



EDUCATION AND PANDEMIC: SPACE FOR STRENGTHENING FAMILY WELL-BEING

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Abstract

Through times of the COVID-19 pandemic, humans all over the world have been affected differently. It has left a huge impact towards human well-being spiritually, physically, emotionally and also in terms of family relationships. To date, thousands of crises have happened to people, leaving them feeling burnt out with the pandemic which has been affecting the economy as well as national development since the beginning. It is undeniable that people will get first moral support from their family. Thus, it is essential to identify practices that contribute to human well-being especially in the aspect of family education during a pandemic. This study analyses how a pandemic affects family education among Muslim Malaysians. The current study has been conducted in order to measure the level of family education before and during the pandemic. It was conducted in March 2020 and the respondents consisted of Muslim Malaysians who live in several states such as Selangor, Kelantan, Sabah and also other areas. It used the purposive sampling technique where the selected respondents are married from both male and female categories. This study was analysed using SPSS version 23 to perform paired t-test analysis. Family education was measured through the component of religious practice, social relationship and individual value. The findings showed that the practices for each component significantly increased among family members during the pandemic [6.19±0.97], [6.08±1.00], [6.30±0.92] respectively. The study also revealed that most Muslim Malaysians emphasise on family education during a pandemic and it is understood that a pandemic moves a Muslim's heart to become a more responsible parent in instilling religious practices in their children, as the precious future generation that they will become.

Key words: *Pandemic, Family education, Religious practice, Muslim Malaysian, Well-being.*

INTRODUCTION

Education cannot be spread with human being. It forms the characteristics of people and it determines how people react during trying situations. The pandemic of Covid-19 proved that humans all over the world are struggling to fight a mental combat because we are fighting with invisible creatures. It is important to have a good family education because during the pandemic, most people need to stay at home, additionally family education is the first step to having good behavior, especially among children.

In the education field, family education refers to the action that can promote the well-being of students. In the current study, the concept of education in the family consists of several aspects that enhance the well-being

among family members. It needs to be instilled from parents because the first example of character for a child is that of their parents. Hence, it is important to have a good attitude and educate the family in order to obtain a balanced well-being in life. Additionally, the situation of Covid-19 has changed the human norm and they need to adapt with the new one. For example, the first situation after facing the statistics of the spiking of Covid-19 cases, the government made it mandatory for the people to stay at home and prohibited them to go outside. They also needed to work and study from home.

Consequently, the new transformation gave various experiences to people from different backgrounds. For example, in terms of family, previous research mentions that families must have balanced spiritual performance in order to obtain contentment well-being emotionally, mentally and physically (Philips et al., 2020). It is generally known that the element of transcendence could influence human's beliefs, attitudes, emotions and behavior. Spiritual care has a strong correlation with religious belief and it forms a part of human health and well-being for families and other societies (Suzette et al., 2015, Nicolette et al., 2020).

In fact, religious education has values so that the younger generation will become stronger in the future. The current phenomenon of the youth's addiction to social media reveals that the influence of social media leads to insecure emotions. This is because when they share something via social media platforms such as Instagram, that moment is during leisure time. However, they still require a real friend to talk to, a real shoulder to cry on or a real person to put their arms around them when they are feeling down. Additionally, the crisis of stress will increase among them because they feel obligated to fulfill a higher expectation that is projected towards them (Monique, 2020).

Other than that, religious education also assists one to reflect on his personal actions and enables him to re-evaluate the essential values that he needs to practice. Values are important elements as it will aid people to handle precarious environments especially during a pandemic. Previous research mentions that a religious person tends to be healthier physically and mentally (Harold, 2012). Additionally, religious practices lead a person to reduce emotional stress caused by daily occurrences which is beyond a human's control (Filipe et al., 2020). Furthermore, a related study conducted a research regarding the significance of faith in relation with the coronavirus and how spirituality could strengthen a person in dealing with Covid-19 in their daily lives. Other than

that, this study also proves that their religiosity will increase during hard situations (Oliwia et al., 2020).

The effects of the pandemic can be experienced throughout human kind, and school institutions are not excluded in facing difficult challenges to face the new norm. A previous research had been carried out related to challenges faced during fiqh learning for the duration of the pandemic among Islamic Education Institutions. It illustrated that the problems faced were associated to aspects such the educators, students and allocation of time (Firman, 2020). This shows that one must be prepared no matter who they are. For teachers and students, they must be prepared with the adaptability to changing situations during the pandemic, especially regarding online learning.

