

### THE DIFFERENCE IN YOUTH EMOTIONAL COMPETENCY LEVEL BETWEEN GENDER, AND INSTITUTES, TUNAS BAKTI, SECONDARY SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract: Many researches have concluded that low level of emotional intelligence can contribute to problems among adolescent. The aim of the study is to explore the emotional issues of youths in the Malaysian context and to investigate the difference in emotional intelligence based on age, gender, and the different institutions. Youths were enrolled from three different institutes, Tunas Bakti school students, secondary school students, and university students. This study consists of 262 youths aged between 13-22 years old were chosen through purposive sampling. The participants were purposively chosen from Tunas Bakti school, secondary school, and university students. Each of them answered the Universiti Sains Malaysia Emotional Quotient Inventory (USMEQ-i). The survey revealed that most students scored average in all emotional subscales. However, the majority of them scored high in the emotional expression subscale. The t-test showed that females scored better in selfawareness, social awareness and relationship management. However, there was no significant difference between gender and any of the self-management subscales and the overall emotional intelligence scores. ANOVA revealed that there was no difference in emotional intelligence between the Tunas Bakti school, secondary school, and university students. This study highlighted the need to develop a module as the emotional competency is a significant need for youngsters. Future studies can help conduct a developmental study to investigate the emotional issues faced by toddlers and children in Malaysia.

### Introduction

Adolescence is phase that is most challenging in which adult guidance becomes vital. According to a research by Hari Krishnan (2012), youths are still considered vulnerable in the Malaysian society. Numerous social problems happen today that start from less serious cases such as coming late to school, skipping class, breaking rules, followed by serious cases such as disobeying teachers, smoking, participating in illegal racing, gangsterism, bullying and more serious cases such as involving in sexual activities, pregnant out of wed lock, baby dumping and rape that has been reported by the mass media almost every day (Tunggak, Ngadi & Abu Naim, 2015). A statement from the Malaysian Welfare Department revealed that juvenile cases from year 2009 to 2013 involving under age male offenders is 23,950 and female offenders is 1828 (Che Mohd Nasir & Mohd Ali Hanafiah, 2015).

Many researches have concluded that low level of emotional intelligence can contribute to problems among adolescents. A recent study on adolescent delinquency conducted by Abdullah, Lee, Roslan, and Baba (2015) found that adolescents with better emotional intelligence had lower levels of delinquency. Therefore, improving the quality of life among adolescent's is imperative.

A study by Sharma, Prakash, Sengar, Chaudhury and Singh (2015) showed that the emotional intelligence level and convicted criminals had lower emotional intelligence levels compared to nonOcriminals. Whereas another study by Cavins (2005) showed that older students aged 22 years old scored higher in EQ compared to their younger 18-year-old participants. However, the literature review identified a lack of study that showed whether there was a difference in emotional intelligence between juvenile delinquents, normal national school students and university students aged between 13 to 22 years old in Malaysia. Hence, a study is needed to examine this issue.

Hence, this research is a quantitative study. The research questions aimed to be answered in this study are:

- a) Which emotional issues are more evident among youngsters?
- b) Is there a significant difference between male and female adolescents based on the emotional intelligence domains?
- c) Is there a significant difference between adolescent's emotional intelligence domains and their current institution (Tunas Bakti schools, secondary school and university)?

The hypotheses of the study are:

- a) There is no significant difference between male and female adolescent's emotional intelligence.
- b) There is a significant difference between the adolescent's overall emotional intelligence between Tunas Bakti school, secondary school and university students.

The current study follows the Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory. Although Goleman's theory is more applicable within organization setting but his theory focuses on a wider area in an individual's emotional intelligence. There are four main emotional intelligence domains

based on Goleman (2001) which are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Survey Study** 

### Literature Review

Previous researchers revealed various issues pertaining to internal as well as external emotional problems that require immediate attention. Hence, a case study by Halimah, Eow, and Chuah (2016) showed how emotional competency methods can help promote healthy growth in a school setting consequently showing the need to train emotional competency in order to curb delinquent behaviours involving drugs, smoking and etc among adolescents. The current study aims to include the four domains from the Goleman's theory which are self-awareness, selfmanagement, social awareness and relationship management. From the researches reviewed, it can be concluded that adolescents issues that need to be improved are selfawareness/intrapersonal awareness, self-management/intrapersonal management, social awareness/interpersonal awareness (Chong et al., 2015), relationship management/ interpersonal management (Maizatul Akmal Mohd et al., 2013; Maraichelvi & Rajan, 2013; Sharma et al., 2015; Balluerka et al., 2013) and emotion regulation (Balluerka et al., 2013; Braet et al., 2014; Maizatul Akmal Mohd et al., 2013). Other methods that can be included in the development of the module are using religious values (Mousavi Chamani, 2016; Nesami et al., 2015).

