

The Social Support Influence on Psychological Well-Being among Converts in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT--*Psychological well-being consists of positive relationships with others, personal mastery, autonomy, a feeling of purpose and meaning in life, and personal growth and development. This study was conducted to identify the effect of social support on psychological well-being among the converts. The study was conducted on 70 converts from Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islamiah Malaysia (PERKIM) and Institut Dakwah Islamiah PERKIM (IDIP), Malaysia. Respondents were selected based on the criteria set out by the study aged 18 years and above and had converted to Islam for at least a year. Inference analysis is used to test the influence between social support variables and psychological well-being. A T-test is also used to test the mean difference for social support variables and psychological well-being. The findings show that there is a significant influence between social support and the well-being of converting psychology. These studies can contribute to the development of the psychology field, especially in the study of converts in the Asian country. This article also has the potential to be a reference to governments and non-governmental organizations in drafting policies or modules, especially for the converts.*

Keywords-- *Convert Psychology, Social Support, Psychological Well-Being, Asian Converts, Social Studies, Malaysian Converts,*

I. INTRODUCTIONS

Pew ResearchCenter estimates that there were about 3.45 million Muslims of all ages living in the U.S. in 2017 and that Muslims made up about 1.1% of the total U.S. population (PEW, 2018). From the year 2010 to 2015, about 500,000 people had converted to Islam in the world (Pew 2016). The two countries with the highest number of citizens who had converted to Islam in the United Kingdom with an estimated 100,000 people, followed by France with an estimation of 100,000 people and the United States with around 50,000 converts. Contemporary worldwide Islamic revivalism was not without its impact on Malaysia, which witnessed the da'wah movement in the early 1970s (Ungku Maimunah 1994). Islam also the religion of the federation (Wan Ahmad et al. 2017). In Malaysia, as much as 106,747 had converted to Islam from the year 2000 until 2012 (Zohdi et al 2014). New brothers, New Muslims, Mualaf and Converts are the terms that are often referred to as individuals who began to cultivate the religion of Islam (Khadijah et al. 2017).Mariam et al. (2016) had identified the 10 factors that influence a person to

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convert to Islam. The factors are such as finding purpose in life, obtaining inner peace, observation of the surrounding, looking at Islam as the solution to all problems, marriage, dreams, following family members and to make it easier to obtain financial assistance. Siti Marziah et al (2018) perspectives on faith rested on four meanings; 1) guide and way of life, 2) principle of life, 3) obedience, and 4) source of peace.

Even though it's obvious that there is an increase in the number of Islam converts (JAKIM 2013), past research has found that there are issues in social support which led a small number of individuals to get back to their original religion (Mawaddah et al 2015) as they did not obtain family support (Musa et al 2015), weak support from the local community (Mawaddah et al 2015) and *concept of intrapersonal communication* (Azarudin et al 2018). Generally, social support is defined as the ability to help one another (Leavy, 1983). Cobb (1976) stated that social support is the balance of information that motivates a person to believe that they would be cared for, valued and loved. Therefore, the context of social support refers to helping in acceptance through personal relationships such as friends, family, relatives, and community. Social support also identified as a factor that influences psychological well-being (Rohany et al 2016). Despite JAKIM providing all kinds of financial assistance and emotional support to the converts, but there are a small fraction of converts who get back to their first religion. This is a sign that there is a weakness in the existing support system. For instance, past research has shown that JAKIM or the relevant government agencies have failed in fully helping the converts (Syarul et al 2016).

Meanwhile, converts have to go through a few phases at the start of their religious change to achieve psychological well-being. Psychological well-being is a widely used concept but it has not been clearly explained in the field of social sciences (Porat, 1977). Taufiq (2012) defined it as an effort that comes wholeheartedly to achieve one's goals in life. Ryff (1989) explained that psychological well-being is a concept that is related to what is being felt in influencing daily life through past memories. Ryff (1989) also pictured the characteristics of an individual that has good psychological well-being based on the views of Carl Rogers (1965) about a *fully-functioning person*. The views of Maslow about *self-actualization*, concept about maturity and Erikson's concept in portraying an individual that has achieved perfection. *From the perspectives of emotional well-being and life satisfaction, acceptance and gratitude is one of the psychological well-being factors* (Siti Marziah et al. 2017). Generally, psychological well-being is needed by converts to live safely and prosperously, in ease and tranquility, safe from disasters (hardships, disturbances, etc.) and well-being as safety, ease of life, happiness and peace of the heart like every other Muslim.

