had experienced (Bogaerts et al. 2005). Therefore, during early age, most sex offenders witnessed domestic violations (Leirós et al. 2016). Consequently, this sort of experiences of insecure attachment style will be a factor for upcoming sexual offending (Leirós et al. 2016).

## **MENTAL DISORDER**

Mental disorder is also of the determinants on how pedophilia emerges. Due to that, are university students aware that this determinant breeds the number of pedophiles? Moreover, can this predictor influence the level of awareness that creates stigmatization of university students towards pedophilia or not? A study discovered that pedophilia is a major public health issue and a worldwide concern

(Capra et al. 2017).

Pedophilia is sometimes used to refer to the sexual attraction that has a relation to mental health of some individuals who sexually abuse children or teens. (Barazenji, 2015). At some extent, PWP are also described by psychologist as those who suffer mental disorder (Barazenji, 2015). As a result, these individuals are considered as mentally ill and need to decrease their sex interest (Barazenji, 2015). One previous study indicated that many scholars and sociologists considered pedophilic action as a kind of mental disorder that is subjected to different motivations and reactions (Barazenji, 2015). There was a finding discovered in a recent survey, where 6 in 28 countries responded that experiencing sexual abuse during childhood are the strongest predictors of mental disorders in the developmental age, which is adulthood (Capra et al. 2017).

According to Capra et al. (2017), since the 1970's, pedophiles receive their treatments by psychodynamic therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and medical treatment (Capra et al. 2017). However, all of them only focused on the reduction of sexual interest and prevention of relapse rather than changing their sexual orientation (Capra et al. 2017). Consequently, Seto (2009) stated that "there is no evidence that pedophilia can be changed" and this statement was supported by recent neurodevelopmental studies (Capra et al. 2017). Another point is that due to the existence of traumatic experiences by PWP in terms of sexuality by the adult figures and parents, the experience will build bad perception towards adults (Safitri et al. 2013). With regard to that, they tend to change their sexual interest towards safer figure such as the children (Safitri et al. 2013). Pedophilia is not common in clinical contexts because PWP tend to keep it hidden. However, pedophiles cannot hide their mental disorder and cannot avoid from committing harassment and violence (Barazenji, 2015).

Meanwhile, a study conducted in Turkey discovered that most psychological scholars cure PWP through mental health cases by considering them as a child at heart who is trapped in an adult body with a mind and thinking as much as a developed person (Barazenji, 2015). Based on the scenario above, it is obviously seen that pedophiles are suffering mental disorders. Besides, PWP are also considered as psychopaths that are against the morals of society and its ethics (Barazenji, 2015). Therefore, as psychopathic pedophiles, they think life should go on without any hesitation by totally denying the parental role (Barazenji, 2015). At some extent, according to Barazenji (2015), psychopathic pedophiles think that they should appreciate the beauty of children's body sexually.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Methodologically, a cross-sectional design by using a quantitative method was used in this study. Olsen (2004) mentioned that cross-sectional study can be carried out where data are gathered just once, days, weeks, or months from selected population to meet a research objective. In that respect, this study successfully obtained feedbacks from the respondents. All questionnaires with the total of 400 copies were returned. However, only 375 were usable. The unit of analysis used was individual student.

In order to retrieve the feedbacks, a set of questionnaire were distributed to UKM students.

The questionnaire which contains five sections were adapted from Jahnke et al. (2014). The constructs in this study were measured by using 5 points Likert scales as drawn from this existing study. Hence, the levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia is evaluated by using a 14-item scale.

The survey through personally hand administered was conducted at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia over the course of two weeks. In that response, the students were asked to evaluate their levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia based on the statements such as “*A dominant sexual interest in children is something that one can choose*” and “*When I feel about interacting with people who are dominantly sexually interested, I would not accept these people friends*”.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings begin with the profile of respondents, followed by relevant analysis results and finalised with actual findings to cover all three objectives of the study.