In terms of gender, females were shown to have better emotional intelligence compared to males (Bibi & Saqlain, 2016; Ensari, 2017; Bacon, Burak and Rann, 2014). In contrary, many other researches indicate that gender does not affect the level of emotional intelligence (Adigwe, 2015); Wilks, Neto, & Mavroveli, 2015; Romero, Master, Paunesku, Dweck, and Gross, 2014; Bacon, Burak, & Rann, 2014; Liu, Wang, & Lü, 2013; ). Lim (2011) who found that there was no significant difference in actual and self-estimated EQ level among undergraduate students in a private university in Malaysia. However, an interesting finding in

the qualitative survey done by Lim (2011) showed that both genders perceived males to be more emotionally intelligent. Due to conflicting findings, the survey aimed to find out if there exist a difference between males and females in their level of emotional intelligence.

Emotional consequences of juvenile delinquents residing in Tunas Bakti schools compared to adolescents who are in either normal schools or universities are very limited. Sharma, Prakash, Sengar, Chaudhury and Singh (2015) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and criminal behaviour among convicted criminals revealed that the convicted offenders group scored lower in emotional intelligence in comparison to their normal counterparts. In a different view, university students' emotional intelligence increased with their year of study. The current research aims to find out if there exist a difference in the emotional intelligence level between juvenile, normal secondary school and university youths in Malaysia.

### Methodology

This is a cross-sectional design survey study. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) adolescents are individuals between 10 to 19 years, while youths are aged between 15 to 24 years whereas young people are aged between 10 to 24 years old (Curtis, 2015). So, this study combines these age groups to find that the appropriate age group to be addressed would be those aged between 13-22 years old. Therefore, the population of this study are Malaysian adolescent aged 13 to 22 years old. Adolescents were mainly recruited from 5 Tunas Bakti juvenile schools, 6 national secondary schools from 5 different states (Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Perak, Terengganu and Melaka) and 4 universities in Malaysia using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is used because the target population was for adolescents aged between 13 to 22 years old.

This survey study involved 262 respondents whereby 36.3% (*n*=95) of the respondents were from secondary schools, 30.2% (*n*=79) were juvenile delinquents from Tunas Bakti schools and 33.6% (*n*=88) were respondents from universities. The emotional competence of adolescence was measured using the Malay version of USM Emotional Quotient Inventory (USMEQ-i) developed by Muhamad Saiful Bahri, Ahmad Fuad and Ab Rahman (2010). This measure consisted of 46 items related to emotional intelligence with five-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (not like me) to 4 (totally like me). There are seven emotional domains in this inventory which are Emotional Control, Emotional Maturity, Emotional Conscientiousness, Emotional Awareness, Emotional Commitment, Emotional Fortitude and Emotional Expression that made up for 39 items and one Faking Index which has 7 items. To answer the research questions, a descriptive analysis, independent samples t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted.

### Results

Overall EQ score of adolescents

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Scores Obtained for Emotional Competency
Domains and Emotional Intelligence

Domains	Subscales	Category of Scores	n	%	
		Low	2	0.8	
Total EQ	Emotional Intelligence	Average High	177 83	67.6 31.7	

		Total	262	100.0
		Low	7	2.7
	Emotional	Average	210	80.2
	Control	High	45	17.2
Self-Management		Total	262	100.0
-		Low	7	2.7
	Emotional	Average	153	58.4
	Maturity	High	102	38.9
	-	Total	262	100.0
		Low	10	3.8
	Emotional	Average	152	58.0
	Conscientiousness	High	100	38.2
Self-Awareness		Total	262	100.0
		Low	15	5.7
	Emotional	Average	158	60.3
	Awareness	High	89	34.0
		Total	262	100.0
		Low	15	5.7
	Emotional	Average	158	60.3
	Awareness	High	89	34.0
Social Awareness		Total	262	100.0
		Low	11	4.2
	Emotional	Average	182	69.5
	Commitment	High	69	26.3
		Total	262	100.0
		Low	6	2.3
	Emotional	Average	170	64.9
	Fortitude	High	86	32.8
Relationship Management		Total	262	100.0
		Low	5	1.9
	Emotional	Average	118	45.0
	Expression	High	139	53.1
	_	Total	262	100.0

The descriptive findings in Table 1 revealed that majority adolescents scored average in the overall and the emotional domains in the USMEQ-i. More importantly, adolescents scored high in the emotional expression domain showing that they were rather good in conveying and adjusting their emotions accordingly in different situations.

