

Malaysian Youth Perception Towards Management of Spirituality Programs in Malaysia

Selamah Maamor*

Islamic Business School, Economics Building, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

Abdullah Abd Ghani

Islamic Business School, Economics Building, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

Norazlina Abd Wahab

Islamic Business School, Economics Building, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

Ahmad Bashir Aziz

Islamic Business School, Economics Building, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

Mohd Shahril Ahmad Razimi

Islamic Business School, Economics Building, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

Nik Safiah Nik Abdullah

Islamic Business School, Economics Building, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

Nor Hanim Elias

Islamic Business School, Economics Building, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

Abstract

Spirituality Issues among youth should be concerned in order to secure good nation building in future. In relation to this, government as well as private sectors manages to setup various activities in order to develop and improve spirituality among youth. There are three categories of activities: education, training and program offered or managed by government and private sector. However, what is the Malaysian youth perception towards management of spirituality program conducted? Therefore, the objectives of this paper is to measure Malaysian youth perception towards management of spirituality program. The methodologies utilized in this research is quantitative methods to gather primary data through questionnaire. In this study, we employed stratified sampling technique and the respondents are Malaysian youth which age within 15 to 40 years. The data gathered from 4703 respondents analysed by using descriptive analysis, t-test and ANOVA. The findings show that the mean score for effectiveness of management level towards spirituality activities is 7.55 out of 10 points which imply there are room to be improved. There are ample opportunity to improve the management of spirituality activities, especially in terms of selecting professional facilitator or moderator who conduct the spirituality activities.

Keywords: Spirituality programs ; SPM/O Level ; t-test and Anova.



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1. Introduction

Understanding religion in contemporary society, and glimpse its future, we should focus our attention on the youths. Youths are the generation at the forefront of cultural and social change. It is their engagement with religion, religious ideas and institutions that tells us how resilient beliefs and practices are, whether faith has a future, and how religions adapt, transform and innovate in relation to wider social and cultural trends.

There are many verses in Al-Quran and Hadith mentioned about the importance of youth in developing a nation. For example, Allah says in the Quran:

“We relate to thee their story in truth: they were youths who believed in their Lord, and We advanced them in guidance. We gave strength to their hearts: Behold, they stood up and said: “Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and of the earth: never shall we call upon any god other than Him: if we did, we should indeed have uttered an enormity”. (Surah al-Kahfi, verses 13 to 14)

The Prophet said:

“There are seven whom Allah will shade in His Shade on the Day when there is no shade except His Shade: a just ruler; a youth who grew up in the worship of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic; a man whose heart is attached to the mosques; two men who love each other for Allah's sake, meeting for that and parting upon that; a man who is called by a woman of beauty and position [for illegal intercourse], but he says: ‘I fear Allah’, a man who gives in charity and hides it, such that his left hand does not know what his right hand gives in charity; and a man who remembered Allah in private and so his eyes shed tears”.

Historically, the words religious and spiritual have been used synonymously to describe all the various aspects of the concept of religion. Gradually, the word spiritual came to be associated with the private realm of thought and experience while the word religious came to be connected with the public realm of membership in a religious institution with official denominational doctrines. In the eastern context, spirituality is aimed at personal well-being and personal development. Spirituality can be sought not only through traditional organized religions, but also through movements such as liberalism, feminist theology, and green politics. Spirituality is also now associated with mental health, managing substance abuse, marital functioning, parenting, and coping. It has been suggested that spirituality also leads to finding purpose and meaning in life.

Related studies on spirituality have been done by various scholars such as MacDonald (2000), Nasel and Haynes (2005), (Farizah *et al.*, 2011; Hall and Livingston, 2006; Robbins and Francis, 2009); Hall R. E. *et al.* (2011), and Berry *et al.* (2011).

