

# Social Support and Psychological Well-Being among Delinquents in Rehabilitation Centers

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## Introduction

Psychological well-being is best defined as adolescents' sense of whether their life have purpose, either realizing their given potentials, the qualities of their ties to others or to feel in charge of their own lives (Ryff, 1989). Ryff proposed that it consists of the requirements of an individual to be psychologically well. Erikson (1982) viewed psychological well-being as equivalent to the characteristics of healthy personality. In this study respondents' psychological well-being refers to how respondents perceived their life living at the rehabilitation centers that is focusing on the altered feelings of these adolescents about themselves as a delinquent. The psychological well-being viewed into the combination of adolescents' (delinquents) feelings and other aspects of psychological functioning.

As an immature and growing adolescents facing conflicts in numerous developmental tasks, majority of them are unable to stand alone and needed support from their love ones from their ecological surroundings. According to Cobb (1976), social support refers to a thought upon others that one is being loved, esteemed and valued. It has become a mutual obligation and the domain of belonging has to be fulfilled. Good attachments with significant people such as parents, siblings, peers and teachers help adolescents to lead a happier life. The presence of an attachment figures is very important and contribute towards adjustment outcomes (Gullone & Robinson, 2005). However, some young people are considered irrational and irresponsible when it comes to adjustment and decision making. The inability to follow the normal route for transition from adolescence to adulthood drove some adolescents into the negative pathway. Hence, a few who slipped away from the normal route will diverge into delinquency. In this respect, this study was conducted with institutionalized delinquents due to the fact that they are subjected for premature entry into adulthood.

Therefore, in view of the above, the purposes of this paper is to examine the correlation between the level of perceived social support and the level of psychological well-being among delinquents living in rehabilitation centers in Malaysia.

## **Methods**

Six rehabilitation centres in Malaysia were randomly selected for this study. A quantitative and correlation research design was employed. A total of 240 delinquents aged 10 to 18, comprising of 113 males and 127 females, were surveyed using a structured questionnaire. Since most of the respondents do not know how to read or write, therefore face to face interview methods were employed. Enumerators from different races were employed to assist in the interview sessions.

To examine respondents' level of perceived social support and psychological well-being Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support or MSPSS (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988) and Affect Balance Scale (Bradburn, 1969) (revised short term assessment) were utilized. Affect Balance Scale were used to access the positive and negative affect of the psychological well-being model. Respondents are required to answer 'yes' or 'no' in accordance to all 10 statements which best defined their feelings for the past months. The summing score for these two aspects serves as the more potent indicator of well-being as compare to separated independent affect scale. Meanwhile, the level of social support was examined using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) which consists of 10 items, with seven response scales from '1= very strongly disagree' to '7= very strongly agree'. The MSPSS focuses on three main subscales which are family, friends and significant others.

All the collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package of the Social Science (SPSS) version 18.0. Both descriptive and inferential analyses were applied in this research. Pearson Correlation Test was used to examine the relationships between social support and psychological well-being.

## **Findings and Argument**

Descriptively, majority of the delinquents (129, 53.8%) were between the age of 14 to 16 years old. As shown in Table 1, 145 (60.4%) out of 240 delinquents reported that they received high level of social support from family, friends and significant others, followed by 39.6% (95) with

moderate level. The high level perceived social support reflected that the delinquents realize that they still have families and friends that they can rely on.

Table 1: Levels of Social Support among Delinquents (N=240)

Levels	Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)	
	n	%
Low ( $\leq 32$ )	10	4.2
Moderate (33-51)	95	39.6
High ( $\geq 52$ )	145	60.4

Meanwhile, finding in Table 2 showed that 40.4% (97) were reported to have a moderate levels of psychological well-being followed by 33.8% (81) with high level of psychological well-being. The positive results showed that the respondents viewed psychological well-being not as a pursuit of pleasure, but instead as a sense of good life and fulfilling one's own potential because it is an important predictor of one's trust and confidence (Dhar, Sen & Basu, 2010). However, about 10.8% (26) of the respondents in the present study that still felt that they are useless, especially when they were caught and sent to the rehabilitation centre.

Table 2: Levels Of Psychological- Being Among Delinquents

Levels	Affect Balance Scale (ABS)	
	n	%
Low ( $\leq 3$ )	26	10.8
Moderate (4-5)	97	40.4
High ( $\geq 6$ )	81	33.8

Table 3 below showed a correlation analysis carried out between social support and psychological well-being showed a significant result. Findings indicated an existence of positive significant relationship between social support and psychological well-being ( $r = .181^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Table 3: Relationship between Social Support and Psychological Well-Being

	Psychological Well Being (r)
Social Support	0.181**

Note: \* $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.01$

It is an undeniable fact that people tend to be happier if they feel accepted and loved by someone. Bradburn (1969) has reported that lavishly positive over negative affect is much related to greater happiness in individual's life and vice versa. It appears that, encouragement is vital for the delinquents to feel good about their fallacious life. Despite have chosen the wrong life path, they only crave for attention from significant others and simply feel good about it.

### Conclusions

The purpose of this presentation is to examine the relationship between social support and psychological well-being among delinquents in rehabilitation centers in Malaysia. Analyses proved that respondents have moderate level of psychological well-being and high level of perceived social support. Social support also was found to have positively significant correlation with psychological well-being. This study proved that with adequate social support and positive attachment with family and friends can assist in the development of a positive psychological well-being among the delinquents. The conducive and supporting rehabilitation environment are very important to ensure positive recuperating process.

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