### *Demographic Profile of Students' Stigmatization*

Table 1 presents on the summary of respondents' backgrounds. Based on the reported result at Table 1, majority of the respondents were female at 65.7 percent while male at 34.3 percent. For ethnicity, the majority of the respondents were Malay which were 89.5 percent compared to 10.5 percent were Non Malay. Most of the questionnaires were answered by Muslim respondents which was 91.9 percent and the rest were Non-Muslim which was 8.1 percent. Furthermore, more than 57.6 percent of the respondents were at 22 to 23 years old compared and 42.4 percent were 27 years old and above. Most of the respondents were undergraduates, and only 10 percent of them were at postgraduate level.

From 370 respondents, surprisingly, some of the respondents identified their friends and classmates as pedophiles with 3.2 percent and 2.2 percent consecutively. While the majority confirmed that their classmates and friends were not pedophile. Nevertheless, this study managed to record some respondents who had the inclination in becoming pedophiles which was 5.7 percent from them. Fortunately, the rest had no inclination in becoming one. Last but not least, from the demographic part, 84.3 percent which was the majority solidified that pedophilia were not accepted universally and only 15.5 percent of them accepted PWP universally.

Table 1  
Summary of Profile of Respondents

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Gender		
Male	127	34.3
Female	243	65.7
Ethnicity		
Malay	331	89.5
Chinese	17	4.6



	Indian	7	1.9
	Others	15	4.1
Age			
	18 – 20 years old	128	34.6
	21 – 23 years old	213	57.6
	24 – 26 years old	20	5.4
	27 years old – above	9	2.4
Religion			
	Islam	340	91.9
	Buddha	13	3.5
	Christian	6	1.6
	Hindu	8	2.2
	Others	3	.8
Current Academic Level			
	Foundation	6	1.6
	Diploma	324	87.6
	Degree	32	8.6
	Master	5	1.4
Do you have friends who are pedophiles?			
	Yes	11	3.0
	No	359	97.0
Do you have classmates who are pedophiles?			
	Yes	8	2.2
	No	362	97.8
Do you have the potential of becoming pedophiles due to your sexual inclination?			
	Yes	21	5.7
	No	349	94.3
I agree that people with pedophilia are not accepted universally			
	Yes	312	84.3
	No	58	15.7

#### *Level of Students' Stigmatization towards Pedophilia*

Table 2 presents the levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia among university students. The stigmatization level was evaluated by using 14-question items and with a 5 point Likert scales as drawn from existing study. The mean score for level of stigmatization towards pedophilia among university students was in average range ( $M=52.7811$ ,  $SD=8.89$ ). Based on the result obtained in this study it was found that majority of the respondents had a moderate level of stigmatization towards pedophilia. The result of this study was similar to one of the previous studies. A study conducted by Jahnke et al (2014) mentioned that most psychology students were not favoured to working with PWP and showed neutral or moderately positive attitudes towards this group of PWP at pretest level.

In contrast, the findings of this study were not in line with the previous study conducted by Jahnke et al. (2014). They had reported that 14 percent of the participants in a large and heterogeneous German sample agreed that PWP should be executed and 39 percent recommended imprisonment. Therefore, it could be concluded that almost half of the Germans have high level of stigmatization towards PWP and this is a very destructive perception. Furthermore, it was also emphasized by Alanko et al. (2014) who revealed that this stigma also happened in Finland where it involved 352 clinical practitioners such as the psychotherapist, psychologist, medical doctor, and other healthcare personnels. 65 percent of the majority rated their skills and knowledge and 38 percent rated their personal attitudes as poor or insufficient concerning the treatment of PWP. In addition to that, a study conducted by Jones (2013) showed females were frightened or angry about sex offenders moving into the neighbourhood more than males and it showed that females cannot accept presence of pedophiles in their surroundings. Therefore, the levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia between these two genders were different.

Table 2  
 Summary of Level of Stigmatization towards Pedophilia among University Students

Variables	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Level of Stigmatization towards Pedophilia among University Students	52.7811	8.8986	27.00	70.00

Low = 27-41, Moderate = 42-55, High = 56-70

*Association between Parenting Attachment, Mental Disorder, Emergent of Internet and Levels of Stigmatization towards Pedophilia among University Students*

Table 3 presents the relationship between parenting attachment and levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia among university students using correlation analysis. Results showed that there was a moderate relationship between parenting style and levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia among university students with coefficient of  $r = 0.490$ . The significance value is less than 0.05. It implies that, the relationship was positive as parenting attachment increases the levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia also increases.

