



# PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM 2021

On an Unchanging Mission: Reaching out to the Turbulent World

MARCH 6, 2021 (SAT)  
SUNWAY UNIVERSITY,  
MALAYSIA

## ABSTRACT BOOK

ORGANISED BY

DEPARTMENT OF  
PSYCHOLOGY

# Acknowledgements

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The Psychology Research Symposium 2021 was held on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2021 in Sunway University, Bandar Sunway, Selangor, Malaysia. There were plenary sessions, and two concurrent oral sessions as well as poster presentations during the symposium.

## Foreword

The Psychology Research Symposium 2021 was organised by the Department of Psychology, Sunway University with the intention to share current knowledge and research findings by our students and staff in the field of psychology. The current COVID-19 pandemic has substantially reduced conference/symposium opportunities and as a consequence, hindered the much-needed intellectual platform. As a result, we organised this online symposium with hopes that we can foster and encourage multi-disciplinary discussion and research collaboration for our psychology community. The scope covered multiple themes ranging from clinical, cognitive, developmental, social, community, cross-cultural and educational psychology. We also included a new theme; COVID-19 related topics to address the psychological effects of the pandemic situation in Malaysia.

It is our belief that the knowledge gained in this symposium would be immensely useful in addressing multiple behavioural and physiological facets in our society and community. As this symposium also had general public viewers, we hoped that the knowledge and information would be useful for themselves and implemented for future research ideas and collaborations.

Assoc Prof Dr Yong Min Hooi, Assoc Prof Dr Lin Mei-Hua, Dr Wo Su Woan,  
Dr Lee Ai-Suan  
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# Keynote Speaker

## PSYCHO-SOCIAL EFFECTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**Author:** Low Wah Yun, PhD

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COVID-19 pandemic and its preventive measures have had devastating effects on people's everyday lives. Malaysia reported its first three cases of COVID-19 on 25 January 2020 and in 18th March 2020, a national Movement Control Order (MCO) was implemented to prevent its spread. This mandatory MCO resulted in confinement, separation of families and friends, fear of infection, stigma, restriction of personal freedom, losses (job, income, health, etc), uncertainty of the future and all these contribute to psychological distress, parenting practices, spouses' relationships and interpersonal violence. This lecture will present findings from an international online survey examining the psychological status, parenting practices, relationship, boredom, interpersonal violence, and well-being of 543 participants by comparing their scores before and during the COVID-19 MCO. The results showed that over half the respondents (58.3%) experienced some form of anxiety: mild (25.2%), moderate (13.6%) and severe (19.5%) anxiety. Relationship quality was negatively associated with having children and spousal violence. During MCO, participants' well-being worsened, more anxious, more bored and lonely. However, relationship, violence, and parenting practices did not show any significant difference before and during MCO. The pandemic has impacted the psycho-social well-being and thus new strategies and interventions are needed to improve resilience and cope with mental health issues during the pandemic.

# Plenary Speaker

## EFFECT OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ON ATTENTION, COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY AND WORKING MEMORY

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**Affiliation(s):** <sup>1</sup>Sunway University, Malaysia

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**Purpose:** To examine the effect of physical activity (PA) on executive function (EF) over time during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Methodology:** We recruited 105 respondents (Mage = 25.79, SD = 3.99). They completed a set of questionnaires before EF tasks either by phone or online platforms as baseline (Time 1). They recorded their daily PA for 14 days in a diary. After 14 days, they completed similar questionnaires and EF tasks (Time 2), and again one month after the 14 days (Time 3).

**Results:** Our results showed that high and moderate PA group had higher attention and working memory (WM) accuracy and better performance in task-based cognitive flexibility (CF) task compared to low PA group. Both groups showed improvement in attention and WM in Time 2 compared to baseline and maintained their performance in Time 3. The low PA group showed significant decline in attention in Time 3 compared to baseline, and this EF decline could not be explained by stress, mood and perceived social isolation.

**Limitations:** Most of our participants are Chinese (86.7%), hence generalizations to the Malaysian demographic should be made with caution. Other factors e.g. sleep and social activities were not studied in this study and it may have an effect on EF.

