



Spiritual Well-Being, Intra-Familial Relations, and Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Malaysia: A Framework Analysis

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Abstract. Mental health issues during the pandemic attract the global concerns and has become one of the main focuses in research across disciplines. The involvement of family and the contentment of individuals' religious practices during the COVID-19 pandemic deplete the significant desolation of the issues in mental health worldwide. The aim of the current study is to investigate the individuals' approaches using intra-familial relations and spiritual well-being to enhance their mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia. This study is to establish the model framework to assist in the understanding of how such resilient approaches are utilised by the Malaysians during the pandemic. The approach will proliferate individuals' capacity in sustaining their mental health through family interaction, communication, relationship and their religious rituals and activities. Framework analysis is utilized to extract the elements of the approaches represented by selected theories and models. The study is using the systematic approach to data review ensuring the pre-determined procedure is achieved. The focus on data management, including familiarization, identification of thematic framework, coding, and charting, as well as interpretation, including mapping and description, is highlighted in the current framework analysis. Such a qualitative approach uses the secondary data for the purpose of the analysis, proposed to be developed in four phases. Phase 1 involves the need analysis procedure identifying the components of both approaches, leading to a conceptual model supporting the resilient methods enhancing the mental health. Phase 2 seeks to determine factors contributing to pre-determined procedures in selecting data reviews, verifying the accuracy of review search. Phase 3 is to propose the conceptual model based on data management and interpretation for the Model framework development. Thus, this research would contribute to the individuals and community awareness enhancing their mental health using spiritual well-being and intra-familial relation as approaches in resilience.

Keywords: Spiritual well-being · Intra-familial relation · Mental Health · COVID-19 Pandemic · Framework analysis

1 Introduction

The phenomenon of COVID-19 has attracted many researchers worldwide and the impact of such pandemic has been focused across different disciplines. Many fields of work have discussed the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the individuals' mental health, physical health, and psychological well-being (Gewertz, 2021; Santamaria et al., 2021). The impact has also been studied on the development of stress, anxiety, and depression to indicate the devastating experience of the pandemic among people in different countries (Gloster et al., 2020; Ho et al., 2020; Otu et al., 2020; Silva et al., 2021). Such a tremendous impact on the mental health of the individuals was also investigated by many researchers as the consequence of the lockdown measure, imposed by majority of the countries (Fitriana et al., 2020; Samy et al., 2020; Ho et al., 2020; Coppola et al., 2021). As a major stressor for many individuals, the pandemic has recorded a high percentage on the occurrence of psychological problems and other emotional disorders (Pietrabissa & Simpson, 2020; Silva et al., 2021), to include the changes in the family relationship (Chua et al., 2020; Naser et al., 2020), and the occurrence of other anxiety related disorders (Gloster et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, the pandemic has also created the dynamic interaction in social and family relationship. The increased percentage of people engaging in the social network sites (SNSs), utilizing the usefulness of the social media to link their relationship with others, found to induce their positive psychological and physical health during the pandemic (Hassan, 2020; Naser et al., 2020). The pandemic has also strengthened the family relationship and interaction which helps improve the mental health problems and increase online work productivity (Rodriguez-Rey et al., 2020). Family could initiate positive activities at home with the members, interacting with each other, communicating with the members and having weekend together with exercises and leisure activities. Such family relationship was found to be among the protective agents to reduce the psychological and mental health issues among people during the pandemic (Ryan et al., 2020).

Moreover, religion and spirituality are also among the most important protective agents for people to battle against issues of their mental health and psychological degradation (Kim & Esquivel, 2011; Fitriana, 2017). Mental capacity among people was found to increase by utilizing such coping mechanisms (Arslan & Yildirim, 2021; Tan et al., 2021), which enhance the balance in people's psychological, emotional, and physical health during the COVID-19 pandemic (Health, 2021). Such strategies indicate a mutual integrity between healthcare system and religious institutions to help people deplete their life problems and serve as measures for their psychological relief especially during the crisis (Tan et al., 2021).

The current research, therefore, aims at investigating the individuals' approaches using intra-familial relations and spiritual well-being to enhance their mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia. The study focuses on analyzing the impacts of familial relationship, communication, and attachment on individuals' mental health, as well as their spiritual well-being, using multisystemic approach to analyse the framework of the current study.

