



Examining the Differences of Gender on Psychological Well-being

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to determine whether male and female differ with regard to aspects of psychological well-being among flood victims. This study is based on a quantitative approach using cross-sectional survey. The research sample consisted of 300 flood victims who were moved to shelters in the state of Kelantan. Research tools was Ryff's psychological well-being scale developed by Ryff (1989). The results showed that there was no significant difference between male and female in psychological well-being ($t = 1.194, P > 0.05$). Besides that, no gender differences were found in term of all the dimensions in psychological well-being (autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, self-acceptance, and personal growth) among flood victims. It implies that there was no dissimilarity in term of perception toward psychological well-being for those male and female respondents.

Keywords: Psychological Well-being, Gender, Flood Victim

JEL Classifications: I18, H84, Q54

1. INTRODUCTION

Flooding in Malaysia has various impacts on the affected population in terms of damage to property, destruction of property and loss of life. Flood victims will suffer severe psychological effects and probably will continue for a long time. This natural disaster affects people from various psychosocial aspects (Salleh et al., 2013).

The flood victims received the biggest impact thus affecting their psychological wellbeing. This is consistent with the statement submitted by Norris et al. (2002) that most of the previous studies have found that the occurrence of severe events had a negative impact on psychological well-being of the victims.

Other than that, flood can change the victims' beliefs about themselves and the meaning of life (Adeola, 2009).

The disaster victims are more likely to develop psychological disorders compared to those that are not exposed to natural disasters (Dohrenwend, 2000). Therefore, the effects of flooding and disasters on people's health and psychological well-being can

be extensive and significant. The foregoing proves that flooding could affect the psychological well-being of victims and there is need for the attention and action by those who are responsible for the welfare of the citizens.

2. PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Psychological well-being is a concept that is multi-dimensional because there are many aspects such as confidence, self-control, anxiety and loneliness (Sinha and Verma, 1992). According to Khanbani et al. (2014) psychological well-being is associated with a range of structures like life satisfaction, affect, happiness, adjustment and subjective wellbeing. Psychological well-being can be identified when a person obtains happiness, life satisfaction and did not show symptoms of depression (Ryff, 1995).

Besides that, psychological well-being is about lives going well because the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively (Huppert, 2009). Individual with high psychological well-being is happy, capable, well-supported, satisfied with professional and personal life (Sharma, 2014).

Psychological well-being is a subjective term that has different meanings to different individuals. On his part, Ryff (1995) submits that psychological well-being is a concept with different and various dimensions. These dimensions are what can be used to measure the emotional well-being of the persons (like the victims of the floods) that can be viewed and get the views on individual mental well-being.

3. MODEL OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Ryff (2014) model is the most important model of psychological well-being. This model was developed by Ryff (1989). To construct a theory that joins philosophical questions with scientific empiricism, Ryff (2014) mined for building blocks in a diverse selection of well-being theories and research from Aristotle to John Stuart Mill, from Abraham Maslow to Carl Jung. Thus, Ryff (2014) identified the recurrence and convergence across these diverse theories, and these intersections gave her the foundation for her new model of well-being.

Ryff's (2014) model of psychological well-being recognizes that the psychological well-being as a holistic development process which is spread over a lifetime (Khanbani et al., 2014). Ryff and Burton (2008) states that psychological well-being is a critical element of faith which gives a sense of purpose and meaning in life. Besides that, specific objectives of life, purpose and intentions and having a sense of direction and orientation all are associated with the feeling.

In this model, Ryff (1989) identified and defined the concept of psychological well-being based on six dimensions of self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth.

3.1. Self-acceptance

- High self-acceptance: You possess a positive attitude toward yourself; acknowledge and accept multiple aspects of yourself including both good and bad qualities; and feel positive about your past life
- Low self-acceptance: You feel dissatisfied with yourself; are disappointed with what has occurred in your past life; are troubled about certain personal qualities; and wish to be different than what you are.

3.2. Positive Relations with Others

- Strong positive relations: You have warm, satisfying, trusting relationships with others; are concerned about the welfare of others; are capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy; and understand the give and take of human relationships
- Weak relations: You have few close, trusting relationships with others; find it difficult to be warm, open, and concerned about others; are isolated and frustrated in interpersonal relationships; and are not willing to make compromises to sustain important ties with others.

