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RELATIONSHIP OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING WITH PERCEIVED STRESS, COPING STYLES, AND SOCIAL SUPPORT AMONGST UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES

ANNETTE ANANTHI ARULRAJAH

FPP 2000 20

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By

ANNETTE ANANTHI ARULRAJAH

Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in the Faculty of Educational Studies Universiti Putra Malaysia

May 2000

UPM

DEDICATION

To the one person who believed that all things are possible for her children, to my greatest mentor, encourager and prayer warrior - MUM!

This thesis is a toast to the passion you have inspired me with.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

RELATIONSHIP OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING WITH PERCEIVED STRESS, COPING STYLES, AND SOCIAL SUPPORT AMONGST UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES

By

ANNETTE ARULRAJAH

May 2000

Chairman : Dr. Lily Mastura Haji Harun

Faculty : Educational Studies

The psychological well-being of undergraduates in Malaysia in relation to their perceived stress, coping styles, and social support has not been thoroughly investigated. The aims of the study are (a) to explore the level of psychological well-being, perceived stress, coping styles, and social support; (b) to get an accurate description of the demographic variables; (c) to explore the relationships between psychological well-being, perceived stress, coping styles, and social support; (d) to explore the relationships between psychological well-being, perceived stress, coping styles, and social support after controlling for the possible intervening (demographic)

variables; and (e) to explore the differences in psychological well-being, perceived stress, coping styles, and social support with reference to gender, status of learner, and religiosity each in its turn.

A random stratified cluster sample of 422 from the faculty of Educational Studies was taken, as a representative of undergraduates in that particular faculty in Universiti Putra Malaysia. The sample came from each of the six programmes in the faculty - the Physical Education programme, the Agricultural Sciences programme, Teaching English As A Second Language programme, Guidance And Counseling programme, the Home Sciences programme, and Teaching Malay As A First Language programme.

It was found that coping styles and social support had a positive relationship with psychological well-being, while perceived stress had a negative relationship after having controlled for all other variables. Intervening variables such as gender, religiosity, and status of learner did not have any relationship with all the major variables like perceived stress, coping styles, social support and psychological well being. There was one exception though, there was a relationship between status of learner and psychological well-being.

On the whole, the Malaysian undergraduates were found to be psychologically well. Enhancing the social support of the undergraduate in his natural community, as well as providing training skills in positive intrusive thoughts as well as problem-focused coping is strongly recommended. The need for counselors in each faculty is also strongly advocated.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

HUBUNGAN KESIHATAN PSIKOLOGI DENGAN PERSEPSI TEKANAN, STAIL MENANGANI TEKANAN, DAN SOKONGAN SOSIAL DI KALANGAN PELAJAR UNIVERSITI

Oleh

ANNETTE ANANTHI ARULRAJAH

Mei 2000

Pengerusi : **Dr. Lily Mastura Haji Harun**

Fakulti : **Pengajian Pendidikan**

Kesihatan psikologi para mahasiswa di Malaysia berhubung dengan persepsi tekanan, stail menangani tekanan, dan sokongan sosial masih belum lagi diteliti dengan bersungguh-sungguh. Objektif kajian ini adalah (a) untuk menentukan tahap kesihatan psikologi, persepsi tekanan, stail menangani tekanan serta sokongan sosial;(b) untuk mendapat gambaran yang tepat mengenai pembolehubah-pembolehubah demografi; (c) untuk menentukan hubungan antara kesihatan psikologi, persepsi tekanan, stail menangani tekanan, dan sokongan sosial; (d) untuk menentukan hubungan antara kesihatan psikologi, persepsi tekanan, stail menangani tekanan, dan sokongan sosial setelah mengawal pembolehubah luaran (demografi); dan (e) untuk menentukan perbezaan dalam kesihatan psikologi, persepsi tekanan, stail menangani tekanan, dan sokongan sosial dibanding dengan pembolehubah jantina, status pelajar, dan keagamaan.

Satu persampelan kelompok secara rambang seramai 422 orang daripada Fakulti Pengajian Pendidikan telahpun diambil untuk mewakili pelajar di fakulti tersebut, di Universiti Putra Malaysia. Sampel ini telah dipilih daripada enam program dalam Fakulti Pengajian Pendidikan, iaitu - program Pendidikan Jasmani, program Sains Pertanian, program Mengajar Bahasa Inggeris Sebagai Bahasa Kedua, program Bimbingan dan Kaunseling, program Sains Rumahtangga, serta program Mengajar Bahasa Melayu Sebagai Bahasa Pertama.

Didapati bahawa stail menangani tekanan serta sokongan sosial mempunyai perhubungan yang positif dengan kesihatan psikologi. Manakala pula, persepsi tekanan mempunyai hubungan yang negatif setelah pembolehubah lain dikawal. Pembolehubah seperti jantina, keagamaan, serta status pelajar tidak mempengaruhi pembolehubah-pembolehubah utama seperti persepsi tekanan, stail menangani tekanan, sokongan sosial, serta kesihatan psikologi. Hanya satu pengecualian iaitu, didapati hubungan antara status pelajar dan kesihatan psikologi.