The terms spirituality and religion are often used interchangeably. Religion is the term used for formal or ritualized belief practices that are shared with a group of others. Spirituality has been described as broader than religion, a personal, individual value system about the way people approach life (Laukhuf and Werner, 1998), varying from person to person and changing throughout life, a personal quest for meaning and purpose. Labun (1988) connected spirituality with love, faith, hope, and trust, all of which are interpersonal relationships. The National Interfaith Coalition on Aging and most Western writing assumed a Judeo-Christian religious stance defining spiritual well-being as the affirmation of a life in a relationship with God, self, community and environment that nurtures and celebrates wholeness (Moberg, 1971).

With the dawn of a new century, spirituality has received increased coverage in the media and more discussion in the workplace, business/ entrepreneurs, leadership, training, education and in politics (Messikomer and De Craemer, 2002). Spirituality has also become more apparent in health care, with increasing evidence that spiritual factors are important components of health and well-being (Dossey, 2001). The need for health care providers to effectively address the connection between spirituality and health is becoming widely recognized as more people want the spiritual content to their health care. As the information age gives way to the intuition age and more people become spiritually centered, health care professionals will need to focus less on logical, linear, mechanical thinking, and more on creative, lateral and emotional thinking (Reynolds, 2001). This shift in focus will require the provision of care to encompass a more holistic perspective—one that attends to all aspects of the mind, body and spirit. As Burkhardt and Nagai-Jacobson (2002) so aptly writes in their books, *Spirituality*, “Spirituality is at the heart of caring for the whole person”. Yet the lack of a clear definition or a concise conceptual framework, coupled with limited opportunities for spiritual training and professional development of health care providers, has resulted in the neglect of this aspect of client care. For health care providers, this course will attempt to help fill that gap. For the non-healthcare student, the course will help provide an understanding of spirituality.

In Malaysian case, Imam *et al.* (2009) assess the magnitude of an association between measures of spiritual and psychological health in a sample of 358 undergraduate students of International Islamic University Malaysia. Spiritual well-being of the students were looked into two different angles i.e. existential well-being (life purpose, satisfaction and relations with the people and situations around us) and religious well-being (items contain the word Allah). The study found that there were high mean of spirituality among the students which maybe contributed by the overall Islamic scenario of the university. Surprisingly, only existential well-being predicted all the measures of psychological health i.e. self-efficacy, self-esteem and life satisfaction.

Many researches in Malaysia improved the social problem and sexual behaviour of students due to lack of spiritual practice. For example, as students do not pray, do not fast, do not act to remember Allah swt such as chanting, berwirid, reflect upon themselves and do not want to get closer to Allah Reviews show that the problem of discipline among the students is due to the lack of knowledge and spiritual practices among them.

Issues among youth should be concerned in order to secure good nation building in future. In relation to this, government as well as private sectors manages to setup various activities in order to develop and improve spirituality among youth. There are three categories of activities: education, training and program offered or managed by government and private sector. However, what is the Malaysian youth perception towards management of spirituality program conducted? Therefore, the objectives of this paper is to measure Malaysian youth perception towards management of spirituality program.

2. Methods

The data for this study obtained through questionnaires distributed to all respondents who are Malaysian youth aged 18 to 40 years. A total of 4703 questionnaires were distributed to whole Malaysia. The questionnaires were divided into three parts which in section A the questionnaires is about the respondent's background, Sections B is about youth perception towards spirituality activities and Section C is consists of their views and recommendation towards the study. In Part B, the respondents were required to select each of the statement in Likert-Scale format that ranging from 1 to 10 where 1 is 'Strongly Disagree' and 10 is 'Strongly Agree'.

In this study, Cronbach's alpha used to test reliability of the research instruments. Furthermore, we also used factor analysis to confirm the construct validity of the scales through the principal component analysis. These result confirm that the instruments used in this study is valid and reliable. The data gathered from 4703 respondents analysed by using descriptive analysis, t-test, Anova and cross tabulation.