**Implications:** Our findings highlighted the importance of staying physically active during the COVID19 pandemic to maintain high levels of EF.

**Research Impact:** Current study added new knowledge related to sustainability effect of PA on EF and included a more objective form of measuring exercise virtually

## PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH OF OLDER ADULTS: RECENT FINDINGS IN AUSTRALIA AND MALAYSIA

**Author:** Yvonne Leung, PhD<sup>1,2</sup>

**Affiliation(s):** <sup>1</sup> University of Nottingham Malaysia

<sup>2</sup> Centre for Healthy Brain Ageing, UNSW

**Abstract:** Rapid population ageing is a significant challenge faced by both developed and developing countries. Currently, there were 703 million individuals aged 65 or over worldwide and this number is predicted to double by 2050 (United Nations, 2019). To achieve successful ageing, maintaining both physical and psychological health are essential, and there are no better representatives than those who had outlived most people in their birth cohorts, the super-agers /oldest-old (aged 95+). In this talk, I will give an overview of research on the psychological health of the oldest-old. I will also share our recent findings on the psychological health of older adults in Australia and Malaysia, where we compared levels of psychological distress and life satisfaction between the oldest-old and 'young olds' (aged between 70-90) in Australia, and identified factors associated with distress, depressive symptoms and life satisfaction among older adults in Australia and Malaysia.

Our recent findings suggest that the oldest-old showed significantly higher level of psychological distress than the young olds. Social support plays a significant role in preventing distress and improving life satisfaction in both older Australians and Malaysians after controlling for sociodemographic and physical health factors. More specifically, having the feeling of being loved and cared for from contacts with their friends and relatives has a significant impact on their life satisfaction.

While more representative, population-based data is required to better understand the wellbeing of older adults, the identification of risk factors for lower life satisfaction, psychological distress and depression in the elderly could offer opportunities for intervention and public awareness.

# Covid-19 related Topics

## AGE DIFFERENCE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS THAT PREDICT ADOPTION RATE OF PROTECTIVE MEASURES FOR COVID-19 IN MALAYSIA

**Author(s):** Brenda Chow Gynn, Grace Yap Chin Choo

**Affiliation:** Sunway University, Malaysia

**Purpose:** COVID-19 pandemic has threatened the livelihood of more than 140,000 individuals in Malaysia. Adoption of protective measures such as social distancing, wearing face masks, and increasing hygiene levels, are most crucial to contain the disease among general public. This study answered two research questions; what psychological factors are associated with the adoption of protective measures; and, is there an age difference in adoption of protective measures for COVID-19 in Malaysia.

**Methodology:** 310 individuals between 18 and 65 years old ( $M=31$ ) who stayed in Malaysia during the 2020 Movement Control Order, were recruited to answer an online survey assessing their perceived severity, perceived vulnerability, perceived self-efficacy of adopting protective measures and perceived anxiety and number of protective measures adopted against COVID-19. One-way ANOVA and standard multiple regression were conducted to analyse the data.

**Results:** Perceived self-efficacy of adopting protective measures and perceived anxiety were significant predictors of adoption of protective measures while perceived severity and perceived vulnerability were not. Older adult group ( $\geq 37$  years) was found to adopt significantly more protective measures as compared to younger adult groups.

**Limitations:** The results were collected from the end of July to September, possibly affecting participants' perceived severity, vulnerability and anxiety towards COVID-19, as the number of COVID-19 cases were decreasing.

**Implications:** This study provides insight on psychological factors that affect adoption of protective measures in Malaysia during COVID-19, which could be influenced through intervention to increase adoption of protective measures. The results also increase understanding on age differences on adoption of preventive measures in response to COVID-19.

**Research Impact:** The relevant authorities can utilise results from this study to create more relevant interventions and target them more towards the younger population, to promote adoption of protective behaviours against COVID-19 in Malaysia.



## DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES IN CABIN FEVER

**Author:** Chin Wen Cong

**Affiliation:** Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia

**Purpose:** The study aimed to examine how differences in demographic variables (i.e., age, employment status, and gender) can influence cabin fever among Malaysian adults.

