THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT, PEER RELATIONS, AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR OF ADOLESCENTS AT THE INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC SCHOOL MALAYSIA

BY

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the association among religious commitment, peer relations and behavior of adolescents. The study also assessed how the variables predict behavioral/relational problems of the Muslim Secondary School Adolescents, specifically in International Islamic Secondary School Gombak, Malaysia. With the increased level of freedom which he youths have today, the level of academic motivation lowers and the level of other life risk activities like smoking, sniffing, drinking alcohol, sexual promiscuity, risky motorcycle driving, abortion increases significantly. To the youth, school becomes more and more boring because, it is not as challenging and motivating as what he/she sees and learns from the media and peers. This study was done to investigate on the relationship between Religious commitment, Peer Relations and Behavior of International Islamic Secondary School. The sample of 103 students was asked to fill in Questionnaires on their Religious Commitment and Peer Relations. Seven of the Home Room Teachers were requested to fill in questionnaires on behaviors of these 103 students. The data collected through the questionnaires were analyzed through SPSS version 11.5 for windows Using Descriptive Statistics and "T" test. Results of descriptive statistics indicated that students have a moderate religious commitment, moderate peer relations and moderate positive behavior which indicate a significant relationship between religious comment, peer relations and behavior. However the results of both descriptive and "T" test indicated that boys are more religious than girls; yet girls are having more social peer relations and more positive behavior. More in-depth study is recommended to know cause and effect of these variables.

ملخص البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى البحث عن العلاقة بين الالتزام الديني والسلوكي والمزاملة عند المراهقين. وقد قامت الدراسة أيضا بتقييم المتغيرات التي تنبأت بالمشاكل السلوكية و المزاملة عند المراهقين في المدارس الثانوية الإسلامية، خصوصا المدرسة الثانوية الإسلامية العالمية بغومباك، ماليزيا. ومع توسع آفاق الحرية في العصر الحالي، فإن مستوى الحافز الأكاديمي والدراسي تقل، ويرتفع مستوى جوانب النشاطات الأخرى السلبية في حياة الطالب كالتدخين والمخدرات والمسكرات والاختلاط الجنسي والمغامرة في السياقة و الاجهاض. هذا لأن الدراسة أصبحت مملة ولا توفر جو المنافسة لدى الطالب مقارنة بما يقدمه الإعلام أوالزملاء. لقد تنبه أولياء أمور طلبة المدرسة الإسلامية العالمية في الآونة الأخيرة عن عصيان وتمرد وسوء تصرف، وانعدام الحافز، والأهمال الدراسي عند أبنائهم، فرفعوا شكوى للقضاء على هذة المشكلة. علاوة على ذلك فإن المدرسين أيضا يشتكون من نفس المشكلة. بناء على هذا، قامت هذه الدراسة بالبحث عن العلاقة بين الالتزام الديني والسلوكي والمزاملة عند طلبة المدرسة العالمية الثانوية الإسلامية. شملت عينة الدراسة ثلاث ومئة (١٠٣) طالب وطالبة في إجابة الاستبانة عن التزامهم الديني وعلاقاتهم الطلابية، وشارك سبع (٧) من المدرسين في السكنات الطلابية في إجابة الاستبانة عن سلوك تلك العينة. لقد تم تحليل البيانات عن طريق SPSS (باستخدام نسخة ١١,٥) ودلت نتيجة المنهج الوصفي على أن درجة التدين والمزاملة والسلوك الايجابي عند الطلبة معتدلة، والذي أشار إلى مدى أهمية العلاقة بين التدين والسلوك والمزاملة الندية. ومن ناحية ثانية فبالرغم من أن نتيجة الإحصاء الوصفي و "T" test أشارت أن البنين أكثر تدينا من البنات؛ إلا إن البنات أكثر إلتزاما سلكيا ولديهن علاقات إجتماعية أفضل. لذا يوصي هذا البحث إلى دراسة أكثر عمقا لمعرفة الأسباب وتأثيراتها على هذه المتغيرات.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it confirms the acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Education.

Siraje Abdallah Ssekamanya
Supervisor

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it confirms the acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Education.

Nor Azian Md. Noor
Examiner

This dissertation was submitted to the Institute of Education and Human Development and is acceptable as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

Nik Ahmad Hisham Ismail
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DECLARATION PAGE

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Name: Hafsa Mzee Mwita

Signature…………………………   Date………………………..

