RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL STATES AND COPING STYLES AMONG HIGH RISK STUDENTS

Hubungan antara Keadaan Emosi dan Gaya Daya Tindak dalam Kalangan Pelajar Berisiko

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Abstract

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between emotional states and coping styles among high risk students in five secondary schools at the Hilir Perak district. This study identified the coping styles among high risk students and examined the relationship between emotional states and coping styles among high risk students. This quantitative study was done by using a survey research design. A total of 140 students consisting of Form One to Six students were selected as respondents in the study. Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) was used to measure depression, anxiety and stress levels while the *Soal Selidik Gaya Daya Tindak* (SSGDT) was used to measure coping styles. Data were analysed by using descriptive and inferential statistics. Inferential analysis using *Pearson r* correlation statistical analysis were used for variables to be compared using interval measurement scales. Findings indicate the level of depression and stress for high risk student is at a normal level while the level of anxiety is in a mild level. Correlational analysis indicate that the level of anxiety and stress levels were correlated with their coping style.

Keywords: drug abuse, emotional states, coping style, high-risk students.

Abstrak

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidik hubungan antara keadaan emosi dan gaya daya tindak pelajar berisiko di sekolah menengah daerah Hilir Perak. Kajian ini turut mengenal pasti gaya daya tindak pelajar berisiko apabila berhadapan dengan kemurungan, kebimbangan dan tekanan serta melihat hubungan antara keadaan emosi dengan gaya daya tindak pelajar-pelajar yang berisiko. Kajian ini berbentuk kuantitatif dengan menggunakan kaedah tinjauan. Seramai 140 orang pelajar tingkatan satu hingga enam yang terdiri daripada lima buah sekolah menengah dalam daerah Hilir Perak telah dijadikan sebagai responden. Instrumen *Depression Anxiety Stress Scale* (DASS) telah digunakan untuk mengukur tahap kemurungan, kebimbangan dan tekanan manakala Soal Selidik Gaya Daya Tindak (SSGDT) pula digunakan untuk mengukur tahap gaya daya tindak. Analisis statistik inferensi pula menggunakan analisis korelasi *Pearson r* untuk membandingkan kedua-dua pembolehubah yang menggunakan skala pengukuran *interval*. Hasil kajian mendapati keadaan emosi pelajar berisiko yang merangkumi tahap kemurungan berada dalam keadaan normal, tahap kebimbangan adalah ringan dan tahap tekanan adalah normal. Tahap gaya daya tindak pelajar berisiko pula berada dalam keadaan ringan apabila berhadapan dengan kemurungan, kebimbangan dan tekanan. Hasil kajian juga mendapati wujudnya hubungan antara tahap kebimbangan dan tekanan dengan gaya daya tindak pelajar berisiko.

Kata kunci: penyalahgunaan dadah, emosi, daya tindak, pelajar berisiko.

INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, drug abuse received major attention among the leaders which is why on 28th February 1983; the Anti-Drug Cabinet Committee had declared "Drug as the National Main Enemy". The National Anti-Drug Agency has launched the slogan "Fighting Against Drugs" (PDH) starting 2016. It is an important event for the country especially in the government's efforts to address the issue of fighting against drug abuse in this country.

According to the NADA; National Anti-Drugs Agency of Malaysia (2005), until 2004, there were 195,893 drug addicts being detained and ordered to undergo treatment and rehabilitation programs at all state centres. The government had spent RM867 million to cover the cost of treatment and rehabilitation programs for drug addicts in the country's central drug rehabilitation centres. According to the Drug Information Books obtained through the adk.gov.my website, the statistics by type of employment 2010-2015 stated that in 2010 a total of 284 (1.20%) students were detected as addicts. In 2014, the numbers were reduced to 197 people (0.90%) but increased slightly to 264 students or 1.3% students found to have been billed as new

cases. This is indeed a worrying trend as the age group of students represents the formative years of a person's life.

According to Mohmood Nazar, Sabitha Marican, Nadiyah Elias and Yahya Don (2008), the involvement of adolescents in illegal substance abuse is growing globally. The existence of common recreational drug-use lifestyle, various external influences and easy-access on psychoactive substance have caused adolescents to be involved in the substance abuse. This trend is been monitored in Malaysia and the number of teens who abuse drugs are increasing at an alarming rate.

According to Ducan and Gold (1982), drug is any substance including food that is either chemically or naturally derived which are able to alter the structure or function of living organisms. Drugs are psychoactive substances with chemical entities that affect the functioning of the brain. Examples of drug include alcohol, marijuana, LSD, morphine, cocaine and others. According to Mohd Muzafar (2007), adolescence is usually the age of onset on the start of drug behavioural usage. Misuse of cigarette and alcohol at an early age increases the risk of drug use such as marijuana and other drugs. Most children or adolescents who are involved in drug abuse are due to their desire to relieve boredom, wanting to feel special, forget difficulties in their life and relax, curiosity, wanting to be an adult, to show independence and a sense of belonging in the group.