**Methodology:** A total of 124 adults (75% females) aged 19-57 years old ( $M = 29.3$  years) in Malaysia completed the online survey while staying at home during the Movement Control Order. Differences in the level of cabin fever by age, employment status, and gender were compared by running independent sample t-test analyses.

**Results:** Youths (19-24 years) suffered with more behavioural symptoms of cabin fever compared to adults with the age range of 25-57 years old. Besides that, unemployed adults exhibited a significantly higher level of cabin fever compared to employed adults. However, no significant difference was found in cabin fever for males and females.

**Limitations:** The study only discovered the demographic variables of cabin fever but did not investigate the protective or risk factors that are related to the symptoms of cabin fever. Also, the study only included adults without any children and elderly samples.

**Implications:** Demographic variables such as age and employment status can influence cabin fever among Malaysian adults. Thus, the psychological well-being of the high-risk groups (i.e., young and unemployed adults) should be considered when they are required to stay at home for a lengthy period.

**Research Impact:** Policymakers may benefit from this study. When imposing the Movement Control Order, it is important to address the psychological well-being of young and unemployed adults.

# PERCEIVED STRESS, AVOIDANT COPING, HOPELESSNESS, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**Author(s):** Rafah Mohamed, Ruhaya Hussin

**Affiliation:** International Islamic University, Malaysia

**Purpose:** This study aims to examine the relationships between perceived stress, avoidant coping, hopelessness, and psychological distress among undergraduate students in Malaysia during COVID-19 pandemic.

**Methodology:** A cross-sectional survey was employed, and 113 participants were recruited via purposive sampling. Undergraduate students who were active during the pandemic from International Islamic University Malaysia (48.7%), Sunway University (10.6%), Taylor's university (8.8%), and other Malaysian universities were approached while those diagnosed with any psychological disorder by trained professionals as stated in the DSM-5 were excluded from the study. The variables were measured using Perceived stress scale, Brief approach/avoidance coping questionnaire, Beck's hopelessness scale, and General health questionnaire.

**Results:** Results indicated that perceived stress, avoidant coping, and hopelessness were positively correlated with psychological distress.

**Limitations:** As this was a cross-sectional survey, causality with the pandemic cannot be established. As different universities responded differently to the pandemic it could have influenced the strength of the relationship between variables, for example, IIUM began ERTL after a three-month break, whereas Taylor's University a two-week break.

**Implications:** Future research can examine whether perceived stress, avoidant coping, and hopelessness, may predict psychological distress longitudinally in this population. Support system developers can pilot test possible psychosocial interventions addressing stress, avoidant coping, and hopelessness to decrease the psychological distress for this population.

**Research Impact:** This study adds to the knowledge on university students' psychological health during the pandemic and aid in improving and developing universities' support systems for the students and for future reference in counselling services centres handling undergraduate students.

# PERSONALITY AS A MEDIATOR IN THE RELATIONSHIP OF SELF-PERCEPTION AND MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNG ADULTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

**Author(s):** Samia J. Khalifa, Amira N. Yahaya, Mimi Fitriana Zaini

**Affiliation(s):** International University of Malaya-Wales, University of Malaya, Malaysia

**Purpose:** The aim of this study was to examine how personality can act as a mediating impact on one's self-perception and then how it would rate their mental health under or the stressors and uncertainties of life. This study also explored how negative mental health can manifest itself during pandemics among young adults.

**Methodology:** The Big Five Inventory (BFI), Self-Perception Profile for College students, and the Mental Well Being Scale (WEMWBS) were used as questionnaires and were distributed online to 209 students in Malaysia.

**Results:** Results have shown that there is a significant relationship between all the study variables including all 5 personality types.

**Limitations:** The demographic location and sample size can't be generalized to all countries. **Implications:** The results have proven how personality, self-perception and mental health are significantly related to each other. This can serve as a great body of knowledge especially for mental health professions as a guide to deal with clients during this pandemic.

**Research Impact:** Since the results have shown significant results between personality, mental health and self-perception; this can potentially act like a guide for higher authorities makers and professional health practitioners to develop a better understanding toward how personalities can play a major role in our life, thus handling the situation more effectively.