II. METHOD

This study is a cross-sectional study that uses the quantitative method which is by surveys. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents of the study. Among the advantages of using questionnaires in this study is that it will enable collecting lots of information from a big sized population, the collected data is to see the relationship between the variables and it also does not consume a high cost (Ishak, 2002). This method was chosen

as this study is not intended to find the *cause and effect* and the researcher cannot manipulate the other factors which would influence the independent variable (Frederick et al 2013).

The study was conducted in two separate institutions. The first institution of study is the Institut Dakwah Islamiah PERKIM (IDIP), Pengkalan Chepa, Kota Bharu Kelantan, Malaysia. IDIP is a school that was launched to place the fellow converts. In IDIP, a convert can learn about Islam, and get a deeper grasp of Islamic knowledge to a higher level. The second institute is the learning classes of converts by Pertubuhan Kebajikan Malaysia (PERKIM) Jalan Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. PERKIM is a governing body under the government of Malaysia that manages the converts affairs in Malaysia. Respondents were chosen from both of these institutions as they were suitable with the objectives and visions that have been set for the study.

This study involved the participation of respondents who are converts aged 18 and above. According to Erikson (Santrock, 2003), individuals of that age have attained maturity in the aspect of psychology, physical, cognitive and social. Besides that, the chosen respondents are those who have converted to Islam for at least 1 year. Zakiah Daradjat (1970) stated that individuals who change their religion would go through a long appreciation phase until they get to express the effect of changing religion.

The sample of the study was chosen among Malaysian citizens who are of the Chinese, Indian, Sabah ethnicities and others. This study is also not restricted to a particular gender only. As much as 70 subjects from both of the mentioned institutions were chosen to participate in this study. The study used the *purposive sampling* technique.

The instrument of the study was a questionnaire that could test the constant and manipulating variables. The questionnaire was prepared with a complete psychology inventory that was specifically chosen to predict the behavior of the respondents. The psychological instrument used was the *Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)* dan *Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being (RSPW)*.

Table 1 shows the dimensions and question items of the MSPSS questionnaire. Based on the table, there are 3 dimensions of Social Support with 12 items that would measure it. The three dimensions are a special person or a partner, the second dimension is family and the third dimension is friends. The measuring towards the dimension of a special person or a partner was at the items 1, 2, 5 and 10. Meanwhile, the dimension of the family was measured in the items 3, 4, 8, dan 11. The items which measured the dimension of friends is 6, 7, 9 dan 12. The example of items bases on the dimensions are as the following :

- i) A special person or partner
 - There is a special person by my side when I need them (item 1)
- ii) Family
 - My family really helps me (item 3)
- iii) Friends
 - My friends really help me (item 6)
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Table 1: Dimension and Item Of the MSPSS Social Support Questionnaire

Dimension	Item No
Special Person	1,2,5, &10
Family	3,4,8 & 11
Friends	6,7,9, &12

Table 2 below shows the dimension and items in the social well-being questionnaire by Ryff. This questionnaire has 6 dimensions which are self-acceptance, control of the surroundings, personal growth, positive relations, purpose of life and inner self-acceptance. Each dimension was measured with 6 specific questions.

Table 2: Dimensions of the Ryff Psychological Well-being Questionnaire

The dimension of Psychological Well-being	Item
Self-acceptance	1,7,13,19,25,31,37
Control of the Surroundings	2,8,14,20,26,32,38
Personal Growth	3,9,15,21,27,33,39
Positive Relations	4,10,16,22,28,34,40
Purpose of Life	5,11,17,23,29,35,41
Inner Self-acceptance	6,12,18,24,30,36,42

III. FINDINGS

Table 3 explains the demographic profile of the respondents of the study. Based on the table, 70 respondents were involved in this study and they were converts from Institut Dakwah Islamiah (IDIP) and Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia (PERKIM). From that amount, 31 people (31%) of the respondents were male while the remaining 39 people (55.7%) were female respondents. From that number, 25 people (35.7%) of the respondents have 5 to 6 siblings while 20 (28.6%) of the respondents have more than 7 siblings. Next, 13 people (18.6%) have 1 to 2 siblings and 12 people (17.1%) have 3 to 4 siblings.