3. Results and Findings

The discussion on the respondents' background can be divided into three category which are general (Table 1a), religious (Table 1b) and education (Table 1c). In term of general category, it includes sex, age, ethnic and marital status. As can be referred in the Table 1a, most of the respondents are male (55.6%), 20-25 years (30%), Malay (71.6%) and Single (58%). This analysis is reflect the real situation of Malaysian youth population.

The second background is related to respondents' religious. As we aware, in Malaysia there 4 biggest type of religious that their population involved in. The highest in this study is Islam (77.6%), most of them started learn about religious when they in age below 5 years old, however they started praying in age 5-10 years old. It shows that this is normal for them to learn anything related to their own religion starting age below 5 and they seriously learn about their own religion starting year 6 to 10 when they know which is right or wrong (mumayyiz).

While in term of education background, most of the respondents are achieved SPM/O Level (76.2%) in the category of highest education level at school. While for secondary category, most of the respondents have been attended national school (87.7%) and their type of school mostly is daily (71.8%). When asking whether they actively involved in co-curriculum activities, most of the respondent say yes (70.1%). In term of highest education level at IPT, most of them hold diploma (87.7%). These background can be simplify that the respondents which are youth are having moderate level of education.

Table-1a. Background of the Respondents - General

Item	Sub-item	Valid Percent
Sex	Male	55.6
	Female	44.4
Age	15 – 20 years	21.3
	21 – 25 years	30.0
	26 – 30 years	19.5
	31 – 35 years	13.7
	36 – 40 years	15.4
Ethnic	Malay	71.6
	Chinese	12.1
	Indian	7.0
	Others	9.4
Marital Status	Single	58.0
	Married	39.8
	Divorced	1.6
	Widow/ Widower	0.6

Table-1b. Background of the Respondents – Religious

Item	Sub-item	Valid Percent
Religious	Islam	77.6
	Buddhism	10.3
	Hinduism	6.1
	Christianity	5.4
	Others	0.7
Age started learn about religious	1 - 5 years old	51.6
	6 - 10 years old	37.1
	11 - 15 years old	3.3
	16 - 20 years old	0.6
	More than 20 years old	0.2
Age started pray/ solat	1 - 5 years old	21.5
	6 - 10 years old	61.7
	11 - 15 years old	7.9
	16 - 20 years old	1.3
	More than 20 years old	0.5

Table-1c. Background of the Respondents – Education

Item	Sub-item	Valid Percent
Highest Academic Qualification at School	Below UPSR	0.8
	UPSR	1.6
	PMR/ SRP	4.6
	SPM/ O LEVEL	76.2
	STPM/ A LEVEL	16.8
Secondary School	National School	87.7
	Chinese Private School	2.7
	Religious School	5.8

	Others	3.8
Type of Secondary School	Boarding School	8.0
	Daily and Boarding	20.2
	Daily	71.8
Actively involved in co-curriculum activities	Yes	70.1
	No	29.9
Highest Academic Qualification	Diploma	87.7
	Bachelor	2.7
	Master	5.8
	PhD	3.8

The results show that the mean score for effectiveness of management level towards spirituality activities is 7.55 out of 10 points. As referred to Table 2, the highest mean for the item on effectiveness of management level is 7.68 which is item 'I think spirituality activities that I involved in is very effective to me'. Its shows that the level of the effectiveness of the spirituality program is really effective to the respondents based on their opinion. However, based on this result, there are still have room to improve on the management side in managing the spirituality program especially for youth.

Table-2.Mean of Effectiveness of Management Level

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.
I always involve with spirituality activities (example like religious lecture)	7.35	1.90
In my opinion, the moderator which moderate the spirituality activity is suitable.	7.56	1.83
I am satisfied with the spirituality program that I involved in.	7.62	1.80
I think spirituality activities that I involved in is very effective to me.	7.68	1.84
Overall	7.55	1.64
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.839		
Cronbach's Alpha = 0.910		

There are significant differences based on demographic factors which can be categorised in three main category – general, religion background and education as shown in Table 3a, Table 3b and Table 3c. In term of demographic factors in general category, ethnic and religion are significant different towards the management level of spiritual activities among Malaysian youth. It is similar to demographic factors in term of religion which include three (3) item, all of the items are significant differences towards the management level of spiritual activities among Malaysian youth. However, for education background category, only 2 out of 3 item which are type of secondary school and highest academic qualification are significant differences towards the management level of spiritual activities among Malaysian youth.