## $H_01$ : There is no significant difference between male and female adolescent's emotional intelligence.

Domains	Subscales	Gender	n	M	SD	t	р
Total EQ	Emotional	Male	106	2.51	0.46	-1.80	0.07
	Intelligence	Female	156	2.61	0.46	-1.80	0.07
	Emotional	Male	106	2.37	0.54	0.44	0.66

### Table 2: Independent Samples T-Test Results

Self-	Control	Female	156	2.34	0.61	0.45	0.65
Management	Emotional	Male	106	2.61	0.57	-0.26	0.80
	Maturity	Female	156	2.63	0.62	-0.26	0.79
	Emotional	Male	106	2.48	0.61	-3.34	0.001
Self-	Conscientiousness	Female	156	2.75	0.66	-3.39	0.001
Awareness	Emotional	Male	106	2.53	0.75	-1.38	0.17
Awa	Awareness	Female	156	2.66	0.68	-1.35	0.18
	Emotional	Male	106	2.53	0.75	-1.38	0.17
Social	Awareness	Female	156	2.66	0.68	-1.35	0.18
Awareness	Emotional	Male	106	2.37	0.62	-2.17	0.03
	Commitment	Female	156	2.55	0.71	-2.23	0.03
	Emotional	Male	106	2.43	0.66	-2.65	0.01
Relationship Management	Fortitude	Female	156	2.65	0.65	-2.65	0.01
	Emotional	Male	106	2.80	0.71	-1.82	0.07
	Expression	Female	156	2.95	0.62	-1.77	0.08

These findings in Table 2 indicates that females scored better in self-awareness, social awareness and relationship management. However, there were no significant difference found between gender and any of the self-management subscales and the overall emotional intelligence scores. Hence, this accepts  $H_01$  that there is no significant difference between male and female adolescents overall emotional intelligence scores and self-awareness domain.

# $H_02$ : There Is A Significant Difference Between the Adolescent's Overall Emotional Intelligence Between Tunas Bakti School, Secondary School and University Students.

	Table 3: ANOV	A Test R	esults			
Emotional Domains		SS	df	MS	F	р
Emotional Intelligence	Between Groups	0.16	2	0.08	0.37	0.69
	Within Groups	55.22	259	0.21		
	Total	55.38	261			
Self-Awareness	Between Groups	1.08	2	0.54	1.70	0.18
	Within Groups	82.12	259	0.32		
	Total	83.20	261			
Self-Management	Between Groups	0.19	2	0.10	0.38	0.69
	Within Groups	65.53	259	0.25		
	Total	65.72	261			
Social Awareness	Between Groups	0.08	2	0.04	0.11	0.90
	Within Groups	90.12	259	0.35		
	Total	90.20	261			
Relationship Management	Between Groups	1.85	2	0.92	2.97	0.054
-	Within Groups	80.39	259	0.31		
	Total	82.24	261			

Table 3 shows that there were no significant differences in the means of the domains between Tunas Bakti school, secondary school and university students. This rejects the hypothesis that there is a significant difference between the adolescents' overall emotional intelligence and its domains between Tunas Bakti school, secondary school and university students.

### Discussion

## Research Question 1: Which Emotional Issues Are More Evident Among Youngsters?

The overall emotional intelligence scoring reveals to us that most adolescents scored average (67.6%). This adds up with about 0.8% of them who scored low who have trouble with handling their emotions. These findings were similar to studies by Nor Lailatul Azilah, Syed Najmuddin and Ruslan (2016) and Jafar, Siti Aishah, Aminah and Maznah (2010). This indicates that adolescents are only reasonably skilful at controlling and managing with their own emotions in different situations.

For the self-awareness domain, adolescents scored average in both the emotional awareness and emotional conscientiousness domains. Different findings were obtained in a study by Chong et al. (2015). This means that adolescents they are either good to a certain degree in having good values or principles but sometimes compromise their values or are only reasonably skilful in understanding their self and other's feelings.

