SOCIAL SUPPORT AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF DELINQUENTS IN THE REHABILITATION INSTITUTIONS IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The concept of emotional intelligence is gaining wide attention among researchers in social science. However, most of the previous studies focused more on the students or teenagers in general. Therefore, this study was conducted specifically among delinquents who were undergoing rehabilitation program in the rehabilitation institutions. The main objective of this study was to examine the correlation of social support and emotional intelligence among delinquents in government rehabilitation institutions in Malaysia. Respondents involved in this study were 203 Malay delinquents aged between 11 to 19 years old that were randomly selected from six different rehabilitation institutions in Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur (WPKL), Selangor and Malacca. Respondent’s emotional intelligence was measured through the Assessing Emotional Scale (AES; Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden, & Dornheim, 1998), while social support was assessed using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988). Results showed that majority of Malay delinquents in the rehabilitation institutions have moderate level of emotional intelligence and have high level of social support. Besides that, result also showed that social support was significantly correlated with emotional intelligence (r=0.527, p<0.01) of delinquents in the rehabilitation institutions. Meanwhile, T-test analysis indicated that there were no significant differences for social support and emotional intelligence across gender.

Field of Research: Social Support, Emotional Intelligence, Delinquency, Rehabilitation Institution

1. Introduction

Delinquency is a crucial issue in every country. In Malaysia, the total number of delinquency cases always fluctuates from one year to another. Based on statistical report released by the Department of Social Welfare in 2011 to 2015, the number of delinquency cases in 2011 was 5,547 and increased to 5,584 cases in 2013 and thereafter decreased to 4,667 cases in 2015 (http://www.jkm.gov.my/jkm). These children and teenagers mostly were involved with different kinds of criminal cases that related to properties like theft and vandalism, and the cases that involve people such as violence, bully, prostitution, gambling, and also drug abuse. There are various factors that contribute to delinquency among adolescents and one of the important factors that have been identified by the researchers is the
problem of low levels of emotional intelligence in adolescents (Tomczak, 2010; Milojević, Dimitrijević, Marjanović, & Dimitrijević, 2016). Teenagers who have low levels of emotional intelligence which usually tend to have problems in controlling and using their own emotions and adapt or understand the emotions of others (Esturgó-Deu & Sala-Roca, 2010). Individuals who are unable to control emotions usually more prone to conduct activities in the form of violence or other social problems such as loitering, running away from home or truancy (Bonab & Koohsar, 2011).

2. Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence generally refers to ‘the abilities to recognize and regulate emotions in own selves as well as in others’ (Bar-On, 2000). According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize and regulate emotions in our own selves and in others for motivating oneself and for maintaining a relationship. Good level of emotional intelligence is very important for growing adolescents in order to avoid them from involving in behavioural problems. Moreover, past study agreed that adolescents who have high level of emotional intelligence involved less in delinquency and vice versa (Tomczak, 2010). Siu (2009) argued that individuals with low emotional intelligence level tend to involve more in behavioural problems, both internalizing (depression, anxiety, and stress) and externalizing (aggression, delinquency). Similar pattern can be observed among adolescents in Malaysia. Liau, Liau, Teoh and Liau (2010) also found that emotional intelligence is negatively related to depression, stress, and aggression delinquency.

3. Social Support

According to Umberson and Montez (2010), social support refers to the emotionally sustaining qualities of relationships such as a sense that one is loved, cared for, and listened to. Social support is also defined as the perceived and actual amount of instrumental and expressive/emotional supports that one receives from primary relationships, social networks, and communities (Hochstetler, DeLisi & Pratt, 2010). Past researches reported that deficiency of social support is significantly correlated to social problems, crimes and delinquency (Kort-Butler, 2010; Wills & Ainette, 2012). Meadows (2007) in his study to identify the affects of social support on depression and delinquency problems among teenagers found that social support received from family members reduced the risks of delinquency and depression problems.

4. Methodology

4.1 Sample and Data Collection Method

There were 203 delinquents aged between 11 to 19 years old from six rehabilitation institutions involved as respondents for this study. These institutions were under the management of the Department of Social Welfare in Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Malacca.
Stratified random sampling method was employed to choose sample, while data was gathered by survey, using set of questionnaire. Among 203 respondents, 52.9% were males and 47.1% were females aged between 11 to 19 years old.

4.2 Instrumentation

The Assessing Emotional Scale (AES; Schutte et. al., 1998) or also known as the Emotional Intelligence Scale was used to measure emotional intelligence among delinquents. Many past studies have used the AES and reported high values of alpha Cronbach (Schutte, Malouff, & Bhullar, 2009) while the value of reliability for this present study is 0.89. The second scale used in this study was Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet et. al., 1988). This scale was used to measure the perception of the delinquents regarding social support received from family, friends and their significant others. The internal reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) for this scale is 0.86.