Given that Table 3 also showed the relationship between emergent of the Internet predictor and the levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia among university students. The significant value for this relationship was less than 0.05. Therefore, it can be interpreted that there was a significant relationship between emergent of the Internet predictors and levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia among university students. In addition, the coefficient of  $r = 0.372$  indicates a moderate and positive correlation between the variables. Thus, emergent of the Internet predictors was positively related with levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia among university students. It is assumed that as emergent of the Internet predictor increases the level of stigmatization towards pedophilia among university students increases.

Table 3 reports the result for the relationship between mental disorder and the levels of

stigmatization towards pedophilia using pearson correlation analysis. The recorded p-value for this relationship was less than 0.05. In accordance to that, it shows that there was a significant relationship between mental disorder predictors and levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia among university students. Besides, the coefficient of  $r = 0.474$  indicated a moderate and positive correlation between the variables. It implies that, mental disorder is positively related with level of stigmatization towards pedophilia among university students. Thus, mental disorder increases the level of stigmatization towards pedophilia among university students increases.

Table 3  
 Summary of Correlational Analysis Results

Variables	R-Value	P-Value	Decision
Parenting attachment and the Level of Stigmatization towards Pedophilia	.490	.000	Significant
Emergent of Internet and the Level of Stigmatization towards Pedophilia.	.372	.000	Significant
Mental Disorder and the Level of Stigmatization towards Pedophilia.	.474	.000	Significant

The first association was between parenting attachment and their level of stigmatization towards pedophilia. Based on the obtained findings of this study, there was a significant association between parenting attachment and levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia. The result in the present study can be related to several previous studies. According to Marsa, O'Reilly, Carr Murphy, O'Sullivan, Cotter, and Hevey (2004), only seven percent of child sexual offender group possessed a secure attachment and 59 percent of them had fearful adult attachment. Therefore, PWPs were reported to have poorer relationships with their parents (Marsa et al. 2004). This is supported by previous study by Leirós et al. (2016), who found that parental style behavior particularly lack of maternal care is an important factor for the symptoms of psychopathology in adulthood. Similar study also found that PWPs reported significantly lower levels of maternal and paternal care but have significantly higher level of overprotection from maternal and paternal care during childhood (Marsa et al. 2004). Thus, there was a significant association between parenting style predictor and the levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia

The second association was between the emergence of the Internet and the level of stigmatization towards pedophilia. Based on the findings of this study, there was an association between the emergence of the Internet predictor and the levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia among university students. It was discovered from a previous study conducted by the Internet Watch Foundation, which highlighted that ICT was responsible for the increasing number of child pornography (Jalil, 2015). Besides, a previous study conducted by Wolak et al. (2012) demonstrated that 64 percent of PWP communicated with the victims online for more than one month, before 79 percent of them met the victims through telephone conversation, 48 percent sent pictures online to the victims, and 47 percent gave gifts or money as offering to the victims. Nevertheless, since 2010,

Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye said that the police reported 400 reports of Internet-related rape cases in which 339 cases involved minor pornography (Shukor et al. 2017). Thus, it portrays that the relationship between the emergence of the Internet predictor with the level of pedophilia was found to be associated.

The next association was between mental disorder predictor and the levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia. From the result presented in this study, there was an association between mental disorder and the levels of stigmatization. Based on the survey conducted, majority of university students in UKM assumed that mental disorder predictor was positively related with the levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia among university students. Therefore, it can be said that the increasing mental disorder predictor awareness will lead to the increasing levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia. This was proven by a previous study conducted by Barazenji (2015) who indicated that many scholars and sociologists considered pedophilic action as a kind of mental disorder that is subjected to different motivations and reactions.