Most of the respondents were from the age group of 18 to 25 which amounted to 33 people (47%), 20 people (28.6%) were from the age group of 26 to 35, 9 people (12.9%) were aged 46 to 55, 5 people (7.1%) were aged 56 and above while 3 people (4.3%) were from 36 to 45 years of age. From the aspect of marriage status, 40 people (57.7%) were single, 21 people (30.0%) were respondents who are married, 6 people (8.6 %) were widowers, and 3 people (4.3%) from the respondents were widows.

Meanwhile, for income, it shows that 41 people (58.6%) from the respondentsearn less than RM1000 a month, 14 people (20%) of the respondents were not working, 8 people (11.4%) of the respondents had an income of RM1001 to RM1999 a month, 3 people (4.3%) from the respondents had a monthly income ofRM2000 to RM3499,

3 people (4.3%) from the respondents had a monthly income of RM3500 to RM4999 and only one (1.4%) of the respondents had a monthly income of more than RM5000.

Looking at the previous religion, it can be seen that 24 people (34.4%) were Buddhists, 19 people (27.1%) were Christians, 16 people (22.9%) were from other religions and 11 people (15.7%) were Hindus. The factor of Islamization period shows that 39 people (55.7%) have converted to Islam for 1 to 5 years, 16 people (22.9%) have been Islam for more than 16 years, 8 people (11.4%) have been Islam for 11 to 15 years and 7 people (10%) have been Islam for 6 to 10 years. Table 3 shows in detail the demographic of the respondents.

Table 3: Demographics of Study Respondents

Demography		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	31	44.3
	Female	39	55.7
No. of Siblings	1 to 2 person	13	18.6
	3 to 4	12	17.1
	5 to 6	25	35.7
	7 and above	20	28.6
Age	18 to 25	33	47.1
	26 to 35	20	28.6
	36 to 45	3	4.3
	46 to 55	9	12.9
	56 and above	5	7.1
Marriage status	Married	21	30.0
	Widower	6	8.6
	Single	40	57.7
	Widow	3	4.3
Income	Below RM1000	41	58.6
	RM1001-RM1999	8	11.4
	RM2000-RM3499	3	4.3
	RM3500-RM4999	3	4.3
	More than RM5000	1	1.4
	Not working	14	20.0

Previous Religion	Christian	19	27.7
	Buddhist	24	34.3
	Hindu	11	15.7
	Others	16	22.9
Period of Islamization	1 to 5 years	39	55.7
	6 to 10 years	7	10.0
	11 to 15 years	8	11.4
	16 years andmore	16	22.9

Table 4 shows the results of the descriptive analysis of the study. For the dimension of social support which is a special person/partner, the mean value is 20.88, the standard deviation value is 5.94, the minimum score value is 4.00 and the maximum score value is 28.00. For the dimension of the family in social support, the mean value is 21.70, the standard deviation value is 6.31, the minimum score value is 4.00 and the maximum score value is 28.00. The third dimension which is friends recorded a mean value of 20.56, standard deviation value of 5.66, minimum score value of 7.00 and maximum score value of 28.00.

For the variable of psychological well-being, the dimension of self-acceptance has a mean value of 28.82, a standard deviation value of 4.40, a minimum score value of 15.00 and the maximum score value is 42.00. For the dimension of control of the surroundings, the mean value is 28.48, the standard deviation value is 5.76, the minimum value is 16.00 and the maximum score value is 40.00. For the dimension of personal growth, the mean value is 30.71, the standard deviation value is 5.87, the minimum score value is 22.00 and the maximum score value is 42.00. For the fourth dimension which is positive relations, the mean value is 27.74, the standard deviation value is 4.61, the minimum score is 17.00 and the maximum score value is 37.00. For the fifth dimension which is the purpose of life, the mean value is 28.30, the standard deviation value is 4.55, the minimum score value is 22.00 and the maximum score is 35.00. For the final dimension which is inner self-acceptance, the mean value is 29.95, the standard deviation value is 8.15, the minimum score is 17.00 and the maximum score value is 68.00.