Consequently, for self-management domain, a majority of them scored average in the emotional control and emotional maturity subscales. This is contrary to findings in a study by Rai and Khanal (2017) who showed that college students were extremely unstable in the emotion maturity level. These findings reveal that adolescents were reasonably skilful in facilitating emotions but sometimes are unmotivated with work and are capable of controlling their emotions in certain situations but lose control when under pressure.

In social awareness domain, most adolescents scored average showing that most of them are either reasonably skilful in understanding own and other's feelings or are unwilling to sacrifice their own feelings to achieve common goals. This is contradictory to the findings by Chong et al. (2015) who found that delinquent students scored low in the social skills domain but high in empathy levels.

For the relationship management domain, a majority of adolescents scored average in emotional commitment but scored high in emotional expression which shows that they are both unwilling to sacrifice own feelings in negotiating and resolving disagreements however are very good and skilful in expressing emotions effectively to others. This is also contradictory to Chong et al. (2015)'s findings.

### **Research** Question 2: Is There a Significant Difference Between Male and Female Adolescents Based on the Emotional Intelligence Domains?

The t-test findings indicate that females scored better in self-awareness, social awareness and relationship management. This is similar to findings by Bibi and Saqlain (2016), Ensari (2017) and Bacon et al. (2014). The results may be due to girls being given more cultural and emotional freedom these days compared to their ancestors as mentioned by Bibi and Saqlain (2016). This may also be due to girls obtaining the ability in perceiving emotions and non-verbal perceptions as mentioned in a study by Adigwe (2015). Moreover, Adigwe (2015) says that youth girls are

more stable emotion wise than boys. Girls tend to receive better emotional education from their parents (Elias et al., 2007). However, there were no significant difference found between gender and any of the self-management subscales and the overall emotional intelligence scores. This is similar to findings by gender does not affect the level of emotional intelligence Adigwe (2015), Wilks, Neto and Mavroveli (2015), Romero, Master, Paunesku, Dweck and Gross (2014), and Liu, Wang and Lü (2013).

# Research Question 3: Is There a Significant Difference Between Adolescent's Emotional Intelligence Domains and Their Current Institution (Tunas Bakti Schools, Secondary School and University)?

ANOVA analyses between emotional intelligence domains and institutions showed no significant differences between the adolescent's overall emotional intelligence and it's domains between Tunas Bakti school, secondary school and university students. This is contrary to findings by Sharma, Prakash, Sengar, Chaudhury and Singh (2015) who showed that convicted criminals have lower levels of emotional intelligence compared to their normal counterparts. These findings show two possibilities. Either the programs offered in Tunas Bakti schools are effective in dealing with emotional issues among adolescents and is in par with secondary school students and university students or due to the convenience sampling method, there existed a potential selection bias. Due to the selection bias, it is possible that those who participated in this study were mostly good in emotion competency and the results obtained may not represent the general population.

### Limitations, Implications and Future Recommendations

### Limitations

This research fulfilled Fundamental Research Scheme Grant for a period of two years. As more time is required for developing an Emotional Competency Module and pilot testing the module. Limited time was spent in the quantitative part hence lacking good sample size to generalize the findings of the study. Initially this study sample population included the Henry Gurney schools for juvenile delinquents. However, our application was declined by the Malaysian Prison Department hence disabling us from conducting our research there. Besides, another Tunas Bakti school in Jerantut, Pahang was under construction hence allowing us to collect data from only four Tunas Bakti school instead of five. This may have caused issues in the final results. Besides, despite administering the test in Malay language, there were still residents at the Tunas Bakti schools and secondary schools whom did not know how to read, write and also others who did not even understand the language. This made it tough for us to administer the survey.

### **Implications**

The findings of the research can help provide better knowledge regarding more current issues of emotional problems faced by adolescents in Malaysia. Besides the results cater youth organizations and governmental organizations to modify their approaches toward the improvement of developing youth skills in this era. The results also show specific emotional competency issues faced by adolescents for which the Emotional Competency Module is developed. This module will benefit all professionals and adolescents in handling their emotions in future.

### Future Recommendations

This study has shown significant results in the emotional intelligence of adolescents in Malaysia. Due to a monotonous overview of only emotional intelligence, future researches may want to explore relationships between the emotional intelligence with social and cognitive aspects of adolescents. Besides, researches exploring the level of emotion intelligence among toddlers and children are still lacking in Malaysia. Hence, this research may be a stepping stone into a deeper developmental psychology research.

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