



Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences

**THE IMPACT OF SPIRITUAL BELIEF TOWARDS DEPRESSION,
ANXIETY AND STRESS LEVEL AMONG UNIMAS
UNDERGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS**

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68851

Bachelor of Nursing with Honours

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**THE IMPACT OF SPIRITUAL BELIEF TOWARDS DEPRESSION,
ANXIETY AND STRESS LEVEL AMONG UNIMAS
UNDERGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS**

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Final Year Project Report

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Spirituality is vital to a person's mental health and can protect against illness. Spirituality will assist one makes sense of situations in life and can be an internal motivation in trying to recover. University students' poor mental health is a global problem as it results in high rates of stress, anxiety, and depression. It affects around 30% of Malaysians aged 16 and older nowadays. Therefore, many initiatives, such as spiritual belief, are mooted to reduce stress.

Objectives: This study examines the relationships between spiritual belief and depression, anxiety and stress levels among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students.

Methodology: A cross-sectional study was conducted among undergraduate nursing students at the University of Malaysia Sarawak. A total of 173 participants were selected using a simple random sampling method. A structured item questionnaire which adopted 26 items of the Spiritual Involvement and Belief Scale and the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale 21 items for data collection. SPSS version 26.0 was used to analyze the data of the participants.

Results: There is a significant negative correlation between spiritual belief with depression and stress levels among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students through Pearson Correlation Coefficient. However, there were no significant differences between spiritual beliefs with anxiety levels among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students.

Conclusion: The results of this current study offer valuable data that can serve as a foundation for future research on the relevant subject. Additionally, it provides valuable insights to guide the development of a comprehensive treatment approach to mitigate depression, anxiety, and stress levels among undergraduate students.

Keywords: Kepercayaan Spiritual, Kemurungan, Kebimbangan, dan Stres.

ABSTRAK

Pengenalan: Spiritualiti adalah penting bagi kesihatan mental seseorang dan boleh melindungi daripada penyakit. Spiritualiti akan membantu seseorang memahami situasi dalam hidup dan boleh menjadi motivasi dalaman untuk pulih. Masalah kesihatan mental yang buruk di kalangan pelajar universiti adalah masalah global kerana ia mengakibatkan kadar stres, kebimbangan, dan kemurungan yang tinggi. Ia mempengaruhi kira-kira 30% rakyat Malaysia berumur 16 tahun ke atas pada zaman ini. Oleh itu, banyak inisiatif, seperti kepercayaan spiritual, dicadangkan untuk mengurangkan stres.

Objektif: Kajian ini mengkaji hubungan antara kepercayaan spiritual dan tahap kemurungan, kebimbangan, dan stres di kalangan pelajar sarjana muda kejururawatan UNIMAS.

Metodologi: Satu kajian keratan rentas telah dijalankan di kalangan pelajar sarjana muda kejururawatan di Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Sejumlah 173 peserta telah dipilih menggunakan kaedah persampelan rawak mudah. Satu soal selidik yang struktur dengan mengambil 26 item dari Skala Keterlibatan dan Kepercayaan Spiritual dan Skala Kemurungan, Kebimbangan dan Stres dengan 21 item telah digunakan untuk pengumpulan data. Versi SPSS 26.0 digunakan untuk menganalisis data peserta.

Keputusan: Terdapat korelasi negatif yang signifikan antara kepercayaan spiritual dengan tahap kemurungan dan stres di kalangan pelajar sarjana muda kejururawatan UNIMAS melalui Koefisien Korelasi Pearson. Walau bagaimanapun, tidak terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan antara kepercayaan spiritual dengan tahap kebimbangan di kalangan pelajar sarjana muda kejururawatan UNIMAS.

Kesimpulan: Hasil kajian ini memberikan data berharga yang boleh menjadi asas untuk penyelidikan masa depan mengenai subjek yang berkaitan. Selain itu, ia memberikan wawasan yang berharga untuk membimbing pembangunan pendekatan rawatan yang komprehensif bagi mengurangkan tahap kemurungan, kebimbangan, dan stres di kalangan pelajar sarjana muda.

Kata kunci : Kepercayaan Spiritual, Kemurungan, Kebimbangan, dan Stres.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter describes study background, problem statement, research and research objectives, the significance of the study and follows by definition of terms.