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Pupils' behavior is a major issue in many schools of Malaysia as well as other countries of the world. With the increased level of freedom which the youths have today, the level of academic motivation lowers and the level of other life risk activities like smoking, sniffing, drinking alcohol, sexual promiscuity, risky motorcycle driving, abortion, increase significantly. To the youth, school becomes more and more boring because, it is not as challenging and motivating as what he/she sees and learns from the T.V. and peers.

Schools have always been the safest place for children but, these days it is the opposite. Children are exposed to corporal punishment, cruel and humiliating forms of psychological punishment, sexual and gender-based violence, as well as bullying (Yaakub & Leong, 2007). This might be the major cause of low self esteem of many adolescents. For example during the Researcher's practice, she encountered a female student who was being teased by boys daily by calling names which she hated the most. This frustrated her too much to the extent of loosing concentration in the class, which led her into having low grades until after receiving some counseling sessions. Counseling sessions encouraged her to be assertive and therefore, the boys stopped to tease her and her self esteem also began to rise.

Although all adolescents experience developmental changes at one time or another, the effects of these changes are not the same for all adolescents. Some adolescents begin a down fall that can lead them to antisocial behaviors, premature school dropout, health and psychological problems, moral problems, and maladaptive

behaviors. In a study on Behavior in Scottish Schools conducted by Wilkin, Moor, Murfield, Kinder, and Johnson (2006), they identified that young people can engage positively with learning when the factors that affects learning are taken into consideration. Similarly Kinder *et al*., (1995; 1999), observed that the reasons why young people do not engage with school, can be very complex and multi-faceted therefore, highlighted the influence of school factors relating to the young people themselves, family, community and social factors.

In order to rectify problems caused by social factors, McClatchy Newspapers (2006) reported that each year the government of U.S.A spends billions of dollars trying to address social problems. Most of the funds are being spent by the Department of Justice – at the local government on police protection, judicial, legal and correctional activities as well as for medical expenses of the victims, lost earnings and assistance programs. They also stated that countless hours are being spent by the Congress and state legislatures in investigating social problems and possible solutions. Almost always, the political solutions end up with the redistribution of money to target whatever the social ailment.

Regarding the efforts of dealing with social ailments in Malaysia, Yaakub and Leong, (2007) reported that recent cases of school bullying have become a cause for concern. One of the more shocking incidents of bullying that overwhelmed the nation was the ruthless and cruel assault of a 16-year-old student by his school seniors in 2005 which resulted into his early death. The Researcher has also encountered a student who was bullied physically when he was ten years old and by the age of twelve he joined a gang to bully his juniors. Now at the age of fourteen, he has been referred for counseling sessions for being a chronic fighter. In another case, a boy was frequently bullied to the extent of being forced to steal money from another

student's bag and immediately hand it over to the boy who was bullying him. Fortunately there was a secret camera in the area. When he was caught, he stated the whole truth and was suspended for two weeks while the one who bullied him was dismissed from the school after he denied the fact that he was the master planner of the theft.

Bullying is not only in the form of physical violence but also in the form of psychological violence, and which is a more common and destructive form of bullying in Malaysian schools. If violence is defined as the intentional act of hurting another person, then non-physical bullying represents a form of emotional and social violence said Yaakub and Leong, (2007).

However, Yaakub and Leong, (2007) stated that many societies tend to focus on physical bullying while ignoring and downplaying psychological forms of bullying. The truth is that both forms of bullying lead to real suffering on the part of the victims. According to the Researcher's previous experience, more students reported psychological bullying then physical bullying. However previous studies are still lacking in giving support and evidence to this.

Here is the case of "Y", a fourteen year old boy from Canada who is new in Malaysia for his schooling. On his very first day of school, boys wanted to have a fight with him so as to measure his strength (He had never fought in his life before). When he refused to fight they called him weak. When he did his home-work on time, his classmates were unhappy because they did not want to do their home-work. When he went to school on time, his class mates were angry because they did not want to go to school on time: When he attended all classes, his classmates were not happy because they like to skip classes. He was left confused as to how he should adjust himself to this confusing situation – should he follow the school rules or his class

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mate's wishes? When he tried not to follow his friends' wishes, they called him weak. Eventually, he began to break the school rules so as to have friends and not to be considered weak. This change of personality, led him into further problems with his class teachers. But, whenever he tried to study at night so as to avoid problems with his teachers, he would remember the classmates' words and noises, suddenly feelings of strong fear would begin, and everything would go blank. He could not see what he was reading. He usually ended-up covering himself, putting off the lights and tries to sleep. When he wakes-up in the morning without assignment, he decides to do just like how his peers do – skip the class. Finally, he developed severe anxiety and so began counseling sessions.