# THE MEDIATING ROLE OF RELIGIOSITY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNET PORNOGRAPHY USE AND DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS AMONG YOUNG ADULTS DURING COVID-19

**Author(s):** Enas S. Ahmed <sup>1</sup>, Amira N. Yahya <sup>2</sup>, Mimi Fitriana Zaini <sup>3</sup>

**Affiliation(s):** <sup>1</sup>UCSI University, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup> University of Malaya, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup> International University of Malaya-Wales, Malaysia

**Purpose:** This study investigates the mediating role of religiosity on the relationship between internet pornography use and depressive symptoms, targeting young adults amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Methodology:** We distributed the Problematic Pornography Consumption Scale (PPCS18), Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale (SDS) and the Arabic Scale of Intrinsic Religiosity (ASIR) through convenience sampling among 300 students in public and private universities in Malaysia. We then analysed the data through Exploratory, Descriptive, Pearson's correlation, T-test, and Process analysis.

**Results:** Results of the study found that there is a positive correlation between internet pornography use and depressive symptoms and a positive relationship between religiosity and depressive symptoms. However, the study could not find a significant relationship between internet pornography use and religiosity. Additionally, males were found to have significantly higher levels of internet pornography use than females. Lastly, religiosity had no mediating role on the relationship between internet pornography use and depressive symptoms.

**Limitations:** The inability to accurately generalize the findings of the study to a wider population as majority of the respondents were Muslim, and participants were recruited in two states in Malaysia only. Using convenience sampling also limited the generalizability.

**Implications:** The findings of this study provide additional knowledge for future researchers investigating the addictive behaviour in young adults amidst global pandemics and mental health issues.

**Research Impact:** This study adds in for future investigation on internet pornography use amidst pandemic timeframes to compare the usage with pandemic free timelines.

# EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

## TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PERCEPTION OF IMPORTANT FACTORS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA

**Author(s):** Chow Shze Loon, Wo Su Woan

**Affiliation(s):** Sunway University, Malaysia

**Purpose:** 1. To find out the knowledge, attitude and perception of inclusive education among teachers in Malaysia. 2. To find out the differences that may arise in teachers' attitude towards inclusive education based on differences in teaching level. 3. To explore the challenges faced by teachers who has one or more children with special education needs in a regular class setting.

**Methodology:** A descriptive quantitative approach was employed with the inclusion of open-ended questions to obtain further clarification. Teachers' Attitude Towards Inclusion Scale (TAIS), Teacher Perception of Factors for Successful Inclusive Early Childhood Education (TPSIE), and a selfdeveloped questionnaire were used to gather data for teacher's attitudes, their perception of successful inclusive education, and their knowledge on inclusive education respectively. Data was collected from 40 preschool and 40 primary school teachers.

**Results:** Results were not significant for all statistical tests, implying that age, working experience, and teaching level had no impact on teachers' attitude and perception towards inclusive education. Among the participants, less than half of them were familiar with the term 'inclusive education', and about 40% of participants were able to elaborate on questions pertaining to their knowledge of inclusive education.

**Limitations:** Sample size is too small, and both scales used in this study were relatively new. Therefore, results should be approached with caution due to the recent introduction of both scales to the literature base.

**Implications:** The findings generated discussion on how to overcome various issues in inclusive education, such as further training for teachers and communication between school administration and parents for students to obtain a better adjustment to the school environment. This research implied the need to conduct larger confirmatory studies in a national context and further exploration of more statistical relationships within different variables, as the results showed that over half of the participants held no understanding towards inclusive education.

**Research Impact:** This study has provided a comprehensive overview of the important aspects surrounding inclusive education, in a national context. By exploring the thoughts of Malaysian teachers towards inclusive education, it is vital that all stakeholders identify and implement pragmatic strategies such as more intensive training for teachers for them to feel competent while dealing with special needs students.

# THE INFLUENCE OF COMPREHENSION IN TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET) ON ADOLESCENTS' CAREER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SELF-EFFICACY

**Author(s):** Benjamin Looi Tink Wei <sup>1</sup>, Mimi Fitriana Zaini <sup>2</sup>, Siau Ching Sin <sup>3</sup>, Mansour Amini <sup>1</sup>, Lee Kam Fong <sup>1</sup>

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**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to identify whether TVET as an external factor has an impact on adolescents' career development through self-efficacy as an internal factor. This study also examined the relationship between students' understanding and experience in TVET, career development and self-efficacy among adolescents in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia.