3.3. Autonomy

- High autonomy: You are self-determining and independent; are able to resist social pressures to think and act in certain

ways; regulate behavior from within; and evaluate yourself by personal standards

- Low autonomy: You are concerned about the expectations and evaluations of others; rely on judgments of others to make important decisions; and conform to social pressures to think and act in certain ways.

3.4. Environmental Mastery

- High environmental mastery: You have a sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment; control complex array of external activities; make effective use of surrounding opportunities; and are able to choose or create contexts suitable to your personal needs and values
- Low environmental mastery: You have difficulty managing everyday affairs; feel unable to change or improve surrounding contexts; are unaware of surrounding opportunities; and lack a sense of control over the external world.

3.5. Purpose in Life

- Strong purpose in life: You have goals in life and a sense of directedness; feel there is meaning to your present and past life; hold beliefs that give life purpose; and have aims and objectives for living
- Weak purpose in life: You lack a sense of meaning in life; have few goals or aims, lack a sense of direction; do not see purpose of your past life; and have no outlook or beliefs that give life meaning.

3.6. Personal Growth

- Strong personal growth: You have a feeling of continued development; see yourself as growing and expanding; are open to new experiences; have the sense of realizing your potential; see improvement in yourself and behavior over time; are changing in ways that reflect more self-knowledge and effectiveness
- Weak personal growth: You have a sense of personal stagnation; lack the sense of improvement or expansion over time; feel bored and uninterested with life; and feel unable to develop new attitudes or behaviors.

4. PROBLEM STATEMENTS

Research that investigates the gender differences in psychological well-being is important. It is, because recent studies on gender differences in psychological well-being have yielded contradictory findings which underscore the need to study more on the impact of gender on important well-being outcomes (Perez, 2012). This is because some studies have shown that there are important differences between men and women, while some other studies show there is not much difference between men and women (González et al., 2014).

Demographic features of respondents are important factors that should be included in an investigation so as to determine the influence of demographic variables of the study. According to Fothergill and Peek have proposed that the observations need to be made about how to shape diversity and how gender may have impact on the vulnerability to disaster management (Fothergill and Lori, 2004).

In addition, there are very little information available on how gender differences are manifested in psychological well-being even numerous instruments which attempt to measure psychological well-being have been developed (Roothman et al., 2003). In view of the above, the aim of this study was to determine whether significant gender differences exist with regard to psychological well-being aspects.

5. STUDIES RELATED TO GENDER AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Gender differences are of interest to many researchers to conceptualize psychological well-being because the literature reveals that there are contrasting findings about the role of gender on different components of psychological well-being aspects.

A study entitled “Examining the relationship between gender and psychological well-being” was conducted by Khanbani et al. (2014) in which only married respondents were considered for the survey ($n = 231$). The results showed that there was significant difference between men and women in personal growth, environmental mastery and positive relations with others. But, there was no significant difference between men and women in self-acceptance and autonomy.

Nygaard and Trond conducted a study with the aim of gaining a better understanding of how changes in assumptions related to the well-being and posttraumatic stress symptoms after a natural disaster. Analysis of the data shows that, women have a higher quality of life and facing more pressure than men in posttraumatic situation. In another study, Nor Ezdianie, (2010) conducted a research to identify the level of psychological well-being of students in private higher education institutions Kelantan. The study found that boys achieved a mean score higher psychological well-being than that of the girls.

Meanwhile, Perez (2012) reported that gender differences were found in terms of daily spiritual experience, father relationship, peer relationship, autonomy, positive relations with others and purpose in life. The result shows that no gender differences were found in the aspects of positive affect, negative affect, mother relationship, teacher relationship, environmental mastery, personal growth, and self-acceptance among Filipino college students. But, Joanne and Ferlis (2014) found that significant difference for the positive aspects of the relationship with others and autonomy based on gender.

According to Robinson (2000) the relationship of family factors to the quality of intimate relationships among young adults is the same for males and females. However, Colarossi and Eccles (2003) found that no significant gender difference in perception of parental support among US samples in their study.