Table 4: Results of Descriptive Analysis

No.	Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum score	Maximum score
SOCIAL SUPPORT					
1	Special Person/Partner	20.88	5.94	4.00	28.00
2	Family	21.70	6.31	4.00	28.00
3	Friends	20.56	5.66	7.00	28.00

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING					
1	Self-acceptance	26.82	4.40	15.00	42.00
2	Control of the Surroundings	28.48	5.76	16.00	40.00
3	Personal Growth	30.71	5.87	22.00	42.00
4	Positive Relations	27.74	4.61	17.00	37.00
5	Purpose of Life	28.30	4.55	20.00	38.00
6	Inner Self-acceptance	29.95	8.15	17.00	68.00

There is a direct influence between social support and psychological well-being

Table 5: Results of Regression Analysis of Social Support and Psychological Well-being

Variable	B	R Square (R ²)	Beta (β)	t
Social Support	133.53	0.187	0.432	3.954*

*k < 0.05

The regression analysis shows that the level of social support contributes to a variance of 19 percent towards psychological well-being. The Anova results show that the level of social support to significantly predict psychological well-being, $F(1,68) = 25.20$ $k < .05$. Further analysis shows that social support is significantly predicted as $t = 3.95$ $k < .05$. Hence, the regression equation is $Y = 133.53 + 0.61(S)$ where Y is psychological well-being and S is the level of social support. Therefore, the hypothesis which was formed is accepted.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on observation and assessment of the past studies, among the factors which influence psychological well-being is social support. Social support is a description of behavior that supports a person towards another person who gives meaning to their life. Social support from the close ones in a person's life will give prosperity towards the person (Lazarus 1993). Social support is given to help one attain well-being in their life.

The findings of this study show that there is a direct influence between the aspect of social support and psychological well-being of converts. This is in line with the findings of a study which was carried out by Shazli Ezzat Ghazali, Ponnusamy, Normah Che Din and friends titled Psychological Well-being, Depression and Social Support among Rape Victims in the year 2006. The purpose of this study is to identify the relation between the level of depression, mental health, the effect of social support and psychological well-being among rape victims with the demographic aspect. The subjects of the study were 30 women who were chosen from Pusat Perlindungan dan Pemulihan Wanita in Batu Caves, Selangor. The results of the study also showed that there is a need for social support from family, partner, and friends to increase the mental health and decrease the depression level of the respondents.

The findings of this study are also in line with another study which was carried out by AliyaTusya'ni titled Psikologis Pada IbuBekerja Di Kantor Sekretariat Daerah PemerintahanPovinsiJawa Tengah which found that the condition of a non-working mother was not burdening even though they faced a problem in juggling multiple roles. The results showed a positive relationshipbetween social support and psychological well-being. The value of the social support variable was 24.4% while the other percentage was determined by factors such as age, gender, income or socio-economy status, education level, religion, personality, and cultural background. This study has clearly shown how the psychological well-being of a working mother is higher when there is social support from the family. This situation shows that a working mother who has a lot of roles will have a higher level of psychological well-being due to satisfaction, confidence, and motivation that is achieved at the workplace.

Another study which was carried out by Mira Amalia dan AisahIndatititled Hubungan Antara DukunganSosialDenganKesejahteraanPsikologis pada Ibu Yang Memiliki Anak Retardasi Mental. Among the hypothesis of this particular study is to find the relation between social support and psychological well-being in mothers who have children that are mentally retarded. This study also used the Psychological Well-being Scale by Ryff which has 6 dimensions which are self-acceptance, personal growth, the purpose of life, control of surroundings and positive relations with others. The findings of the studies show that social support correlates with psychological well-being with a value of $r=0,448$; $p=0,000$ ($p<0,01$). This extremely significant relationship between social support and psychological well-being of a mother with a mentally retarded child. Social support by family members is also important to reduce stress (Khadijah et al, 2015).Lack of this element can make family members to be more distant and even lost contact (Nurhayati, 2017). Nur Saadah (2016) said that social support program can help others in psychological well-being.

Through the findings of this study and the other studies which were carried out by the previous researchers, it is proven that there is a direct relationship between the social support aspect and psychological well-being of converts. The hypothesis is accepted.This study has been able to contribute to the development of converts management modules in aspects such as education, welfare, and religion to achieve psychological well-being. Studies also can be used by governmental and non-governmental organizations in formulating policies for managing converts institutions.

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