**Methodology:** A total of 187 students in an international school, aged 15-17 years old, was recruited using convenience sampling.

**Results:** The results revealed a significant relationship between technical education and general self-efficacy as well as a significant correlation between vocational education and childhood career development. The study also found that vocational education and general self-efficacy were significantly associated. Regression analysis revealed that only vocational education and general self-efficacy had a statistically significant effect on career development. However, technical education and gender as predictors, showed no significant effect on career development and self-efficacy.

**Limitations:** The current research was limited in the opportunity of visiting a few schools implementing TVET education due to restricted movement during pandemic (MCO), affecting the sample size. Besides, English version of the instruments limited some students' ability in understanding English version of the provided scales.

**Implications:** The current research implied significant development of TVET model to help improve in the training and teaching quality among TVET teachers as well as in learning strategies among students and their specific career guidance.

**Research Impact:** The current research provided insights to improve TVET in line with the government of Malaysia to focus on integrating TVET in education and to further develop students' learning career development.

# Cognitive Psychology

## EFFECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL NOISE ON READING COMPREHENSION PERFORMANCE

**Author(s):** Atuleisha Thapa, Yvonne Leung

**Affiliation:** University of Nottingham Malaysia

**Purpose:** Task-irrelevant background speech can disrupt performance in complex cognitive tasks like reading comprehension (Knez & Hygge, 2002). Considering factors like background speech semanticity (Marsh et al., 2008), speech intelligibility (Hongisto, 2005), and task difficulty (Halin et al., 2014), this study investigated the effects of background speech in realistic noise environments on 'easy' and 'hard' reading comprehension performance. Task performance was hypothesized to decrease with increasing speech intelligibility and semanticity due to increasing cognitive demand in 'easy task' only, but not in 'hard task' whose complexity could elicit focal task engagement, thereby attenuating speech effects.

**Methodology:** Thirty-six undergraduate students performed 'easy' and 'hard' reading comprehension on a computer under five realistic background noise conditions (in decreasing speech intelligibility and semanticity): 'speech only', 'speech masked with library noise', 'speech masked with outdoor noise', and 'speech masked with café noise', with non-speech 'operational/air-conditioning noise' (control).

**Results:** Consistent with our hypothesis, results showed that reading comprehension performance decreased as speech intelligibility and semanticity increased, in 'easy task' only. In the more complex 'hard task', no significant differences in performance were found across background noise conditions.

**Limitations:** Only two task difficulty levels were used. Individual differences in English language proficiency were not controlled for.

**Implications:** Our findings implied that task-irrelevant background speech disrupts easy reading comprehension due to high cognitive demand but not harder reading comprehension that elicits focal task engagement.

**Research Impact:** This research contributed to the existing knowledge on auditory distraction. The results are generalizable to real-life work/study settings due to the ecologically valid stimuli.

# SENSITIVITY TO AUDITORY PERCEPTUAL CUES: UNIVERSAL OR LANGUAGE-SPECIFIC?

**Author(s):** Liyana Faisal, Christine Leong

**Affiliation:** University of Nottingham Malaysia

**Purpose:** Kelantan Malay (KM) has an unusual presence of word-initial phonemic contrasts: singleton and geminate consonants. Extending from a previous study that tested native KM speakers, Kelantan Chinese (KC) non-speakers, and non-Kelantanese (NK) Malay non-speakers, we investigated whether exposure to this phonemic contrast would help preserve discrimination sensitivity to it in a new language. The effects of language exposure on the retention of phonemic contrast discrimination sensitivity were also examined.

**Methodology:** 16 Arabic native speakers (Exposure Group; EG) and 16 Malaysian Chinese native speakers (No-Exposure Group; NG) were examined by measuring their discrimination accuracy percentage (%) of the KM singleton and geminate consonants. The participants listened to two consecutive auditory stimuli (e.g., /tido/ and /ttido/) and had to decide whether the pair they heard were the same or different.