A previous study analysed how social relationships with those such as family members, friends, neighbours, co-workers, and other associates have been affected during the pandemic. The research identified the period of quarantine and the results showed that the pandemic had negatively affected social relationships and health implications (Abdalah et al., 2020). In addition, spirituality is also important since it has a positive connection with human well-being and it helps people who are dealing with illness and other stressful phases (Fides, 2020).

METHOD

1. Activities during pandemic

Many people suffer from anti-social attitude because of the Movement Control Order (MCO). However, it is mentioned that social distance is a great means to instil a firmer relationship with God (Koenig, 2020). This is because everybody is required to stay at home and they are unable to travel to any place that is unnecessary. Consequently, they will instead spend more time with their family and do many beneficial activities. This MCO schedule provides people with the opportunity to be more creative when spending time with their family and simultaneously, they could perform their religious practices at home. When they perform religious activities together, automatically they are more able to deal with stress as religious activities are a form of therapy to reduce anxiety. Moreover, it is proven that religious attendance could handle the feeling of worry

and enhance religious activities also associate with lower level of worrying (Giancarlo et al., 2020). Hence, it can be understood that spiritual practices strongly influence the human's response towards the pandemic.

From the above discussion, it would seem that the element of religiosity has a significant effect towards human well-being. Additionally, the current challenging situation has forced people to become more disciplined in terms of managing their daily lives. For example, they need to reorganize their family economically, mentally and spiritually as well as many other aspects related to human development. These elements are essential because when human has organized their life better, they will gain a balanced well-being.

Hence the current study aims to analyse how people manage their lives and educate themselves and their family in order to handle the hard situation during the pandemic. It also observes the differences of daily practices before and during the pandemic. This is due to the fact that this study is attempting to evaluate the human's response before and during hard situations. Other than that, this research also aims to analyse how people respond during the pandemic based on their social and economic background.

The current study was conducted quantitatively whereby it consisted of several Muslim Malaysians from all over the country. The questionnaire was executed during the Movement Control Order (MCO) in March 2020. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling and overall were from various ages.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The current study observed the practices among Muslim Malaysians. It involves several aspects of education that relates to spiritual practice among family members. It consists of the components of religious practice, social relationship and individual value. All of these domains relate to the aspect of education among family members. It includes education for children and all of the items are parallel with the Islamic education among family members.

Demographic Variable	N	%
Gender		
Male	66	33.7

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Female	130	66.3
Nationality		
Malaysian	195	99.5
Non Malaysian	1	0.5
State		
Johor	30	15.3
Kedah	8	4.1
Kelantan	66	33.7
Negeri Sembilan	2	1.0
Other	2	1.0
Pahang	10	5.1
Perak	18	9.2
Perlis	3	1.5
Pulau Pinang	1	0.5
Sabah	7	3.6
Sarawak	6	3.1
Selangor	24	12.2
Terengganu	19	9.7
Living area		
Urban	94	48.0
Non-Urban	102	52.0
Religion		
Muslim	195	99.5
Buddhist	1	0.5
Age		
18-20	2	1.0
21-25	29	14.8
26-30	29	14.8
31-35	52	26.5
36-40	24	12.2
41-45	20	10.2
46-50	17	8.7
51-55	11	5.6
56-60	9	4.6
60 and above	3	1.5
Education		
None	20	10.2
Primary	1	0.5
Secondary	10	5.1
Pre University	9	4.6
College	10	5.1
University	146	74.5

Status		
Single	32	16.3
Married	156	79.6
Divorce	2	1.0
Single Parents	4	2.0
Widow	2	1.0
Orphan		
Yes	47	24.0
No	149	76.0
Job sector		
Accountant	27	13.8
Admin	114	58.2
Assistant legal officer	31	15.8
Bank officer	8	4.1
Business man	16	8.2
Current Job		
Government (Kerajaan)	114	58.2
None (Tiada)	27	13.8
Part-time Job (Kerja Sementara/Sambilan)	8	4.1
Private (Swasta)	31	15.8
Self-employed (Bekerja Sendiri)	16	8.2
Income		
Less than RM1000	22	11.2
RM1000-RM3000	17	8.7
RM3000-RM5000	45	23.0
RM5000-RM7000	64	32.7
Over RM7000	32	16.3
	16	8.2