According to Hazlin Ramli (2001), drug abuse among school students was known to begin in the early 1970s. As a result, various preventative measures have been taken by the government through counselling as a disciplinary action in schools. From statistics, it was found that 671 first-time addicts were comprised of school students aged 14 to 18 years old. This scenario shows that drug abuse involving students is not a new thing but still continuing to this day. To ensure the well-being of the nation, it is important to produce students who are free from drug use.

At the Ministry of Education Malaysia level, Healthy Screening Test involving the use of two instruments namely DASS and SSGDT only involved Form Four secondary school students. This test must be done to identify the emotional state of students such as the level of depression, anxiety and stress and to identify students' coping style (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2014). However, the program is only conducted on secondary school students and does not cover all students in school, namely primary school students. Depression, anxiety and stress can occur regardless of age, gender, living area and parental status. Coping style skills while facing depression, anxiety and stress should be exposed early to all students regardless whether they are secondary school or primary school students. However, this does not happen at schools in Malaysia. The Ministry of Education Malaysia is still in the

process of providing additional guidelines to the school to identify students who are likely to experience depression, stress and coping styles skills (Sinar Harian, 2017).

Mental health problems among students should no longer be underestimated when statistics point to an increase in the ratio of five students suffer from such problems in 2016 compared to one in 10 people in 2011. Research in the National Health and Morbidity Survey revealed that 15.7 percent of students suffer from emotional problems such as depression, anxiety and stress (Ministry of Health, 2015). With that percentage, experts said depression, anxiety and stress is a major mental health problem among students. Coping styles should also be applied to students to address the situation of depression, anxiety and stress that occur (Ministry of Health, 2015).

Therefore, this study focused on high risk students in school to see their levels of depression, anxiety and stress they face whether it is normal, mild, moderate, severe or very severe. For coping styles, they also need to know and see whether high risk students have coping styles of severe, lightweight, moderate or good to deal with depression, anxiety and stress that they faced.

METHODS AND MATERIALS
The objectives of the study are as follows:
1.   To investigate the level of emotional state among high risk students:
         1.1   To investigate the level of depression
         1.2   To investigate the level of anxiety
         1.3   To investigate the level of stress
2.   To identify the coping styles among high risk students.
3.   To examine a relationship between emotional states and coping style among high risk students.

This study was conducted to identify the level of depression, anxiety and stress faced by high risk students in secondary schools and their relationship to the student's coping styles. Additionally, the level of coping styles of high-risk students also identified. The level of depression, anxiety and stress can be based on five levels; normal, mild, moderate, severely and very severely. The coping styles can also be described through four levels; good, moderate, lightweight and severe. Overall, this research framework can be illustrated in Figure 1.

Research Design

This is a quantitative study using a survey design. The research data was obtained by gathering information from respondents through instruments distributed. Mohd Majid Konting (1993) explained that the questionnaire is more practical and effective as its use can increase the accuracy and validity of the response given by respondents. This is because it is not influenced by the conduct of investigators. An independent sample expresses its own opinion to answer each item submitted. This quantitative study can also provide more information to researchers in a short time. According to Ahmad Mahdzan Ayob (1995), the data collection method in quantitative research ensures the quality of the data and can easily be processed with the help of a computer. Data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS version 20.0.

Figure 1 Research Framework
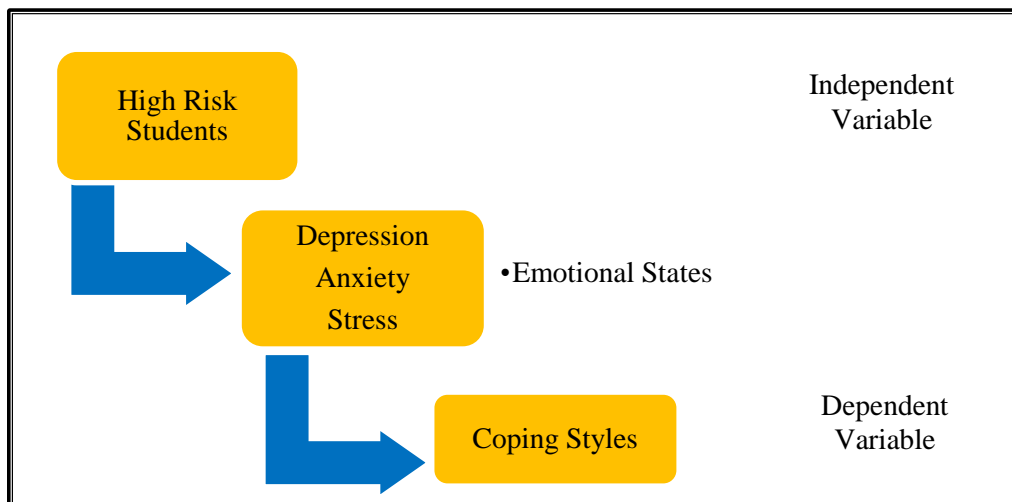
Descriptive analysis was used to determine the background of respondents such as gender, race, residence area, parental status, current status, age and classroom. In addition, descriptive analysis was used to answer the objectives of the first and second studies that look at the level of depression, anxiety, stress and level of coping styles among high risk students. Statistical analysis of inference was used to answer the hypothesis of the study established. Inference statistical analysis used is *Pearson r* correlation test to answer the third study objective to examine a relationship between emotional states and coping styles among high risk students. The interpretation of the correlation value of r correlation is based on Table 1.