**Results:** EG performed better than NG. When compared across all 5 groups (KM, KC, NK, EG, NG), NG performed the worst. EG and NG performed worse than native KM speakers.

**Limitations:** Knowledge of other languages may have influenced performance for EG and NG. Factors like phonemic contrast position and context difference must be considered in future replications.

**Implications:** Although EG and NG could discriminate against the phonemic contrast, their performance was poorer as compared to the other groups. These results imply that there is an effect of language exposure on the retention of phonemic contrast discrimination sensitivity. Hence, it can be concluded that sensitivity to auditory perceptual cues are more language-specific than universal.

**Research Impact:** This research could explain the difficulty in learning and perceiving a nonnative/second language.



# THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN EMPATHY AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AMONG MALAYSIAN YOUTHS: EMOTION REGULATION AS THE MEDIATOR

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**Purpose:** Recent studies revealed increasing youth involvement in antisocial behaviours as the sign of decrease in prosocial tendencies. Past studies found contradicting correlations between cognitive empathy (CE) and affective empathy (AE) with prosocial behaviour (PB). Therefore, the current study investigated the role of emotion regulation, including cognitive reappraisal (CR) and emotion suppression (ES), to mediate associations between these variables.

**Methodology:** 204 Malaysian participants within the age range of 15 to 24 (76 males and 128 females; mean age 20.34, SD = 2.24) were recruited through convenience sampling. The study utilized Questionnaire of Cognitive and Affective Empathy, Prosocial Tendencies Measured-Revised and Emotion Regulation Questionnaire.

**Results:** Bivariate analysis showed CE and AE had significant positive correlations with PB. CE showed significant positive associations with ES and CR whereas AE showed non-significant positive correlations with ES and CR. Regression analysis revealed ES and CR partially mediate the relationship between CE and PB. For AE, CR partially mediates it, whereas ES does not.

**Limitations:** Past research showed cultural differences on emotional regulation between different Asian countries, thus results are likely ungeneralizable outside Malaysian culture. Accuracy of study is reliant on honesty of participants; self-report bias may occur.

**Implications:** Results suggest emotion regulation, especially cognitive reappraisal, influences how Malaysian youths experience empathy and express prosocial behaviour. High empathy may show higher prosocial tendencies when youths regulate emotions with strategies.

**Research Impact:** Possible approaches that family and society can take to cultivate a prosocial culture among Malaysian youths is by educating youth on emotional regulation strategies.

# Developmental Psychology

## CORPORAL PUNISHMENT EXPERIENCE, APPROACH-AVOIDANCE TEMPERAMENTS AND PARENTING STYLES ON PARENT-CHILD CLOSENESS IN MALAYSIA

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**Affiliation(s):** Sunway University, Malaysia

**Purpose:** The objectives were to investigate the relationships between corporal punishment experience, approach-avoidance temperaments, parenting styles, and parent-child closeness; raise awareness and provide findings based in Malaysian context.

**Methodology:** Participants were 201 Malaysian undergraduates from different universities, age ranging from 18 to 25 years old. Participants completed an online survey that included a demographic questionnaire, Corporal Punishment Measure, Parental Authority Questionnaire--Modified Version, Approach-Avoidance Temperament Questionnaire and Parental Closeness Measure.

**Results:** Findings indicated that there was a significant negative relationship between corporal punishment and parent-child closeness. Individuals with approach temperament had higher parent-child closeness than individuals with avoidance temperament. Also, authoritative parenting and authoritarian parenting predicted parent-child closeness, where authoritative parenting has larger effect than authoritarian parenting.

**Limitations:** The use of referent age of 13 in the Corporal Punishment Measure. There is a possibility of the reduction on corporal punishment on children after the age of 12. And, the inability to remember past experiences was also one of the limitation.

**Implications:** The importance of understanding the effect of corporal punishment and types of parenting styles on parent-child closeness. Parents should treat each of their children as unique individuals that have different temperaments. It is pivotal that Malaysian population begin to evolve from what they deemed as culture to something that is less damaging and more beneficial.