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents

Table 1 presents the results of the demographic variable which includes gender, nationality, state, living area, religion, age, education, status, orphan, job sector and income. From the table, the participants are female (66.3%) and male (33.7%). In terms of state of residency, most respondents were from Kelantan 66 (33.7%), Johor 30 (15.3%) and Selangor 24 (12.2%) and the rest from the other states. In terms of religion, the majority of the respondents were Muslim 195 (99.5%) while 1 (0.5%) was Buddhist. Most of them were among 31-35 years old (26.5%), followed by 29 years old (14.8%). Besides that, respondents who were 36-40 years old is 12.2% and 10.2 % consists of people aged 41-45 years old. It is also reported that 5.6% of respondents are 46-50 years old and 5.6% is from the group of 51-55-year-old people and the rest are among 60 years old and above

and also respondents from 18-20 years old. In terms of education, almost 80% of the accumulated respondents had finished their studies at university level, and most of them are married. Respondents also consist of government workers and about 25% of them earn a salary of between RM 3000-5000 per month.

		N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Religious Practices	18-30	60	5.74	1.10	10.162	0.000
	31-50	113	6.39	0.73		
	Above 50	23	6.36	1.29		
	Total	196	6.19	0.97		
Social Relationship	18-30	60	5.59	1.12	11.825	0.000
	31-50	113	6.31	0.74		
	Above 50	23	6.24	1.30		
	Total	196	6.08	1.00		
Individual Value	18-30	60	5.95	1.01	6.727	0.001
	31-50	113	6.47	0.71		
	Above 50	23	6.38	1.34		
	Total	196	6.30	0.92		

Table 2: Virtuous practices based on age

Table 2 illustrates the results of daily practices during the pandemic and it is evaluated based on age. The findings show that age significantly influences religious practices [DF 2,193=10.162, $p<0.05$], social relationships [DF 2,193=11.825, $p<0.05$] and individual value [DF 2,193=6.727, $P<0.05$]. Based on post hoc comparison, religious practices among respondents at the age 18-30 [5.74±1.10] is significantly lower than respondents at the age of 31-50 [6.39±0.73] and above 50 [6.36±1.29]. Similarly, with social relationships which indicates that respondents at the age of 18-30 years old [5.59±1.12] had statistically lower social relationships as compared to respondents with the age of 31-50 years old [6.31±0.74] and above 50 [6.24±1.30]. For the construct of individual value, it is stated that respondents who are aged from 31-50 [6.47±0.71] got the highest score for this domain as compared to people who are above 50 years old [6.38±1.34] and followed by the 18-30 year-old group [5.95±1.01].

	Religious Practice	PRE		POST	
		MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD
RP1	...manage to recite the Quran every day.	4.73	1.671	5.87	1.42
RP2	...perform my prayers (solat) early.	4.99	1.317	5.97	1.20

RP3	...perform supplementary prayers (solat sunat) consistently.	4.04	1.596	5.36	1.50
RP4	...pray for safety and well-being.	5.67	1.315	6.42	1.06
RP5	...have positive impressions with things that Allah has pre-determined.	6.14	1.190	6.54	0.97
RP6	...have faith that there is a reason/lesson for every hardship/test	6.23	1.178	6.51	1.01
RP7	...am always patient in facing challenges.	5.99	1.190	6.42	0.99
RP8	...accept every hardship/test wholeheartedly and sincerely	6.03	1.196	6.40	1.01
RP9	Overall, I am satisfied with my religious practices	5.23	1.534	5.97	1.32

Table 3: Religious practice before and during pandemic

Table 3 illustrates that the items that had been used to measure religious practices among respondents. It also reveals the difference between the daily practice before and amid the pandemic. The first item asks about the daily recitation of the Quran and the results proved that Muslim Malaysians increase their Quran recitation during pandemic. This might be because the Quran has miracles and it soothes the human's mind and soul. This is parallel with Allah's reminder from chapter 13 (surah al-Ra'd), verse 28, that shows, undoubtedly the remembrance of God leads to satisfaction of one's heart.