Furthermore, a study by Roothman et al. (2003) also that found no significant gender difference on sense of coherence, satisfaction with life, affect balance, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and the components of self-concept and of fortitude. Amran and Khairiah (2014) also found no significant difference of general well-being towards sex.

Another study by Mills et al. (1992) entitled “The effect of gender, family satisfaction and economic strain on psychological well-being” was done. The sample for this study consisted of 197 respondents who were married. The result shows that husbands had higher psychological well-being than wives.

Besides the research outcome discussed above, previous researches claim that there is distressingly low self-esteem among women than men (Pipher, 1994). But, Twenge and Campbell (2001) report that gender difference in self-esteem ranged only from small to medium effect sizes. According to Ryff et al. (1994) women showed higher score in personal growth than men. But, Ryff and Corey (1995) noted that no difference was found in personal growth between men and women and also no difference in environmental mastery between men and women.

In view of these previous study where results indicate contrasting findings on the difference in the psychological well-being aspects between the genders, this study intends to investigate the impact of gender differences on the psychological wellbeing among flooding disaster victims in Malaysia.

6. RESEARCH METHOD

The method employed in this study was the quantitative design using cross sectional survey. The sampling technique that was used in this research was random sampling. The population for this research was flood victims at Kota Bharu, Kelantan during the flood disaster of 2014. The sample consisted of 350 flood victims selected among the victims that were moved to Kota Bharu, Kelantan for temporary shelter. From the 350 set of questionnaires that are distributed by the researcher, only 300 set were returned.

The questionnaire was classified into different parts. The first part of the questionnaire was about the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents namely gender, age, religion and race. Then, the second part focused on the psychological well-being of flood victims using Ryff’s Psychological Well-being Scale. This scale was developed by Ryff (1989) to measure dimensions of psychological well-being namely, self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. This scale had been used in several researches on well-being and had been found to have high reliability and validity. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.89 for psychological well-being, 0.74 for autonomy, 0.69 for environmental mastery, 0.63 for positive relations with others, 0.78 for self-acceptance, 0.74 for personal growth, and 0.76 for purpose in life.

7. RESULTS

Out of 300 respondents who took part in the study, 151 respondents were male and 149 respondents were female, which demonstrate 50.3% and 49.7% respectively. The findings also illustrate the distribution of age range among the respondents. The age group of 21-30 years old contributing 30.7% of the total sample population, followed by 80 (26.7%) of them who are in the range of 51-year-old and above, 43 of the respondents were in the age range of below 21-year-old and 31-40 years old (14.3%) and 42 of

respondents were in the age range of 41-50 years old (14.1%). In term of race, majority of respondents which are 299 (99.7%) were Malays and followed by 1 (3%) Chinese. So, in term of religion, majority of respondents which are 299 (99.7%) were Muslim and 1 (3%) Buddha.

In term of gender and psychological well-being, an independent samples t-test is conducted to compare the perception toward psychological well-being based on gender. The result tabulated in Table 1 indicates that there was no significance difference in score for males and females ($t = 1.194, P > 0.05$). The mean value between genders had 159.69 and the standard deviation is 17.25 for the male, while the mean for female is 157.29 and the standard deviation is 17.57. It implies that there was no dissimilarity in terms of perception toward psychological well-being for those male and female respondents.

The same analysis was conducted in order to look at the differences and dimension of psychological well-being based on gender. The result illustrated that there also was no significance difference for the male and female respondents in terms of all dimensions of psychological well-being (autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, self-acceptance, and personal growth).

For autonomy ($t = -0.365, P > 0.000$), the mean value for men is 24.19 and the standard deviation is 3.23 and the mean for female is 24.34 and the standard deviation is 3.57. Environmental mastery ($t = 1.291, P > 0.000$), the mean value for men is 27.44 and the standard deviation is 3.51 and the mean for female is 26.93 and the standard deviation is 3.43, while for the positive relations with others ($t = 0.970, P > 0.000$), the mean value between genders had 26.97 and the standard deviation is 3.17 for the male and the mean for female is 26.62 and the standard deviation is 3.07. For self-acceptance ($t = 0.351, P > 0.000$), the mean value for men is 25.37 and the standard deviation is 3.27 and the mean for female is 25.24 and the standard deviation is 3.09. Personal growth ($t = 1.837, P > 0.000$), the mean value for men is 27.70 and the standard deviation is 3.72 and the mean for female is 26.87 and the standard deviation is 4.03. While, purpose in life ($t = 1.502, P > 0.000$), the mean value between genders had 28.01 and the standard deviation is 4.24 for the male, while the mean for female is 27.29 and the standard deviation is 4.11. These results signify that males and females are not different in

term of their perception toward all the dimensions of psychological well-being that were tested in this study.