**Research Impact:** Mostly on the Malaysian's population, especially, parents. It could also be generalized to other Asian countries due to the fact that Malaysia is a multicultural country.

# Personality Psychology

## COLD HEARTS PLAYING WITH FIRE: DARK TRIAD, RISK-TAKING AND EMPATHY

**Author(s):** Yap Jia Ying, Eliza Berezina

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**Purpose:** The Dark Triad personalities have been well studied, however, it is not often linked with empathy and risk-taking intentions. The present study aims to address this gap by examining the association between the Dark Triad personality traits, empathy and risk-taking intentions in the five domains – ethical, financial, health/safety, social, and recreational.

**Methodology:** A sample of 160 young adults residing in Malaysia (M=69, F=99, Mage=22.01, SD=2.03) completed the Short Dark Triad Questionnaire, Empathy Scale, and Domain-Specific Risk-Taking Scale through an online survey.

**Results:** Machiavellianism and Psychopathy were positively associated with the five domains of risk-taking, including social, ethical, financial, recreational and health/safety domains, and negatively associated with empathy. Narcissism, on the contrary, was positively correlated to all risk-taking domains except for recreational risk-taking, and showed no significant relationship to empathy. Empathy was a significant predictor in social risk-taking whereas Machiavellianism and Psychopathy were significant predictors in ethical risk-taking intentions.

**Limitations:** The Dark Triad traits were studied as unidimensional attributes; hence, lower order facets of the Dark Triad traits, such as primary and secondary psychopathy, were not addressed.

**Implications:** This study expanded existing knowledge on Dark Triad personalities by demonstrating a link between each trait and a larger paradigm of risk behaviours. Given that only Machiavellianism and psychopathy were found to be weakly correlated with low empathy, the study has suggested a possible role of cultural values in affecting the sensitivity to others.

**Research Impact:** The present study provided empirical support to the possible damaging effects Dark Triad personalities can exert in society. To avoid putting executive decisions in the hand of malevolent risk-takers, it is crucial for employers to assess for Dark Triad personalities prior to the promotion of new leaders.

# Social, Community, Cross-cultural Psychology

## PSYCHOLOGICAL COPING STRATEGIES OF FEMALE ADOLESCENT OFFENDERS IN JUVENILE DETENTION CENTERS IN TANGERANG, INDONESIA

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**Purpose:** As there has been a high number of 23% prisoners' suicide rate, the current research was conducted to explore female prisoners' coping strategies to promote and enhance their well-beings as well as to alleviate the chances of occurrence of their suicidal thoughts and behaviours. Gender-specific research was another focus to expose female prisoners' perspective and their specific experiences.

**Methodology:** Qualitative research and semi-structured interviews were conducted to seven informants in two correctional institutions, Tangerang, Indonesia. Thematic analysis enabled the identification of the main findings from the research questions.

**Results:** Female juvenile offenders used emotion-focused coping to enhance their psychological and mental well-being to promote cognitive functioning and behavioural adaptability as well as to minimize the occurrence of psychological and other stress-related problems living with inadequate facilities and strict regulations in the prison.

**Limitations:** There was limited range of research questions performed during interview, due to the timing and opportunity of entry into the institutions with limited chance in the selection of female prisoners, based on the officers' preferences.

**Implications:** The current research implied the development of support group interventions with the mental health programmes promoted by the social workers on duty, to increase female offenders' wellbeing's.

**Research Impact:** This research brought such enormous contributions in the development of family and community intervention as strengthening the offenders' intra-familial relationship and community supports which would also be the focus of various fields in social psychology, counselling, and mental health. Female personal empowerment programme was another contribution for the equivalent visibility in the care of the offenders.

# FAMILY FUNCTIONING AND LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG MALAYSIAN ADOLESCENTS

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**Purpose:** Life satisfaction was found to be very crucial for one's development. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the level of life satisfaction in different types of family functioning (balanced, midrange, and unbalanced) among Malaysian adolescents. The predicting effects of the dimensions of family functioning (cohesion and flexibility) on adolescents' life satisfaction were also examined.