1.1 Problem Statement

The global pandemic affected many individuals and the social isolation as a lockdown measure has been implemented to prevent the spread of the virus. Many studies found the increased rate of stress, anxiety, and depression among people as the impact of such lockdown implementation (Samy et al., 2020; Shanmugam et al., 2020; Rodriguez-Hidalgo et al., 2020; Silva et al., 2021). The prevalence of anxiety increased among Malaysian with 25.2% experienced mild anxiety, 13.6% moderate and 19.5% severe anxiety, during the COVID-19 pandemic (Samy et al., 2020). With such a lockdown measure, it was found that the overall well-being among people has declined to indicate the rise of other psychological degradation and mental health issues (Sundarasan et al., 2020, Wan Mohd Yunus et al., 2020). Other studies also indicated the rise of depressive disorder symptoms among people which lead to psychopathological disorders (Panchal et al., 2021). The increased rate of fear on the COVID-19 pandemic among people was also investigated to be associated with stress, anxiety, and depression (Kassim et al., 2021), with 68% increase in the rate of anxiety scores among the 7 middle income countries in Asia due to fear of the pandemic (Wang et al., 2021). The negative influx of emotion and aggressiveness was also recorded highly as the results of such lockdown fear (Richter, 2021).

The mental health issues in Malaysia during the pandemic were also experienced by the professionals. During the pandemic, many people lost their jobs, became unemployed and were unable to support their family financially. Those who were employed with online activities during the movement control order (MCO) period in Malaysia, were also found to be overworked and experienced a few hours of sleeping resulting in sleep deprivation problem (Arvender-Singh, 2020). Psychological problems happened to be at its high record in Malaysia during the lockdown. Of those professionals, 22% experienced financial constraints, 20% experienced stress at work (Ram, 2019), and the rest developed mental exhaustion from the pandemic condition (Hassan, 2020). Some findings of other research also recorded the rise of loneliness among the older professionals (Banerjee & Rai, 2020; Killgore et al., 2020; Health, 2021; Tzung-Jeng et al., 2021), with mental confusion as the impact of boredom and fatigue during the lockdown, indicating imbalance of psychological state due to pressure and tension (Boylan et al., 2020), which inadvertently deteriorates the mental health and psychosocial well-being of people (Hassan, 2020; Otu et al., 2020; Alwafaz et al., 2021).

The current study, therefore, investigated the coping mechanisms to be implemented by the Malaysian during the COVID-19 pandemic, in the aspects of spirituality and intra-familial relationship to enhance their mental health. Numerous research indicated the increased rate of activities among people in their religious rituals (Tan et al., 2021), spiritual awareness (Abdul Khaiyom, 2020) and family connectedness (Naser et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2020; Rodriguez-Rey et al., 2020) as efforts to incline their mental health and to balance their psychological well-being (Chow, 2021; Coppala et al., 2021). This current research aims at establishing the relationship of the study variables using framework analysis method to verify the consistency of the associated variables to further develop a model framework.

1.2 Significance of Research

Various methods or techniques have been introduced to help improve the psychological and mental well-being of the community in living with the crisis during COVID-19. An important change in peoples' life during the COVID-19 pandemic was the confinement in a home with the family while continuing the daily routine, working from home or studying from home (Naser et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2020; Rodriguez-Rey et al., 2020; Chow, 2021; Coppala et al., 2021). The intra-familial relations contribute to the very fundamental changes in the lives of the family members during the pandemic.

The current research promotes the most important contribution of intra-familial relations to the relationship between individuals' spiritual well-being and mental health in Malaysia. It also signifies the two protective factors for mental health among people during the COVID-19 pandemic. The current research also signifies the development of spiritual and family awareness among people as the protective factors towards adversity in life. This study serves as a novel knowledge and information to the family and community for the resilient approaches. The suggested framework works on a holistic relationship of intra-familial relations in developing the final model of the individuals' resilient approaches using quantitative method.

2 Literature Reviews

2.1 Spirituality, Intrafamilial Relations and Mental Health

Numerous research indicated the important concept of resilience (Walsh, 2006; Kirmayer et al., 2009), explaining human capability in coping with stressful conditions. Resilience is the technique of adaptation in the context of adversity (Roisman, 2005). It is the innate ability to instill confident and assurance to believe strongly in what we are doing to perform better in life (Clarke & Nicholson, 2010). People with the resilient characters tend to develop the balance of their psychological well-being, mental health and social connectedness (Brooks et al., 2020), to relearn their adverse condition living in the stages of recovery to create greater compassion with others in the surroundings (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006).