Furthermore, a similar study also viewed that PWP are considered as psychopaths that act against the morals of society and its ethics (Barazenji, 2015). In the previous research by Capra et al. (2017) who discovered a finding from a survey, 6 from 28 world countries responded that child sexual abuse experienced by adolescent is the strongest factor contributing to mental disorders in adulthood development. In other words, if people especially university students have an awareness pertaining to PWP as the people who experience mental disorders, it will influence their levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia. Thus, there was a significant association between mental disorder predictor and the levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings obtained in this study demonstrated with ranging characteristic of the students. The study provided some understanding of the issues pertaining pedophilia among the public especially university students in one of the public institutions in Malaysia. The findings can be utilised to design programmes and activities to address the issues effectively and holistically. The university students were approached with 370 respondents successfully completed the questionnaire. Based on the study conducted, it was found that majority of the respondents were female and between ages of 21 until 23 years old. Besides, most of respondents obtained were among degree students and represented by Malay ethnicity. Apart from that, majority of the students are aware of pedophilia issues and majority of respondents confirmed that their classmates and friends are not pedophile. Furthermore, this study managed to record some respondents who had the inclination to becoming pedophiles at very low score. Nevertheless, majority of the respondents agreed on not accepting people with pedophilia universally in the society. The result of the present study found that most of university students in UKM had moderate level of stigmatization towards pedophilia. In addition, the association between parenting attachment, mental disorder, and emergence of internet predictors were positively associated with their levels of stigmatization towards pedophilia among university students. Therefore, it is hoped that this will facilitate the relevant parties to devise policies based on the priority shown by the different factors that influencing their stigmatization level.

## **IMPLICATION**

This study will propose a more appropriate and effective activities and programme to promote and create awareness for addressing issues pertaining pedophilia among the public especially university students. However, these issues are public issues and need to be highly supported by the government and should be assisted by various sectors such as the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education in educating people regarding the issues of pedophilia. The finding could serve and bring several impacts to education system, legal system and treatment programme.

### *Education System*

This present study demonstrates that Malaysians view sex as a taboo subject due to religious reasons. Besides, parents are afraid that it would encourage early sexual behavior among children. This leads to huge barriers in implementing effective policies for sexual abuse prevention especially by parents (Makol et al. 2016). A study found that the Former Minister of Education, Datuk Mahadzir Khalid said that the ministry is working on appropriate and suitable sex education syllabus at pre-school level. Due to conservative adults with high social stigma about child sexual abuse cases, it has become the biggest obstacle in implementing effective child sexual prevention.

### *Legal System*

The Government of Malaysia needs to introduce anti-grooming laws in reducing the breeding of pedophilia cases in Malaysia. Due to the growing number of online abuse cases, the movement to propose anti-grooming laws in Malaysia was initiated by RAGE collaborated with United Nation Children Fund (UNICEF) in order to achieve effective child online protection (Shukor et al. 2017). In a similar study, The Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) suggested the government to introduce anti-grooming laws to identify individuals who are targeting children through the Internet and other different online chat applications. These anti-grooming laws are important to fight the mushrooming number of PWPs since Malaysia holds the third highest rank among Southeast Asian nation for ownership of child pornography (Shukor et al. 2017).

### *Treatment Program*

To confront the issue of pedophilia, rehabilitation programmes should be mandatory to the PWP (Mohan & Niggall, 2016). A sex offender who successfully completed treatments re-committed pedophilic action less often than those who did not receive the treatments (Mohan & Niggall, 2016). Even though the treatments do not guarantee in curing PWP, it should however be considered as a crucial part of public policy initiative to control sex offenders.

## **SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE STUDIES**

A more studies should be undertaken in Malaysian context. This is because majority of the previous studies were conducted in the Western countries such as the United States of America and the United

Kingdom. There were a few studies conducted in Malaysia. However, most of the cases that had been reported in Malaysia were recognized as child sexual abuse cases instead of pedophilia cases. In line with this situation, previous studies conducted in Malaysia only focused on young sexual victims rather than the punishment towards the pedophiles. Perhaps, serious attention should be given to educating these future group of parents. Otherwise it will lead to long term impact to the country as a whole.

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