While the second item inquires the respondent whether or not they performed prayers earlier. It reveals that people tend to pray more during the pandemic. This might be due to the fact that when Allah tests His servants, we prone to rely more on Allah because we believe that Allah is the Supreme God and He can do whatsoever as He pleases. This is parallel with Chapter number 2, verse 45 of the Quran, which relates to the encouragement to ask help through prayer and patience. The third item also relates to the practice of additional prayer and it complements the compulsory prayer.

Subsequently, item 4 relates to the prayer for safety and well-being. This action is usually conducted through formal prayer, however it is unlimited for any place and time. Hence, people could pray for their safety anytime that they wished. This habit is necessary to show our humility towards Allah and fully entrust him every time. Additionally, it is crucial for us to have positive impressions toward everything that happens upon us, and this is connected with item 5. The concept of having a good perception towards Allah (husn zhon) will lead people to become a more grateful person in whatever destiny that they are facing.

While item 6 evaluates the level of how Muslims believe that there is reason and wisdom as to why something good or bad happens around us. This is parallel with Surah al-Sajadah, chapter 32 verse 21. In the verse, Allah explains that He will test every human being in the hope that he will return to Allah in a blessed condition. Additionally, item 7 measured a Muslim's patience in facing challenges in their daily life. People will experience hardships especially during the pandemic. It is encouraged to face the hardship with patience as the will obtain a special reward in the hereafter. In Chapter 13 verse 24, Allah states that He will give Salam for those who have preserved in patience. This means that Allah will bless those who are patient in dealing with His test.

This is strongly related with the next item (no. 8) whereby people must accept (redha) the test sincerely in order to mould a positive inner attitude, which is having a peaceful soul (nafs al-mutmainnah). It is elaborated in surah al-Fajr in the chapter 27-30, where the chosen group that may enter Paradise is among those who have a peaceful heart. Hence, it is necessary for Muslims to have such characteristics in order to get Allah's blessing.

No.	Social Relationship	PRE		POST	
		MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD
SR1	...show good example to the children	5.39	1.447	5.96	1.38
SR2	...conduct activities related to religious knowledge for the children.	5.13	1.588	5.86	1.45
SR3	give advices to the children.	5.46	1.503	5.95	1.44
SR4	...make sure of a close relationship among family members	5.79	1.241	6.27	1.01
SR5	...practice good communication with family members.	5.77	1.178	6.21	1.13
SR6	...do activities with family members well.	5.69	1.168	6.24	1.00
SR7	...practice managing family finance well.	5.52	1.183	6.17	1.08
SR8	...assist my family with daily chores.	5.79	1.093	6.30	0.98
SR9	help/assist the people who are weaker/in need.	5.36	1.171	5.95	1.14
SR10	...give financial aid/donation to the people in need.	5.18	1.276	5.90	1.19
SR11	Overall, I am grateful for everything that happens.	5.96	1.132	6.35	1.04

Table 3: The item for Social Relationship Practice

Table 3 illustrates the difference of social relationship practices before and during the pandemic. It is shown that during the pandemic, Muslims are able to be more creative in dealing with social interaction. For item 1, it is proven that even though Muslims are facing the challenges in life, they are willing to show a good example to their children. It is strongly encouraged to control emotion even during the tough conditions. The kind practice will create a positive vibe in the family and consequently they could conceive any activity that contributes to

family well-being. While item 2 relates to the action of having religious activities that could benefit family members. Children need to be exposed to religious knowledge at an early age. This element will form the individual to have a firm religious foundation and they will be able to apply the religious knowledge in the future. This is in line with previous research that analysed the role of religiosity in contributing positively towards family demands and well-being (Achour et al., 2015).

While item 3 is about giving advice to the children. This practice can be done if the family has a positive surrounding and applies religious knowledge among the members. Giving advice is encouraged as mentioned in Chapter 103, verse 3 which elaborates about constantly giving advice to each other. Other than that, during the difficulty of the pandemic, it is also important for the family leader to make sure that the family members have a close relationship, which is listed in item 4. This is in order to reduce depression symptoms by being able to share their problems and help each other. Allah advises people to not be divided and that they must hold firm to the rope of Allah (chapter 3, verse 103) in order to avoid bad sentiment and negative feelings towards other people.