Intra-familial relations are the source of family resilience. This is the ability of a family to respond positively to an adverse condition and emerge strengthened, more resourceful and more confident characters (Walsh, 2003). Intra-familial relations are also described as family mechanisms in building the family resilient characters to face with the crisis, challenges and adversity to be more resistant and adaptable. Walsh (2007) highlighted the importance of strength-based approach in which individuals and families can adapt and manage basic or complex life situations when existing strengths, skills, abilities, and resources are identified, nurtured, and built upon. The approach emphasizes on the three main processes for intra-familial relations, namely, clarity in communication, open emotional expression and collaborative problem solving among the members of the family whereby open and honest communication will enhance family relationships to reduce the occurrence of family conflicts or crisis (Walsh, 2006). Such coping mechanisms further foster problem solving, healing and growth among individuals (Davis, 2020). Resilient is strengthened by individual's self-efficacy, with

a comprehensive understanding of attributes and positive attitudes to increase awareness and to promote more holistic routines to support healthy family and children's development (Paterson (2002).

In the face of calamity, the goal of the family is not only to cope with adversity, but it also rather uplifts the family capabilities to motivate each other and to give more attention to more meaningful relationship and activities, to build more innovative solutions to the system, and to lead to more invention and to create values in the family (Davis, 2020). Such mental capacities in the families enhance more resilient characters to recover well from prolonged adversity or crisis. Adequate resources, useful structures to support each member in the family and having the trusted leadership role in the family serve as the key determinants in family's mental health systems (Davis, 2020). Coping mechanisms during the pandemic are highly significant to reduce mental health problems of people. Having leisure activities with the family was found to be among the most important coping mechanisms to reduce stress and other mental health problems. Naser and colleague (2020) stated that the increased time spent with families during pandemic has improved the mental health of people by having frequent family interaction has reduced the work burden and other stress-related issues. The pandemic has also led to higher relationship quality which was found to positively predict the mental well-being among people with a strong family relationship, and vice versa (Pieh et al., 2020; Chua et al., 2021). Larsen (2020) further highlighted the importance of intra-familial during the pandemic is to be strengthened and optimized to reduce psychological distress of the parents and children. Empowering the ability of family members and establishing the family relationship, interaction and communication reduce children's stress and other negative emotion of the parents. Such coping mechanisms promote the optimal use of intra-familial relations among each member and enhance the psychological, mental, and physical health in the family.

Moreover, spirituality depletes adversity to promoting healthy development in people, enhancing the ability to cope, and leading to positive outcomes in mental health, psychological well-being, and social interaction. It is a source of resilience to foster people with spiritual development in the family and community settings (Kim & Esquivel, 2011). Spirituality involves religious aspects and values to gauge people embracing their faith to be more positive in their perception and acceptance on the adversity and to gain control over the positive attitude and behavior during the time of crisis (Pelechova et al. 2018). During the pandemic, spiritual thinking becomes the key determinant factor to develop coping with life in adverse condition, to develop a sense of tranquility using the spiritual power to manage the stress and other anxiety-related problems, and to attain meaningful life through religion as the spiritual guidance in life (Chow et al., 2021). The role of spirituality as coping mechanism in enhancing the psychological well-being and maintaining the mental health of the individuals during the crisis has become a highly important measure. Roman and colleagues (2020) stated in their study that spiritual coping reduces stress and burnout, encourages recovery and resilience. The spiritual care transforms adversity into a meaningful life thus creates part of human care, health, and well-being for the families to provide people with compassion and empathy during the period of heightened stress, and anxiety (Roman et al. 2020). The role of religion and

spirituality was found to reduce sorrow, fear and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequences of social isolation implementation (Lucchetti et al., 2020). Spiritual well-being serves as the important role in transforming the adverse life into tranquility, such coping mechanisms relieve the suffering, increase health outcomes, and minimize the consequences of social isolation (Lucchetti et al., 2020).

Chow and colleagues (2021) in their study found that positive religious coping is significantly associated with the mental health of the health care workers during the pandemic, where the level of anxiety and depression were significantly reduced among the workers. Moreover, spiritual guidance and other religious rituals become the most actualizing self-ability of people to experience their inner drive and strengths from within their belief and faith for balancing their well-beings (Chow et al., 2021). Abdul Khaiyom (2020) further stated that mindfulness and spirituality are essential factors and become among the best mechanisms to combat against the mental health problems. With these cognitive-behavioural strategies and the spiritual approach, People will be more accepting, optimistic, and committed to prepare themselves for living in the adverse new normal life (Abdul Khaiyom, 2020).