Elliot, Huizinga, and Menard (1989), commented that it is hard to find youngsters who refrain from any form of delinquency. This statement is supported by (Eccles, Wigfield, Midgley, Reuman, Mac Iyer, and Feldlaufer, (1993b) as well as Rudolph and Kurlakowsky (2001). However, Muslims believe that, a pure and humble person is the one who has never experimented the life risk or deviant behaviors. This is evidenced in the Qur'an [An-nur 24:20]

> O you who believe! Follow not the footsteps of Sheitan (Satan). And whosoever follows the footsteps of Sheitan, then verily, he commands Al-Fahsha (committing indecency-illegal sexual intercourse), and Al-Munkar (disbelief and polytheism devil and wicked deeds; and to speak or do what is forbidden in Islam). And had it not been for the Grace of Allah and His Mercy on you, not one of you would ever have been pure from sins. But Allah purifies (guides to Islam) whom He wills. And Allah is all Hearer, All knower.

It is not easy to know and understand the student's behavior and its effect on student's academic motivation and achievement, unless one does the observations at the school. Therefore, this study was done at an International Islamic Secondary School in Malaysia

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Pupils' behavior is a major issue in many schools of Malaysia as well as other countries of the world. With the increased level of freedom which the youths have today, the level of academic motivation lowers and the level of other life risk activities like smoking, sniffing, drinking alcohol, sexual promiscuity, risky motorcycle driving, abortion, increase significantly. To the youth, school becomes more and more boring because, it is not as challenging and motivating as what he/she sees and learns from the T.V. and peers.

Schools have always been the safest place for children but, these days it is the opposite. Children are exposed to corporal punishment, cruel and humiliating forms of psychological punishment, sexual and gender-based violence, as well as bullying (Yaakub & Leong, 2007). This might be the major cause of low self esteem of many adolescents and worse still, some of these students associate with peers of deviant behaviors.

Engels and Bogt (2001), examined whether substance use, transgressive behavior, and delinquency are related to the quality of peer relations. The result of univariate data analysis showed that substance use and transgressive behavior are positively related to both the quantity (chum-ship, size of network, and time spent with peers) and the quality (attachment, support, acceptance and competence) of peer relations. In a hierarchical regression analyses, however, results showed that when the associations of quantitative aspects of peer relations are controlled for, no additional effects of substance use and transgressive behavior emerged. They concluded that, social functions of risk behaviors may be understood as providing the opportunity to intensify contacts with peers or initiate new relations that, in turn, may be related to peer relations in a positive sense.

This result is in agreement with the experience gained by the researcher while counseling one of the students who was referred from the student affairs office of IIS. This student was referred to the counseling unit due to behavioral problems and also belonging to the group of students with deviant behaviors. After a few counseling sessions this particular student was ready to make a change. After stating her goals for change, she began by reducing her chum-ship and also reduced the time spent with the group. After 4 weeks she managed to completely cut off from the group and was concentrating on her studies. Two of the students who belonged to the same group and were not ready to make a change, continued with the same chum-ship, same size of net work (same number of deviant peers) and spent more time with their deviant group. As a result they continued to be convicted with several offenses and are now remaining with only one chance, before being expelled from the school.

Many behavioral changes experienced among secondary school adolescents have been found to have a negative influence on adolescent's functioning. Schools have a legal responsibility to ensure safety of the students. However, the number and severity of the incidents of school violence, vandalism, theft, gangsterism and general student discipline and misconduct problems are increasing.

Parents of students from the International Islamic School – Secondary, have recently noticed the disobedience, misbehavior, lack of academic interest and motivation of their children therefore; raised serious complains about the issue. Teachers are also complaining about the misconduct, indiscipline and misbehavior of the students in the classrooms as well as within the school environment. Pupil behavior in schools has been an issue of concern for many years and the subject of extensive research (Wilkin, et al. 2006). However none of the study has yet been conducted on the role of religious commitment in adolescent behavior.

The International Islamic University of Malaysia (2009), recognized the challenges that the teachers and other professionals face, therefore funding was made available for the implementation of this study. The International Islamic School of Malaysia was selected as the representative of other Islamic Schools because it consisted of students from more than 60 nationalities and thus a wide scope of various adolescent behaviors.