Item 5 relates to practicing good communication among family members. Family communication is valuable to avoid depression and increase self-esteem and psychological well-being (Zabihollah et al., 2020). Hence, this will motivate every family member to execute activities with their family well (item 6). Carrying out activities together with family members will help to alleviate the trying conditions and the family is also able to make a rational decision even in tough situations. Meanwhile, item 7 connects to the financial management of families and it is shown that they are able to handle to financial management during the pandemic. This might be due to the fact that the crisis will cause the family members to be more cautious and reorganise their daily spending. Other than that, item 8 analyses the level of performing daily chores together. This shows that spending time at home will motivate the family members to conduct daily chores together and help each other. Additionally, item 9 investigates the action of family members giving aid to other people in need. This illustrates that the families are able to assist people who are poorer than them, and this will instil virtuous values among them.

Individual Value	PRE		POST	
	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD
IV1 ...practice being sincere (ikhlas) in daily activities.	5.78	1.16	6.32	0.97

IV2	...am honest (amanah) in exercising my responsibilities.	5.89	1.10	6.27	0.99
IV3	...work hard to achieve my goals/dreams.	5.71	1.14	6.20	1.05
IV4	...am patient in facing hardships in life.	5.80	1.08	6.34	1.00
IV5	...am grateful with any blessings and grace that are bestowed upon me.	6.05	1.08	6.42	0.98
IV6	...am disciplined in anything I do.	5.65	1.08	6.17	1.05
IV7	...rely on God in dealing with everyday life.	6.05	1.17	6.40	0.97
IV8	Overall, I have adjusted many positive values in my life.	5.91	1.15	6.30	0.92

Table 4: Items for Individual value.

Table 4 depicts the inner values that has been practiced among Muslim before and during the pandemic. It is proven that they try to increase practicing good characteristics during the predicament. Item 1 connects to the action of sincerity because Islam encourages the people to keep our intention in doing anything for the sake of Allah, and this will lead human beings to have a 'qalibun salim' (sound soul).

While item 2 identifies the practice of honesty in carrying out responsibilities. The concept of honesty (amanah) is integral in order to form good character among Muslims based on ethical Islamic perspectives (Mohd Hasrol et al., 2019). Item 3 evaluates how people work hard to achieve their dreams, and it shows that the pandemic drives people to become even more zealous in doing their work. This is because the prophet advised his followers to perform good deeds excellently. This action will lead to the people becoming more skillful in anything that they pursue, hence they could contribute to society in the future. Item 4 asks about the attitude of being patient. This element allows human beings to control their emotion during difficulty. People who are able to control their temper will be able to make rational decisions, where in the long run, they win and conquer the situation and will obtain good results for their future especially in the hereafter.

Additionally, item 5 measures the concept of gratitude among Muslims. This shows that they feel grateful when they receive any blessing from Allah. This attitude will avoid any negative dispositions such as riya' (wanting to be seen when doing good things), 'ujub (feeling proud of ourselves) and sum'ah (wanting someone to hear about his kindness). This is because when somebody is grateful, he will be aware that everything that he has obtained is from Allah and it is a responsibility to use those possessions properly to acquire Allah's blessing.

While item 6 evaluates whether the people they have self-discipline or not. The result shows that people could be more disciplined during the Movement Control Order (MCO). This might be because most people must stay at home and they manage to allocate their time

According to their tasks during the quarantine period. Additionally, the concept of self-discipline will promote human well-being (Heatherton & Wagner, 2011). While item 7 connects to relying on God in performing daily tasks. This aspect is important because we will not have any feeling of regret if we could not achieve or obtain something that we have dreamt of. This concept of tawakkal needs to be instilled after performing tasks zealously, just as Allah mentions in Chapter 4 verse 159. This verse explains that when people decide to do something, then he must rely on Allah after doing the things. This attitude assists humans to reduce stress and overthinking during challenging situations that he is experiencing.

CONCLUSION

From the findings, it can be understood that people could be more disciplined and escalate their religious activities during the MCO. Furthermore, the education aspect also has been applied among family members. It shows that the hardship is a good teacher for everyone in order to become a better servant. Religious education within the family is essential in order to shape an individual that understands religious rules and is able to benefit other people. This study reveals that religious education should begin at home, so as that the people could develop a harmonious society and blissful well-being among the future generation.

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