1.1 Background of the study

In recent years, there has been an emerging concern and conversation surrounding the prevalent problem of depression, anxiety, and stress (Brown, 2018; Mey & Chuah, 2015). According to Mental Health Foundation (2023), mental health problems are challenging experiences that make it tough for us to move on with our life, including depression, anxiety and stress. Today approximately 30% of people in Malaysia aged 16 years and older face mental health problems (Hassan et al., 2018). According to the Statistics from World Health Organization (2022), about 301 million people have an anxiety disorder, while children and adolescents are about 58 million. There are approximately 280 million who have depression disorders children and adolescents are about 23 million. In a study by Pahwa et al. (2019), the prevalence of psychiatric morbidity increases among 16 years old and above year by year.

Interestingly, Halsted and Hart (2021) state that the high psychological demands of nursing can result in problems like depression, anxiety, secondary trauma, lethargy, and exhaustion that affect mental health. These problems are becoming alarming concerns that affect almost all professions. It is caused by various things, including adaptation to a new environment, overload, stress, competition, a lack of coping mechanisms, academic skills, and motivation (Facioli et al., 2020). In addition, the adverse effects of depression, anxiety, and stress can result in suicide, a genuine concern in Malaysia and

globally (Chesney et al., 2014). Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death for youth between 15 and 29 in Malaysia. About 700,000 people die from suicide (World Health Organization, 2021).

For nursing students to get a diploma or bachelor's degree in nursing, they must complete nursing education programs with two essential components: the practical and theory. The curriculum provides a balance of theoretical and practical learning opportunities to give students the information, abilities, and attitudes required to perform nursing care (Jamshidi et al., 2016). Clinical experiences are essential for nursing students to get practical experience caring for patients, cultivate a profession-wide identity, improve interpersonal communication abilities, and boost professional self-confidence (Aedh et al., 2015).

Throughout their training and education, nursing students face various difficulties that can impede their learning and lead to stress and anxiety during clinical rotations and practical experiences (UI Haq et al., 2017). According to Reeve et al. (2013), the clinical practice required to acquire nursing competencies has been described as highly demanding. In addition, nursing professors are concerned about stress because of its well-documented adverse effects on nursing students' health and well-being (Labrague et al., 2018).

Nursing students are commonly young or middle-aged and experience stress, anxiety, and depression due to their multiple responsibilities. Spiritual belief can lessen stress, anxiety, and depression and protect against mental health disorders by offering a defense against the challenges and hardships of daily life (Taheri-Kharamah, 2016). Studies show that university students who practice or identify as spiritual have fewer signs of sadness, anxiety, and stress, with all elements of spiritual health lowering psychological tension (Leung & Pong, 2021).

1.2 Statement of problem

Health professionals experience high-stress levels due to high pressure and a high prevalence of psychiatric comorbidities, such as anxiety or depression. Up to 43% of undergraduate students are thought to experience depression, according to estimates. Nursing students experience and manage stress and strain differently than others (Reverté et al.,2021). Chen and Meier (2021) also found that nurses had the most stress and burnout among all professions. Student nurses are not excused from feeling stressed since they will eventually work as staff nurses.

Over one million people worldwide are unable to function due to mental illnesses. According to a recent World Health Organization report (2022), depression is the most common cause of impairment globally, followed by 800,000 cases of teen and adult suicide which range from 15-29 years old. Additionally, over a billion people will experience mental illness at some point in their lives. Therefore, it is believed that mental illnesses are one of the leading causes of the Global Burden of Disease (Rehm & Shield, 2019).

On the other hand, depression, anxiety and stress were found to increase year by year among undergraduate students (Pillay et al., 2016). The level of spirituality among Malaysian youth (15-40 years old) was relatively high, with a mean of 8.02 out of 10 (Abdullah et al., 2018). Studies have shown that Asian nursing students have a high prevalence of depression and stress (Tung et al., 2018). Several studies have been conducted in different countries or universities, such as the university students in Sialkot, Pakistan, and have found a moderate to high prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress symptoms among college students. A positive correlation exists between the strength of spiritual belief and decreased depressive and anxiety symptoms (Asif et al., 2020).

1.3 Research questions and Research Objectives

The research question is outlined below.

- a) What is the level of spiritual belief among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students?
- b) What is the prevalence of stress, anxiety, and depression among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students?
- c) Is there any relationships between spiritual belief with depression, anxiety and stress level among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students?