5. Finding & Discussion

5.1 Social Support and Emotional Intelligence Among Delinquents In The Rehabilitation Institutions

Table 1 showed the information regarding delinquents’ emotional intelligence level. Most of delinquents have moderate level of emotional intelligence (75.8%), followed by the respondents with high level of emotional intelligence (14.3%). Only 9.9% delinquents reported that they have low level of emotional intelligence. The mean value and standard deviation for emotional intelligence were 105.31 and 19.25 respectively. Information of delinquents’ social support level also were shown using the same table. Based on the figures reported in table 1, majority of delinquents in the rehabilitation institutions received high (53.2%) and moderate (42.9%) level of social support, while only 3.9% of the delinquents reported that they received low level of social support from their family, friends and significant others. The mean value and standard deviation for social support were 52.00 and 11.13 respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Intelligence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>105.31</td>
<td>19.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>52.00</td>
<td>11.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Delinquents’ Emotional Intelligence and Social Support

Note: n = Frequency, SD= Standard Deviation
These findings were contradicted to the findings from previous studies among delinquents who were not placed in any rehabilitation centres. Previous researches showed that individuals who were involved in delinquency were less emotionally intelligent (Siu, 2009; Liau et al., 2010). Therefore, researcher believed this contradictory finding was influenced by the factor of environment in the rehabilitation institutions. Delinquents who stayed in the rehabilitation institutions living a different lifestyles, going through all the rehabilitation programs with rigid and strict rules compared to adolescents outside the institutions. Therefore, the environment gave some positive impacts that change them into a different and better person. Bettmann & Tucker (2011) also agreed that environment plays a central role in adaptation among individuals. Similarly, Marsh, Evans & Williams (2010) in their study among juvenile offenders in correctional setting revealed that a multiplicity of socio-environmental factors affects the outcome of the correctional program. Based on the latter argument, researchers believe the changing of emotional intelligence level among delinquents in this present study also happen because of the same reasons. Correctional program and strict discipline among trainees in the rehabilitation institutions lead them to become more emotionally intelligent.

5.2 Relationship Between Social Support and Emotional Intelligence Among Delinquents In The Rehabilitation Institutions

Analysis of Pearson Correlation result (table 2) showed that social support was significantly correlated to emotional intelligence of the delinquents in the rehabilitation institutions (r=0.00**, p<0.01). These findings showed that delinquents who received high level of social support from family, friends and their significant others were more emotionally intelligent compared to those who have low level of social support. This present result was parallel with previous studies (Montes-Berges & Augusto, 2007; Brown & Bakken, 2008).

Table 2. Correlational Analysis of Social Support and Emotional Intelligence of Delinquents In Rehabilitation Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Emotional Intelligence</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.00

5.3 Comparison of Social Support and Emotional Intelligence Level Among Male and Female Delinquents In The Rehabilitation Institutions

As can be observed from table 3, result of t-test revealed that there was no significant difference in social support (t=-0.742, p≥0.05) received by male and female delinquents in the rehabilitation institutions. The mean values for both genders did not showed obvious differences, which were 51.25 for male delinquents and 53.13 for female delinquents. The standard deviation values for social support
of male and female delinquents were 12.09 and 9.85 respectively. Table 3 also showed that there was no significant difference in emotional intelligence among male and female delinquents ($t=0.287$, $p≥0.05$). The mean values for both male and female were 106.36 and 106.41 respectively, while the standard deviation values were 19.82 and 18.65 respectively.

Table 3. Differences In Social Support And Emotional Intelligence By Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean Male</th>
<th>Mean Female</th>
<th>SD Male</th>
<th>SD Female</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>51.25</td>
<td>53.13</td>
<td>12.09</td>
<td>9.85</td>
<td>-0.742</td>
<td>0.459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Intelligence</td>
<td>106.36</td>
<td>106.41</td>
<td>19.82</td>
<td>18.65</td>
<td>0.287</td>
<td>0.775</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *$p<0.05$; **$p<0.00$*

However, research done by Gallicchio, Hoffman and Helzlsouer (2007) reported that there is significant different for social support received by male and female individuals, where male usually received more social support compared to female. This finding also parallel with research done by Umberson and Montez (2010), which argued that gender is one of the main factors that can affect the level of social support received by an individual. This present finding regarding to emotional intelligence level of the delinquents also contradicted with previous research (Zeidner, Shani-Zinovich, Matthews & Roberts, 2005). They found that females usually more emotionally intelligent compared to males. Moreover, Naghavi, Redzuan, Asgari and Mirza (2012) also found that females are more emotionally intelligent than males, especially in these three aspects; determining their own emotions, controlling their emotions and using their emotions. These different findings maybe occurred because of the different nature of the sample studied.

6. Conclusion and Future Recommendation

As a conclusion, based on the research objectives mention earlier, results of this study revealed that delinquents who received higher social support from their family, friends and their significant others were more emotionally intelligent compared to those who received less social support. However, t-test analysis showed that there were no differences in social support and emotional intelligence level among females and males delinquents. Researchers believed that the unique findings in this present study compared to past studies were contributed by the factors such as different nature and environment of sample studied. Thus, because of limited numbers of past literature that studied delinquents in the rehabilitation institutions, comprehensive comparisons with the present findings were inadequate and incomplete. However, researchers hope these findings may contribute to additional information on available research. These findings also may be used by many parties such as teachers, parents, trainers and social welfare department particularly to help them in managing the delinquents, either inside or outside the rehabilitation institutions.
Acknowledgement

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References