**Methodology:** A total of 852 adolescents (51% males; M = 14.8 years) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia were recruited using multistage cluster sampling. The participants completed the self-administered questionnaires which consisted of the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale III and Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale. Participants were divided into three family functioning types based on the cut-off scores of cohesion and flexibility.

**Results:** As hypothesised, one-way ANOVA analysis showed that adolescents with balanced family functioning were more satisfied with life compared to those with midrange and unbalanced family functioning. Besides, Standard Multiple Regression analysis revealed that family cohesion significantly predicted adolescents' life satisfaction.

**Limitations:** The data collection only included non-clinical samples, which limit the generalisability of the research findings to severely disturbed adolescents.

**Implications:** Family members should focus on achieving a balanced family functioning in order to be more satisfied with life. Intervention to boost adolescents' life satisfaction should also focus on family cohesion, instead of family flexibility.

**Research Impact:** Mental health practitioners may benefit from this study. When working with adolescents with low life satisfaction, it is important to determine the adolescents' family functioning type and improve the cohesiveness of their family.

# THE EFFECT OF GENDER AND RACE SIMILARITY ON MORAL DECISION MAKING

**Author(s):** Priscilla Chuah Ning-Xin, Grace Yap Chin Choo, Yong Min Hooi

**Affiliation:** Sunway University, Malaysia

**Purpose:** This study investigated the effects of gender and race similarity on an individual's moral decision involving a stranger's suffering.

**Methodology:** 83 young adults participated in a quasi-experiment were grouped by race and gender. Participants would decide the suffering of a stranger (poised by a confederate) in exchange for prizes; the longer the suffering, the bigger the prize for the decider.

**Results:** The impact of race similarity was significant, with Chinese allocated lesser time than NonChinese. Contrary to expectation, gender similarity showed that males allocated less time than females. Race and gender together did not yield any significant results for the sufferings of others.

**Limitations:** Manipulation checks on the perceived attractiveness and similarity were not measured. The presence of an experimenter might suggest bystander effect as a confounding variable.

**Implications:** The theoretical framework is based on self-categorization theory and social identity theory. First impressions were formed based on salient cues and characteristics of the person, such as gender and race. All participants were strangers to the confederate, which strengthened the effect of surface-level diversity (demographic differences) and weakened the effect of deep-level diversity (value similarity); hence focusing more on superficial surface characteristics to form first impressions.

**Research Impact:** Findings can be generalised to and across other situations and shed lights on how demographic similarity could influence social behaviour and response. Besides, this study serves as a powerful yet vital reminder to all decision makers of the existence of personal bias during emergencies. It also advanced our knowledge in prosocial study and on the ways to effectively promote prosocial behaviour.

# THE LEVELS OF EMPATHY, SYMPATHY AND HELPING ATTITUDES UNDER PROLONGED LIFE CRISIS: A REFUGEE STUDY

**Author(s):** Shimal a/p Jaykant, Grace Yap Chin Choo

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**Purpose:** Individuals with prolonged life crisis are individuals who have undergone past sufferings and trauma for an extended period of time. This study aimed to understand the relationship between empathy, sympathy and helping attitudes under prolonged life crisis; and, to determine if empathy and sympathy serve as predictors of helping attitudes.

**Methodology:** This study recruited 56 refugees, representing individuals living under prolonged life crisis and 56 Malaysians without an experience of prolonged life crisis. The participants answered a survey that included Multidimensional Emotional Empathy Scale, Trait Sympathy Scale and Helping Attitudes Scale. Independent Samples T-test and standard multiple regression were used to analyse the data.

**Results:** Individuals with prolonged life crisis were found to have lower levels of empathy, sympathy and helping attitudes compared to those who did not. Empathy and sympathy were also found to predict helping attitudes.

**Limitations:** The perception of life crisis in the refugees was not determined. An individual may interpret life crisis differently due to personal coping mechanisms.

**Implications:** This study has allowed a better insight to the traits present in individuals with prolonged life crisis. This study has shown that prolonged life crisis may to a certain extent cause changes in an individual's altruistic traits.

**Originality/Value:** This study urges the authorities to render more help to the prolonged life crisis community and help to foster a closer understanding of this special population that is otherwise neglected by the general society.