The research aim is : To examine the relationships between spiritual belief with depression, anxiety and stress level among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students.

The study objectives are :

- 1) To assess the level of spiritual belief among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students.
- 2) To determine the prevalence of stress, anxiety, and depression among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students.
- 3) To examine the relationships between spiritual belief with depression, anxiety and stress level among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students.

1.4 Hypotheses

Hypotheses : There is a relationships between spiritual belief and depression, anxiety and stress level among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students.

1.5 Significance of the study

Depression, anxiety and stress have been shown to negatively affect nursing students' mental and psychological well-being, which may have long-term consequences for their physical and psychological health (Alyousef, 2019). Besides, it can also impact nurses' ability to offer care in clinical areas, and study has been less motivated. Thus, appropriate action must be taken to resolve and prevent these concerns from worsening.

Some study has shown that spirituality can help to reduce mental problems, which to aid nursing students in coping with mental problems such as depression, anxiety and stress in their programs and clinical placement. These concerns are an essential matter that may linger in the lives of nursing students if no proper actions are implemented due to recognized issues among nursing students (Reverté et al., 2021). This study aims to examine the relationships between spiritual belief and depression, anxiety and stress levels among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students. In addition, it helps to assess the levels of the nursing students on experience of spiritual beliefs. It is vital to measure the prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress among UNIMAS nursing students.

Besides that, it recognizes that students with strong spiritual beliefs can reduce levels of depression, anxiety, and stress can be beneficial in addressing these mental health challenges. Counselling or participating in forums are recommended strategies that can be utilized to provide support and raise awareness for individuals seeking help with depression, anxiety, and stress. Other than that, it can also serve as a foundation for further study regarding the impacts of spiritual belief on depression, anxiety and stress levels among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students (Papazisis et al., 2014). Therefore, it is expected that the results of this study, nursing educators and nursing students, especially in UNIMAS, will increase the awareness of spiritual

belief involvement to reduce depression, anxiety and stress levels. The current study provides valuable statistical evidence that raises awareness.

Many studies have been conducted to explore the impact of spiritual belief on depression, anxiety and stress globally among nursing students. However, the literature search shows a lack of publications in this area in Malaysia. Hence, the findings from this study will contribute to statistical evidence.

1.6 Operational Definition of terms

1.6.1 Spiritual Belief

Spiritual belief is defined as things that cannot be seen or measured with scientific tools. It also can be defined as a person who believes in a religion, engages in activity and feels inner peace. Under challenging circumstances, having spiritual beliefs can provide people comfort, hope, meaning, and purpose (Krok, 2015). In this study, the spiritual involvement and beliefs level of nursing students is measured using the spiritual involvement and beliefs scale by Hatch et al. (1998). The scale asks about the perception concerning the measured aspects of spiritual beliefs and measures the extent to which participants engage in various spiritual activities.

1.6.2 Mental Health Problem

According to Mental Health Foundation (2023), mental health problems are challenging circumstances that make us unable to go ahead throughout our lives. These include unpleasant emotions and ideas we all experience, such as grief, hopelessness, and others. In this study, mental health problem includes depression, anxiety and stress among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing student.

1.6.3 Depression

Depression is a mood disorder involving persistent sadness and loss of interest or pleasure in daily activities (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Depression can be defined as someone feeling depressed and unable to cheer up for no reason. It is a state of sadness or low mood (Merriam-Webster, 2023). Due to feelings of worthlessness or inability to handle the pain of depression, thoughts of suicide are frequently present in major depressive disorder (Harmer et al., 2022). In this study, the depression of nursing students is measured using DASS-21 (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995).

1.6.4 Anxiety

According to the American Psychiatric Association (2013), anxiety describes as excessive worry and apprehensive expectations about several events or activities, such as work or school performance. Anxiety is an inner excitement of real or imagined fear. Anxiety is an anticipatory unease or nervousness, an unusual and overpowering feeling of apprehension. It is frequently accompanied by physical sensations (such as tension, sweating, and an accelerated heart rate) and uncertainty about one's ability to handle it (Merriam-Webster, 2023). It describes anxiety as accompanied by tense feelings, concerned thoughts and physiological changes like elevated blood pressure. In this study, the anxiety of nursing students is measured using DASS-21 (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995).