Secara keseluruhan, didapati bahawa golongan mahasiswa adalah sihat dari segi psikologi. Memperbaiki sokongan sosial dalam komuniti sedia ada mahasiswa, serta memberi latihan cara-cara menangani tekanan -

seumpamanya cara-cara mempunyai fikiran positif, dan cara-cara menyelesaikan berfokuskan masalah telahpun dikemukakan. Juga, keperluan kaunselor di setiap fakulti telah disuarakan.

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An artist knows that behind every one of his work of art, there were many moments of inspiration and hope. This thesis is also a modest piece of art by an amateur. Many are the persons who added their flavor of inspiration.

I recall that my concerns were birthed in a Community Counseling class. Dr. Lily, you inspired and challenged me to take issues in our community seriously. Truly, you have been a great lecturer as well as a mentor. I quivered when giving you my drafts knowing that your sharp eyes would note everything. Yet, I thrived on the critique and enjoyed the process of being stretched. Dr. Rusnani, your encouragement and "other" perspective enriched my understanding. Dr. Rohani, the statistics you taught and your presence has stood me in good stead. Thank you.

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Profile) with me. Thank you for the pointers and encouragement through the electronic mail.

To the community I studied, the undergraduates! Your struggles, aspirations, and your life was another school I enrolled in - the school of life! You taught me with your struggles to grow on. I was inspired. Thank you.

To my colleagues, you have been a brick. Thank you Yoke Yee for the many words of encouragement and reclipping my questionaire. Same to the 'girls' - Lean Sze and Glory. To Mary, your help in locating resources was such a blessing. To Lee Ang, who helped me complete my keying in of data - that was a great relief. To Kim Cheng who typed in my bibliography, that was patient of you. To the rest who prayed me through, I have finished thanks to your prayers. All your labor of love is appreciated.

To mum and Johnathan, you were the ones who knew my dark nights. You urged me on, even when I was on the verge of quitting. This thesis is testimony that you saw me through.

Finally, to my Lord Jesus, thank You. Creativity, inspiration, knowledge, friends, teachers have all been gifts from You.

I certify that an Examination Committee met on 17th May 2000 to conduct the final examination of Annette Ananthi Arulrajah on her Master of Science thesis entitled "Relationship of Psychological Well-being With Perceived Stress, Coping Styles, And Social Support Amongst University Undergraduates" in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows :

HABIBAH ELIAS, PhD.
Profesor Madya
Faculty of Educational Studies
University Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

LILY MASTURA HAJI HARUN, Ph.D
Lecturer,
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

ROHANI AHMAD TARMIZI, Ph.D
Lecturer,
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

RUSNANI BT. ABDUL KADIR, Ph.D
Lecturer,
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

MOHD. GHAZALI MOHAYIDIN, Ph.D.
Professor/Deputy Dean of Graduate School,
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date : 24 MAY 2000

This Thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and was accepted as fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

KAMIS AWANG, Ph.D,
Associate Professor
Dean of Graduate School,
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date : 13 JUL 2000

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.

Candidate.
Annette Ananthi Arulrajah

Date : 17th May 2000

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFRO	-	African Regional Office
DSM IIIR	-	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IIIR
DSM IV	-	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV
ERIC	-	Educational Resources Information Center
GAS	-	General Adaptation Syndrome
I-K	-	Inventori Kesihatan
LES	-	Life Experiences Survey
MRC	-	Multiple Regression / Correlation
NMHA	-	National Mental Health Association
PF-SOC	-	Problem-Focused Style Of Coping
SAP	-	Stress Assessment Profile
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SSQ	-	Social Support Questionaire
UPM	-	Universiti Putra Malaysia
WB	-	World Bank
WCC	-	Ways of Coping Checklist
WCQ	-	Ways of Coping Questionaire
WHO	-	World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background Of The Study

Health In A New Era

We stand at the dawn of a new era. Like the canvas of an artist, this most important decade in the history of civilization is coloured by stunning technological innovations, economic opportunities as well as crashes, political reforms and great cultural rebirths. Yet, like the glimmering shadows included in the creative work of an artist, increasingly we can feel the gnawing hunger pangs for continued health and well-being as part of this whole new dawning era.

This will be a decade like none that has come before because it will culminate in the millenium, the year 2000. What for centuries has been a monumental symbolic date that stood for the future and what we would make of it, is fast seeing the light of day break. We have fallen under its dominion, and as we march towards the new millenium, visions of excellence spur us towards breakthroughs. Yet, like a growing child throwing away the cloak of childhood, many who

march on do so in a spirit of realism, with a quest not only for success and grandeur but for psychological, physical, and emotional health or well-being. People are becoming more aware that health exerts the power of determining how we live our lives. Whilst not everyone may consciously invest in health although that is a phenomena fast changing, no one can deny that poor health will mean a deterioration of meaning, joy, and power for living, as well as an inability to enjoy all other conquests and breakthroughs.

According to Naisbitt (1996), the most exciting breakthroughs of the 21st century will occur not because of technology but because of an expanding concept of what it means to be human. These words come from the pen of an author who has spent a large portion of his life watching out for changing trends in the world and in Asia too. According to him, as we approach the year 2000, the millenium is reemerging as a metaphor for the future which ignites our vision for a better world, yet holds together with it our nightmares of the world's end. A better world, not just because of technology and globalization but because of robustness and well-being, a state of health and a deepening understanding of what it means to be human encourages us to confront and resolve our problems so we can meet the millenium with a clean state.