8. DISCUSSION

In 2014-2015, a major flooding disaster hit Malaysia. This flood has been described as the worst floods in decades because more than 200,000 people were affected while 21 were killed. The floods did not only affects the victims physically, but also have implications from the security perspective as well as places of residence and family safety (Johana and Najib, 2013). The impacts may be greater for the flood victims who are children, adolescent, adults and elderly who are already experiencing psychological problem (Mustaffa et al., 2014).

Many studies have been conducted specifically to identify the role of gender on the general psychological well-being and dimension of psychological well-being (Roothman et al., 2003; Nor Ezdanie, 2010; Twenge and Campbell, 2001). However, the trends of their findings showed differences between these researchers. Therefore, this study was conducted to fill this gap focusing on the specific situation of flood disaster victims in Malaysia.

The results from this study showed that there were no significant differences in terms of gender and psychological well-being and all the dimensions of psychological well-being (autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, self-acceptance, personal growth, and purpose in life). It explains that there are no differences for the male and female in terms of psychological well-being among flood victims in Malaysia.

The results of this study support the finding of Amran and Khairiah (2014) which showed that no significant difference of general well-being towards gender. This is also in line with the findings by Casey and Rebecca (2011) which also showed that no differences according to gender on the level of anxiety, depression and well-being. Johari and Pusphavalli (2010) has also found that there were no significant differences in self-concept and the well-being of the juvenile toward gender.

Besides, according to Ryff (1989) well-being is based on strength in some key components such as environmental mastery, good

Table 1: T-test result

Variable	Gender	n	Mean±standard deviation	t	Significant
Psychological well-being	Male	151	159.69±17.250	1.194	0.233
	Female	149	157.29±17.572		
Autonomy	Male	151	24.19±3.231	-0.365	0.715
	Female	149	24.34±3.565		
Environmental mastery	Male	151	27.44±3.511	1.291	0.198
	Female	149	26.93±3.433		
Positive relations with others	Male	151	26.97±3.166	0.970	0.333
	Female	149	26.62±3.068		
Self-acceptance	Male	151	25.37±3.273	0.351	0.725
	Female	149	25.24±3.092		
Personal growth	Male	151	27.70±3.724	1.837	0.67
	Female	149	26.87±4.029		
Purpose in life	Male	151	28.01±4.244	1.502	0.134
	Female	149	27.29±4.110		

relationships, personal growth, autonomy, purpose in life and self-acceptance. So, all of these factors will strengthen or weaken an individual, regardless of gender.

However, this finding contradicts the findings of a study by Perez (2012) which explained that there are gender differences in terms of autonomy, positive relations with others and purpose in life. But, for the present study the findings show that there is no differences between male and female toward of autonomy, positive relations with others, purpose in life and also for other dimensions of psychological well-being among flood victims in Malaysia.

Therefore, these findings support the requirement for information about how gender differences are manifested in psychological well-being. This is because this finding explained that there are no differences between male and female toward the general psychological well-being and also in terms all of the dimensions of psychological well-being.

9. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In general, this study has limitations due to the sample. The results of this study cannot be generalized to the entire flood victims in Malaysia because the sample was just taken from the flood victims in Kelantan. Thus, future researchers need to expand the number of samples to get results that can be generalized and also expand the scope of this study.

Though another demographic variables is also important, it could not be considered for this study. So, further research need to take place considering a holistic approach, by not only taking into consideration the gender, but also age, domicile, number of siblings, parental influence, socio-economic status.

Besides that, future studies can also be conducted using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to get the more comprehensive results. For example interviews may be conducted to gain more insights into the psychological well-being aspects between the men and female of flood victims to support quantitative results.

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