Table 1: Classification of the Strong of Correlation

Correlation Index Value		Interpretation
0.01 to 0.09	or -0.01 to -0.09	Very Poor
0.10 to 0.29	or -0.10 to -0.29	Poor, Low
0.30 to 0.49	or -0.30 to -0.49	Moderate
0.50 to 0.69	or -0.50 to -0.69	High, Strong
0.70 to 0.99	or -0.70 to -0.99	Very Strong
1.00		Perfect
0.00		No Correlation

Source:Davies (1971)

Population and Sampling
The study was conducted at five secondary schools in Hilir Perak district, comprising SMK Dato Sagor, SMK Sultan Abdullah, SMK Seri Perak, SMK Seri Kandi and SMK Raja Muda Musa. The population were selected because the five schools were at risk in the context of substance abuse. The population of the study met all requirements of the study. In addition, the population of the study were selected because the respondents were consistent with the objectives of the study.

The sample consisted of Form One to Form Six students in five secondary schools in Hilir Perak district. The sampling method chosen was purposive sampling technique. This method was used because the respondent involved in this study were only for high risk students and not all students. The total number of study samples was 140 students consisting of various races, class and gender. In addition, the selection of sample studied was based on the information contained in the Ministry of Education Malaysia's in *Sistem Sahsiah Diri Murid* (SSDM).

Research Instruments
There are two instruments used in this study: (a) Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS 21), and (b) *Soal Selidik Gaya Data Tindak* (SSGDT). The DASS 21 is a credible and valid Malay version used to measure depression, anxiety and stress among students. According to Ramli Musa (2007), the DASS 21 has been translated into various languages including the Bahasa Malaysia version (BM) which has 21 items. DASS instruments have also been widely used throughout the world as an instrument for measuring psychological aspects. According to Ramli Musa (2007), the DASS instrument in the Malay version has gone for back to back translations and has received approval from the original DASS instrument developer, Peter Lovinbond. According on Ramli Musa (2007), the DASS instruments has undergone

a test and re-test process to determine the validity and reliability of the instrument in a Malaysian context.

The SSGDT is used to measure the level of students behaviour when facing depression, anxiety and stress; normal, mild, moderate, severe, or very severe. The 24 item SSGDT questionnaire has high validity scores because the questionnaire is mandatory for all counselling teachers across secondary schools in Malaysia to carry out the Healthy Mind Program with the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2014).

Overall, the set of questionnaires for this study covers Part A: Respondent Demographic Information which has 7 items. Part B: The DASS Questionnaire has 21 items to measure the level of depression, anxiety and stress. Each level of depression, anxiety and stress subscales is assessed through five levels (normal, mild, moderate, severe and extremely severe). Part C: SSGDT Questionnaire has 24 items to measure the level of respondents coping style when experiencing depression, anxiety and stress. All subscales are assessed through four stages of coping style as severe, mild, moderate and good.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Level of Emotional States among High Risk Students

Based on the data analysis, the mean score for depression level is 4.8, anxiety 5.4 and stress level is 6.7. Based on the DASS Instrument manual, the findings show that these high-risk students are having normal depression, mild level of anxiety and the stress levels are normal. The results for all the scores that describe the levels of depression, anxiety and stress are described in Table 2.

Table 2: Level of Depression, Anxiety and Stress among High Risk Students

Subscale / Domain	Mean	Interpretation	SD	N
Depression Level	4.8	Normal	3.8	140
Anxiety Level	5.4	Mild	3.3	140
Stress Level	6.7	Normal	3.3	140

Level of Coping Styles among High Risk Students

The data analysis show that the mean score level of coping style among high risk student is 69.8. Based on the SSGDT Instrument manual, the mean score illustrates that the level of coping styles among high risk student is lightweight. This means

students can handle the risk of depression, anxiety and stress with good coping style strategies. The results for all the scores that describe their coping styles is described in Table 3.