Muslims believe that the success of an after life is being determined by the present life, this has been emphasized in many verses of Quran and Hadith. Therefore many Muslim parents from more than 60 countries around the world send their children to IIS expecting their children to be the best children amongst all other ethnic groups, yet they do not see them as being different from other youngsters. Hence many parents have recently opted to send their children to other schools where they hope that their children would be more disciplined and have higher academic achievement.

However other parents who are not aware of the situation continue to enroll their children at IIS for the fact that it is an Islamic school. Thus, the purpose of this study is to study the relationship between religious commitment, peer relations and social behavior of Secondary School Students of International Islamic School. Findings of this study are noteworthy because previous research of this nature has not been conducted on any Muslim secondary school students.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1)   What is the degree of religious commitment among IIS students?

2)   What is the nature of peer relations among IIS students?

3) What is the relationship between peer relations and religious commitment?

4) What is the most prevalent social behavior among IIS students?

5) Is there a gender difference between the variables?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1) To identify the degree of religious commitment among IIS students.

2) To assess the nature of peer relations among IIS students.

3) To analyze the nature of the relationships and religious commitment.

4) To determine the most prevalent social behavior among IIS students.

5) To ascertain if there are differences in the behaviors, religious commitment and peer relationships between male and female students.

1.5 DEFINITIONS OF STUDY VARIABLES

The variables used in the present study are religious commitments, peer relations and behavior

- **Religious Commitments**

The Meaning of religious commitment in this study applies to moral conduct.

According to Al-Ghazali's Qur'anic Psychology:

> To be religiously moral is to exercise self-control by curbing your desires and retaining your passion in order to attain your exalted status as a human being worthy inheriting the kingdom of Allah, and indeed the whole world that has been put in your service. You could never be worthy of being a master of this world until you have succeeded in mastering your own self i.e. being fully in charge of your inner kingdom (Mustafa, Mahmood n.d.).

In this sense Muslims are expected to restrain themselves from what Allah forbids them to do and do only what Allah commands them to do. This statement is confirmed by many Qur'anic verses and Hadith example the Hadith which was narrated by Abu Huraira:

Allah's Apostle said "All my followers will enter Paradise except those who refuse" They asked "O Allah's Apostle who will refuse?" He said "Whoever obeys me will enter paradise and whoever disobeys me is the one who refuses" (to enter it). Albukhārī al-Jāmiˇ al- *sahīh*

- **Peer Relations**

In our study, peer relations means social interaction between peers. Therefore this variable shall be measured in terms of social and antisocial peer relations

- **Behavior**

The meaning of behavior in this study is the behavior which is learned by socializing with other peers through observation and modeling. And therefore it shall be measured in terms of positive or negative social behavior

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study will specifically represent International Islamic school of Kuala Lumpur Malaysia. The Question of how religious commitment and peer relations are related to behavior has both theoretical and practical implications for student counselors who are interested in understanding student's behavior during secondary school years for appropriate counseling interventions. The results of this

study will not only contribute to the literature and researches done on behaviors, but might also help the following categories of people:

- o **The researchers** with the identification of positive approaches in combating the negative behavior

- o **Teachers** in understanding reasons of lower achievement of particular students and how to tackle the situation.

- o **Counselors** in identifying students who are in need of counseling and guidance services as well as in designing school counseling programs.

- o **Parents** shall be able to understand the cause of behavioral changes of their children. They will also understand that their motivation and understanding of their children is critical in the development of their children.

- o **Student** shall be able to understand his/her weaknesses and that he/she can be helped through counseling and guidance service.

Lastly this study will contribute to the literature and researches conducted (present and future) on the relationship between Religious commitment, peer relations and behavior of Muslim Adolescents since it is being carried out for the first time among Muslim Adolescents.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section briefly reviews the large body of researches conducted within the last 20 years focusing on issues of religious commitment; peer relations; behaviors and gender differences of secondary school children as well as common misbehaviors in schools. A significant relationship between religious commitment, peer relations and behaviors was predicted after reviewing the following literature.

