

**RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT, STRESS AND WELL-BEING AMONG SECONDARY  
SCHOOL STUDENTS**



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## **5. Report**

### **5.1 Proposed Executive Summary**

One of the major chronic problems in life is stress. Although stress is not a new phenomenon, it is becoming increasingly global and affects all countries. In fact, in Malaysia, it is an increasing problem, with around 400,227 mental patients getting their treatments in the government hospitals (<http://www.utusan.com.my/>). Hence, the present research project is an attempt to sensitize people about the role of religious involvement in understanding secondary school students' stress and well-being. Consequently the following problem statement / research questions are relevant: 1. Is there any relationship between religious involvement and students' psychological distress and general health (somatic and affective symptoms)? and 2. Which religious behavior is most significantly correlated to students' stress and well-being? Hence, the present study objectives are to investigate the links between religious involvement and students' psychological distress and general health and to examine which religious behavior most significantly correlated to students' stress and well-being. Data will be collected from Muslim secondary school students in Kuala Lumpur and Penang. Scales will be used to measure religious involvement, psychological distress and general health. Pearson product-moment correlation will be utilized to examine the interrelationship among the proposed variables. The present research project can assist policymakers and administrators in developing effective strategies and mechanism to manage students' religious involvement and well-being. Also it provides early intervention to handle stress among our young Malaysian.

## **5.2 Enhanced/Improved Executive Summary**

One of the major chronic life problems is stress. Although stress is not a new phenomenon, it is becoming increasingly global and affects all countries. In fact, in Malaysia, it is an increasing problem, with around 400,227 mental patients getting their treatments in the government hospitals, as reported in the local newspaper, Utusan Malaysia dated 19th January 2011 (<http://www.utusan.com.my/>). In relation to this, the Ministry of Health has introduced a mental health module in the secondary schools as a step in handling this stress issue. Among the aims is to provide early prevention and treatment to these teenagers. Hence, the present research project is an attempt to sensitize people about the role of religious involvement in understanding secondary school students' stress and well-being. Consequently the following problem statement / research questions are relevant: 1. Is there any link between religious involvement and students' psychological distress and general health (somatic and affective symptoms)? and 2. Is there any relationship between religious involvement and students' life satisfaction? Hence, the present study objectives are to investigate the links between religious involvement and students' psychological distress and general health and to examine the relationship between religious involvement and students' life satisfaction. Data will be collected from Muslim secondary school students in Kuching, Sarawak. Scales will be used to measure religious involvement, psychological distress, general health and life satisfaction. Pearson product-moment correlation will be utilized to examine the interrelationship among the proposed variables. The present research project can assist policymakers and administrators in developing effective strategies and mechanism to manage students' religious involvement and well-being. Also it provides early intervention to handle stress among our young Malaysian.

**Keywords:** Secondary School Students, Religious Involvement, Psychological Distress, GHQ, Life Satisfaction

### 5.3 Introduction

Living in this modernization and the effort to be abreast with globalization has brought many negative influences. These influences include the experience of negative mental health and stress which are alarming problems and affects all walks of life including teenagers. Few studies have shown that anxiety and depression, are among the most common ailments of graduate students transitioning to clinicians (Kjerulff & Wiggins, 1976; Shapiro, Brown, & Biegel, 2007; Turner et al., 2005). Therefore attention must be given on how these students are coping with their mental health and stress while they are still in school.

One of the major reasons for the concern about stress relates to its consequences. Stress can affect productivity, result in absenteeism, life dissatisfaction and stress-related health problems. Gardner (2002) reported that prolonged stressors cause hormones to be released into the bloodstream, which can damage arteries and the heart. These hormones contribute to the hardening of the arteries, high blood pressure, and ultimately, heart attacks or strokes. Furthermore, stress can cause the heart to beat irregularly, resulting in sudden death. According to Taylor (2006) stress is important, both because it causes psychological distress and because it leads to changes in the body that may have short or long-term consequences for health.

In relation to this, the role of religious involvement may help in understanding the stress and well-being of the students. In one study (French, et al., 2008), assessed the relation between religious involvement and multiple indices of competence in 183 eighth- and ninth-grade Indonesian Muslim adolescents ( $M = 13.3$  years) revealed that parent and adolescent reports of religiosity and spirituality yielded a single religious involvement latent variable that was related to peer group status, academic achievement, emotional regulation, prosocial behavior, antisocial/problem behavior, internalizing behavior, and self-esteem. Moreover a cross-sectional study that examines a sample of medical students ( $N = 285$ ) for association(s) between religiosity, anxiety, and depression found evidence for a protective role of religion against anxiety and depression (Sasan Vasegh & Mohammad-Reza Mohammadi, 2007). In addition, a study by Abdel-Khalek, Ahmed M. (2010) revealed that those who consider themselves as religious were healthier, enjoying spiritual well-being (SW-B), and obtained lower scores on neuroticism.

Hence, the present research project is an attempt to study the link between religious involvement, stress and well-being of the secondary school students. Consequently the following problem statement / research questions are relevant.