Table-3a.Significant Differences based on Demographic Factors – General

Item	Sub-item	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
Gender	Male	7.512	1.668	-1.980	.048
	Female	7.607	1.595		
Ethnic	Malay	7.682	1.513	34.484	.000
	Chinese	6.959	1.893		
	Indian	7.352	1.822		
	Others	7.485	1.844		

Table-3b.Significant Differences based on Demographic Factors - Religion

Item	Sub-item	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
Religion	Islam	7.673	1.524	34.427	.000
	Buddhist	6.874	1.926		
	Hindu	7.286	1.867		
	Christian	7.599	1.690		
	Others	6.189	2.818		
Age started learn about religious	1 - 5 years old	7.681	1.563	14.706	.000
	6 - 10 years old	7.462	1.666		
	11 - 15 years old	6.797	1.453		
	16 - 20 years old	6.310	1.853		
	More than 20 years old	6.600	1.997		
Age started pray/solat	1 - 5 years old	7.692	.0499	12.961	.000
	6 - 10 years old	7.594	.029		
	11 - 15 years old	7.126	.084		
	16 - 20 years old	6.701	.248		

	More than 20 years old	7.423	.518		
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Table-3c. Significant Differences based on Demographic Factors – Education

Item	Sub-item	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
Highest Academic Qualification at School	Below UPSR	7.429	1.757	1.530	.191
	UPSR	7.168	2.154		
	PMR/ SRP	7.426	1.744		
	SPM/ O LEVEL	7.568	1.631		
	STPM/ A LEVEL	7.562	1.562		
Type of Secondary School	National School	7.540	1.626	4.169	.006
	Chinese Private School	7.707	1.816		
	Religious School	7.827	1.495		
	Others	7.325	1.882		
Highest Academic Qualification	Diploma	7.623	1.579	6.023	.000
	Bachelor	7.425	1.645		
	Master	7.892	1.364		
	PhD	7.968	1.823		

Based on Table 3a, Table 3b and Table 3c above indicates that youth opinion on management level of spirituality activities from female (7.61) is higher than male (7.51). In term of ethnic, Malay has the highest mean score (7.68). Meanwhile, in term of religion perspective, youth opinion toward management level of spirituality activities has significant difference among this category where Islam is the highest (7.67). In term of category for age started learn about religious and age started pray, the highest is category of age between 1 to 5 years (7.68 and 7.69 respectively). In term of education background, the highest mean score in the category of secondary school is religious school (7.83), while for highest academic qualification category is PhD (7.97).

4. Conclusions, Implications and Significance

Based on the above discussion, the researchers understand that there are ample opportunity to improve the management of spirituality activities, especially in terms of selecting professional facilitator or moderator who conduct the spirituality activities. Based on the research findings, it is suggested that the expert and professional officers to remain in one place even if they are being promoted so that their expertise can be utilized.

On top of that, budget is always become an issue. Therefore, to be successfully managed, any related spirituality program budget must be enough. In order to ensure all spirituality programs are successful, the related policy must be consistent, which means no changes of policy within a short period of time. Other than that, it is noted that the spirituality program should not only focus on problematic participants, but it should also be involved by all the participants. This is to avoid prejudice among the participants. With reference to the above findings, the government should fully accommodate and concern their media channel to promote and embark spirituality activities.

Our survey shows that Malaysian youth are in need of spiritual program. They realize that spiritual program have good impact on themselves. Furthermore, the result shows that Malaysian youth agree that spirituality is important in enabling them to contribute in strengthening the nation building.

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