1.6.5 Stress

In a biological environment or medical, stress can be defined as a physical, mental, or emotional component that results in physiological or mental strain. According to Yaribeygi et al. (2017), stress is any change that results in a physical, psychological, or emotional strain which is

the body's response to anything that usually needs immediate action. The stress of nursing students is measured using DASS-21 in this study (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995).

1.6.6 Nursing Student

A nursing student can be defined as a person "who is studying or training to be a nurse" at a nursing institute or hospital. A person registered in a professional nursing education program is referred to as a nursing student (Law Insider, 2023). In this study, a nursing student is a person who is an undergraduate nursing student who is taking a bachelor's in nursing program at UNIMAS and has been attached to any hospital or clinic for nursing practical.

1.7 Summary

Previous studies have proved that nursing students were believed to have more stress than other students. Many studies on anxiety among students were conducted worldwide, but only a few focus on nursing students, specifically in UNIMAS. This study aimed to evaluate the prevalence of mental health concerns, including depression, anxiety, and stress, among nursing students.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the literature review aims to create an overview of spiritual belief, depression, anxiety and stress among nursing students. Hence, it helps to understand better whether there is any relationship between spiritual belief and depression, anxiety and stress levels among students. Several online databases have been used, including ResearchGate, Google Scholar, PubMed, and other sources.

2.1 Spiritual Belief

Spiritual beliefs are fundamentally individual perspectives on existence, meaning, and transcendence. They give people a framework for understanding their role in the world and searching for significance. These beliefs could include ideas such as a greater power, interconnectedness, the soul, or enlightenment. They provide a sense of meaning, relationship, and personal development by guiding individuals' principles, morals, and behaviors. Sandoval Mendoza (2021) describes how some individuals can find peace through faith or spirituality after experiencing trauma. He further explains that those who practice spirituality discover methods to overcome obstacles, enjoy a meaningful, and persevere life. There is a finding that significance in life's challenging situations is made more accessible by having a strong spiritual attitude. Recognizing the interconnection of all life as a spiritual practice can also ease the grief accompanying difficult circumstances.

People who practice their beliefs may be encouraged to help others and perform good deeds. It can also offer peace and faith, acting as a lighthouse of hope when difficult. By enhancing kindness, understanding, attentiveness, and mental calmness, spiritual guidance can assist someone in

establishing a positive perspective. For instance, those with strong spiritual beliefs frequently pray. Prayers can inspire sensations of hope, appreciation, and empathy in addition to relaxing reactions, which all positively impact general health. A recent study indicated that clinically depressed persons who believed a caring spirit heard their prayers reacted to therapy significantly better than individuals who didn't think. This belief can offer a sense of security and encouragement in troubling times.

In a study by Papazisis et al. (2014), 123 nursing students of the Department of Nursing of Frederick University of Nicosia, Cyprus, revealed that most students (98.2%) stated a strong religious or spiritual belief. Similarly, Sakellari et al. (2018) said that 137 out of 193 students (71.0%) have religious and spiritual understanding, and only 1 out of 193 students (0.5%) have no religion. The majority of students (71.5%) have communication in any way with some spiritual power, such as praying. However, about 15.0% of students do not communicate, and 13.5% are uncertain. Hence, most students have a religious and spiritual understanding which may reduce the risk of mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety and stress.

Further evidence that spirituality may have a personal significance and represent superior degrees of self-control comes from Kattimani et al. (2015), who discovered that among medical students, higher levels of spiritual belief are linked to lower levels of expressed aggression and decreased rates of state and trait anger. A study by Misran et al. (2021) revealed that religiosity protects against depression. The avoidance of sinful behavior and the regular performance of recommended behavior were significant protective factors against anxiety and depression. So, in hindsight, managing mental distress is where mental health and religion combine. As such, this is a crucial time in developing mental health services where integrating religious elements into clinical practice may positively affect the process of helping people with psychological health issues recover.

Following that, researchers investigated how extrinsic personal religious orientation affected female students' anxiety and stress levels (Buzdar et al., 2020). Faith reduces symptoms of stress and anxiety by 13.3 and 18.8%, respectively. A strong religious sense among individuals holds significant implications across multiple domains, including the type of care they provide, their mental health, and their overall quality of life. (Lucchetti et al., 2014). Additionally, it was discovered that college students are more likely to believe in an all-powerful God than they are to adhere to strict spiritual guidelines (Yadav et al., 2017). In the latest study, third and fourth-year students had higher scores on the Religious and Spiritual Beliefs Scales than first- and second-year students. This is because 3rd and 4th years students have more experience, knowledge and involvement in spirituality during their stressful studies.