Table 3: Level of Coping Styles among High Risk Students

Mean	Interpretation	SD	N
69.8	Lightweight	16.5	140

Relationship between Emotional States and Coping Styles Among High Risk Students

Table 4 showed the relationship between emotional states and coping styles among high-risk students. The results of the *Pearson r* correlation test showed that there was a very weak relationship between depression and coping styles (r = .162, p > .055). Sig Value (2 tailed) was used to determine the significant statistic test *r*. This value is equal to .055 and it is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is rejected and the null hypothesis is accepted. This shows that there is no significant correlation between the level of depression and the coping styles. The results of this analysis also illustrate that a student population with a normal depression level is probably students that have good coping style strategies when they have depression.

Table 4: Correlation Coefficient Table between Level of Depression, Anxiety and Stress with Coping Style

Variables	Sig	Coping Style
Depression Level	.055	.162 **
Anxiety Level	.005	.234 **
Stress Level	.003	.252 **

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

For anxiety, the results indicate weak correlation between the level of anxiety and coping style (r = .234, p <.005). Sig Value (2 tailed) is used to determine the significant statistic test *r*. This value is equal to .005 and it is smaller than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This shows that there is a significant correlation between the level of anxiety and the coping style. The results illustrate that a student population with a mild anxiety

level is having good coping styles strategies when they face anxiety. For stress, the analysis indicate that there is a weak correlation between the level of stress and the coping style (r = .252, p <.003). Sig Value (2 tailed) is used to determine the significant statistic test *r*. This value is equal to .003 and it is smaller than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This shows that there is a significant correlation between stress and coping style. The results of the analysis also illustrate that students with normal stress levels are likely to have good coping styles skills when facing with stress.

The findings found that there are no correlation between the levels of depression in high risk students with the coping styles, while there are correlation between the levels of anxiety and stress among high risk student with the coping styles. This suggests that the level of anxiety and stress faced by high risk students is associated with each other. High or low levels of anxiety and stress faced by high risk students depend on the ability of the students to handle it.

In another context, the higher the level of anxiety and stress students score, the higher the risk that the coping styles used were not used efficiently in dealing with situations of high anxiety and stress. Conversely, the lower the levels of anxiety and stress that students score, better coping style are used by students when facing with a situation of anxiety and stress. Thus, good coping skills are necessary to be applied for students at risk. This fact supports the research done by Hall and Torres (2002) which states that students, especially students at risk, need to be taught skills and given social support particularly from parents, siblings, friends and relatives when facing with problems in their life to avoid behavioural issues.

The findings have several implications. For the Ministry of Education (MOE), the findings show the importance of preventative programs to apply to students' who are at a higher risk. Preliminary guidelines should be formulated by MOE to handle mental health cases such as depression, anxiety and stress in the event of a student. The Standard Operational Procedure (SOP) needs to be formulated as a precautionary measure of how the teachers act before, during and after a life-threatening event such as extreme stress and hysteria cases due to high emotional levels of depression, anxiety and pressure.

Also, parents should play a role in reducing the level of depression, stress and stress of at risk students. Although research findings do not show emotional states and families have a correlation, early prevention is still important. Parents need to have parenting skills when dealing with high risk students. Communication skills are important when interacting with them. Busy working schedule is not an excuse for not taking care of the welfare and attention of their children. Leisure should be used

as best as possible to engage in activities with children such as congregational prayers, mutual vacation, co-mutual living and recreation.

Government and non-governmental organizations can also play an important role in helping students' emotional health. They should contribute to schools by mobilizing preventive and mental health activities in schools. The New Blue Ocean Strategy (NBOS) approach needs to be expanded so that outsiders can work together to develop healthy student development. Community leaders also need to be together with the school to increase the discipline and personality development program for at risk students. Financial assistance should be channelled so that schools can mobilize leadership programs and self-esteem by focusing more on at risk students. Examples of programs can have a major impact includes leadership camps, self-esteem programs, campsites, career trips, parental visits, parenting seminars and stress management workshops.

CONCLUSION
This study was conducted to investigate the relationship between emotional states and coping styles among high risk students. Based on the findings, the level of depression, anxiety and stress-risk students are still in control. The level of depression is at the normal level, the level of anxiety at a mild level while stress levels are normal. The results of this study reflect that students at risk are not experiencing severe or very severe levels of depression, anxiety and stress that requires immediate intervention. The findings also showed that drug prevention programs in schools are showing positive results. However, these programs need to be established more consistently in schools to help students develop good coping skills when they go through bad phases in their lives as it could prevent illicit drug use.

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