2.2 THEORIES OF ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOR

This section briefly reviews the theories focusing on issues of Adolescent Behavior. Thus the following theories have been included in this section:

1. Theoretical perspectives on Qur'anic Psychology

2. Al-Ghazali's Theory of Dynamic Interaction

3. Social Interaction Theory by Patterson, Reid & Dishion (1992)

4. Cognitive Social Learning theory

5. Theoretical Perspectives of Gender

2.2.1 Theoretical perspectives on Qur'anic Psychology

According to Mustafa (n.d), A Muslim believer has a different psychological make-up and a different sense of morality based on a different human vision. Muslims believe that the worldly pleasures are temporary and everything in this world will vanish accept the Almighty Allah. This is evidenced in the Qur'an [Ar-Rahman 55:26-27] "Whatsoever is on it (the earth) will perish. And the Face of your Lord full of Majesty

and Honor will remain forever". Life is full of tests which if passed would admit a person to higher ranks beyond the world that is known to us. Muslims believe that Allah is the only security for such a trip. Allah is the only Lord of Lords who controls the supreme power. He is the one who determines the right and the wrong doers, the successful and the unsuccessful beings.

According to the translation of the Hadith of the Prophet (P.B.U) Narrated by Abullah: from Albukhārī al-Jāmiˇ al- sahīh p178-179

> Allah's Apostle, the truth and truly – inspired, said: "Each one of you collected in the womb of his mother forty days, and then turns into a clot for an equal period (of forty days) and turns into a peace of flesh for a similar period (of forty days) and then Allah sends an angel and orders him to write four things, i.e. his provision, his age, and whether he will be of the wretched or the blessed (in the hereafter). Then the soul is breathed into him. And by Allah, a person among you (or a man) may do deeds of people of the fire till there is only a cubit or an arm-breadth distance between him and the fire, but then that writing (which Allah has ordered the angel to write) precedes, and he does the deeds of the people of paradise and enter it; and a man may do the deeds of the people of paradise till there is only a cubit or two between him and paradise, and then that writing precedes and he does the deeds of the people of the fire and enters it."

Muslim communities all over the world, face a great deal of social challenges which are being brought by forces within the society's main stream – Forces of the media, the presence of guns, alcohol, illegal drugs, adultery, fornication and lack of guidance by the society to the challenges faced by Muslim communities. Although Islam offers hope for salvation to the righteous and the God-fearing, yet Muslims diverge and do what displeases Allah. Allah has revealed this in the Qur'an, He said:

> "Evil (Sins and disobedience to Allah) has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned (by oppression and evil deeds) that He (Allah) may make them taste a part of that which they have done, in order that they may return by repenting to Allah, and begging His pardon" [Al-Rûm 30: 41], "and if not, (i.e. when he turns away) his effort in the land is to make mischief therein and to destroy crops and cattle, and Allah loves not mischief. And when it is said to him, "fear Allah", he is led by arrogance to (more) crime. So enough for

him is Hell, and worst indeed is that place to rest" [Al-Baqarah 2: 205-206],

However, many Muslims go against Allah's wishes, despite knowing that their actions would lead them to the eternal Hell-fire. Prophet Mohammad (PBU), explained this in the Hadith which was narrated by Abu Abdullah al-Nu'man bin Bashir (May Allâh's Mercy be Upon Him) who said:

> I heard the Messenger of Allah (PBU) say: "Truly, what is lawful is evident, and what is unlawful is evident, and in between the two are matters which are doubtful which many people do not know. He who guards against doubtful things keeps his religion and honor blameless, and he who indulges in doubtful things indulges in fact in unlawful things, just as a shepherd who pastures his flock round a preserve, and the things Allah has declared unlawful are His preserves. Beware in the body there is flesh; if it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt and behold, it is the heart. (Albukhārī al-Jāmiˇ al- sahīh p368)

These outside forces have exaggerated all the simple tasks of creating families, raising children and supporting our friends and neighbors. God has given us tools to solve our community problems, by using the Qur'an and Sunnah. (Muhibbah Guidance and Counseling 2009) Islamic counseling emphasizes spiritual solution based on love and fear of Allah and the duty to fulfill our responsibility as the servants of Allah on this earth. Allah says in the Qur'an:

> See you not (O men, don't you see) that Allah has subjected for you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, and has completed and perfected His Graces upon you, (both) apparent (i.e. Islamic Monotheism, and the lawful pleasures of this world, including health, good looks etc.) and hidden knowledge [i.e. one's faith in Allah (of Islamic Monotheism), wisdom, guidance for doing righteous deeds, and also the pleasures and delights of the Hereafter in Paradise] Yet of mankind is he who disputes about Allah without knowledge or guidance or a Book giving light! [Qur'an Luqmân 31:20].

Believing in one God makes for inner unity, one receives inspiration from a single source; he/she fears one authority, hopes to please one power, and seeks to establish a permanent relationship with one ideal. Such, unity of source and target has