In addition, there are about 374 Guilan University students studying nursing and midwifery reported that they had a strong link between a health-promoting lifestyle and spiritual belief, which shows that health-promoting lifestyle in students may be related to religious belief, a sense of connection to an endless source of power and meaningful life. Students can discover ways to acquire a strong sense of purpose and life happiness by developing a healthy relationship with their Creator and participating in religious activities. Spiritual health has a crucial role in preventing diseases and promoting well-being. Hence, it is essential to provide culturally appropriate health promotion treatments through public and places of worship outreach programs intended to encourage social support and spirituality (Rafat et al., 2019). Students with higher scores than the mean SWBS score or more SH have a healthier quality of life than students with lower scores because they are more responsible for their health in their daily lives and have better stress management skills. The average HPLP score for the study group was 84 ± 28 . (range 52–208).

2.2 Depression Level

Depression can be defined as someone feeling depressed and unable to cheer up for no reason. It is a state of sadness or low mood (Merriam-Webster, 2023). Depression is a major mental illness affecting youngsters nowadays, especially university students. It concerns that student depression might result in more severe circumstances, including illegal activity, social issues, and suicide (Ishak et al., 2020). A sad or irritable mood and somatic and cognitive changes that profoundly affect the individual's ability to function are standard features of all depressive disorders. The main characteristics of depression are a general sense of despair, hopelessness, avolition and meaninglessness. Additionally present are cognitive and neurological symptoms like trouble paying attention, memory changes, and sleep disturbances (Ribeiro et al., 2018).

Mental illnesses have a substantial global impact, with over one million people unable to function due to depression. This is the leading cause of impairment worldwide, and approximately 800,000 cases of suicide among individuals aged 15-29. Furthermore, it is estimated that over a billion people will experience mental illness at some point, highlighting the significant contribution of mental diseases to the Global Burden of Diseases (Rehm & Shield, 2019).

People can feel depression whenever, but on average, the first depression feelings may appear during the late teens to the mid-20s. Females were found to be more likely to experience depression feelings than males. The duration of depression depends on the individual. For example, emotional disorders and depression only occur for a short period for some individuals. However, people with a long period of depression are indicated with other negative behavior such as suicide and severe mental illness. Depression has a higher risk which can affect an individual's cognitive, emotional, social, and physical life (Mofatteh, 2021).

In a study by Papazisis et al. (2014), 123 nursing students of the Department of Nursing of Frederick University of Nicosia, Cyprus, revealed that 3rd and 4th study year had the lowest levels of depression, and no students had severe depressive symptoms. In addition, in a study conducted by Tung et al. (2018), among 8918 nursing students (mean age ranged from 17.4 to 28.4 years), about 43.0% of Asian nursing students were found depressed.

On the other hand, Facioli et al. (2020) found that 19.2% of 203 nursing undergraduate students had moderate or severe depression. The findings mainly indicated that women who worked more than 40 hours per week and spent more than 90 minutes on academic endeavors had greater levels of depression. The majority of students also stated that after beginning their studies at the institution, they had less time for physical activity (91.8%), free time (95.1%), and overall quality of life (81.9%), and that this was related to their degrees of depression. Limited personal time availability can harm individuals, impacting their overall well-being and hindering their ability to self-care and pursue personal interests.

This reduced availability of personal time can be attributed to various factors, such as commuting to a college that is not conveniently located, time-consuming essential courses with demanding study methodologies, and the extensive coursework associated with nursing programs lasting four years (Chernomas & Shapiro, 2013). However, students and medical professionals are at a heightened risk of experiencing depressive symptoms and depression. Several studies conducted with nursing students from Brazilian public and private educational institutions have reported a range in the frequency of moderate to severe depressive symptoms, varying between 6.9% and 12.2% (Rezayat & Dehghan Nayeri, 2014).

In another study by Buzdar et al. (2020), it was shown that among female university students, there was a negative association between personal religious affiliation and psychiatric conditions. Extrinsic