Other studies have also found that spiritual well-being is among the most important key factors for physical and psychological health of individuals and the community (Coppala et al., 2021), and the practices of the religion serve as the protective factor not only for their psychological health and mental health, but also for their physical health (Chow et al., 2021; Coppala et al., 2021). In another study, Arslan and Yildirim (2021) also found that coronavirus stress and subjective well-being could be reduced by promoting greater meaning-based coping and spiritual well-being. The study indicated that perceived stress and coronavirus were strongly related and were potential psychological risk factors that might influence the mental health and well-being of people. Those with high levels of risk perception during the pandemic experience greater stress and with meaning-based coping and spirituality, the psychological risk factors which led to increased mental health issues, could be depleted (Arslan & Yildirim, 2021).

3 Methodology

The methodology is based on Multisystemic Approach (Walsh, 2007), which support the design and development of the contents of the conceptual model of spiritual well-being and intra-familial relations. Analysis of secondary data from 58 reviews of the literature was utilized to extract the components of both spiritual well-being and intra-familial relations into the current framework development. This study highlights three research objectives; 1) identifying the components of both approaches, leading to a conceptual model supporting the resilient methods enhancing the mental health. 2) determining factors contributing to pre-determined procedures in selecting data reviews verifying the accuracy of review search. 3) proposing the conceptual model based on data management and interpretation for the Model framework development. Such objectives are in line with the development of the three research questions to support this qualitative method for the framework analysis; 1) What are the components of spiritual well-beings and intra-familial relations as approaches for individuals' resilience in Malaysia? 2) What are the contributing factors towards pre-determined procedures in data selection

on validating the review search for the approaches of resilience? 3) What is the proposed conceptual model incorporating data management and interpretation for model framework development?

4 Data Management and Interpretation

The framework analysis for the current study involves data management which includes familiarization, identification of thematic framework, coding, and charting. It also uses the technique of interpretation which includes mapping and description. For the data management method, the study highlights the process of familiarizing the secondary information into the structure of the framework (Gale et al., 2013). The intimate knowledge towards the content of the secondary data allows the researcher to focus on 58 reviews of the literature to extract the components of both spiritual well-being and intra-familial relations into the analysis of the current framework development. Such a thematic framework is identified through which the components are observed from the theories and/or model representatives. Themes are to be developed and validated using the selected theories and/or models which help reduce the components of both variables into some other elements for the analysis. The qualitative coding is to develop for the purpose of indexing to extract themes and sub-themes into assigned codes. Charting and summarizing the findings are to ease the process of coding into a matrix presentation. Elements are to be summarized and information of the data review is to be inserted into a corresponding cell in the matrix (Gale et al., 2013).

The current study also emphasizes on the technique of interpretation as the second method to develop framework analysis. It involves mapping of the data reviews and interpreting findings into a descriptive text that explore themes, categories, linking all the information back to the data narratives. The summarization matrix helps researcher to group themes under the category of each data search (Ward et al., 2013). This high-level category places similar typologies to interrelate and map the linkages. The development of analysis is further finalized to base on theories and narratives derived from the process of the framework analysis procedure.

4.1 Procedure

The study consists of three phases. Phase 1 identifies the components of both approaches, leading to a conceptual model supporting the resilient methods enhancing the mental health. Phase 2 determines the factors contributing to pre-determined procedures in selecting data reviews verifying the accuracy of review search. Phase 3 proposes the conceptual model based on data management and interpretation for the Model framework development.

Phase 1

Identifying the components of both approaches, leading to a conceptual model supporting the resilient methods enhancing the mental health. Spiritual well-being and intra-familial components are to be identified and selected based on the existing theories and

model's perspective that support the development of resilient approaches for the individuals to be used by the Malaysians. The selected components will be validated by content experts to ensure that these components would be the most appropriate for developing elements used as the approaches for resilient individuals. This phase involves a systematic review/meta-analysis in the selection of the components/features of both variables used in the study (Gale et al., 2013). Using different perspectives from the theories and other past studies to assist the researchers in the selection of components for spiritual well-beings and intra-familial relations. In this stage, data on such variables are to be collected to identify and select some relevant research related to the features/components of both.

Phase 2

Identifying factors contributing to pre-determined procedures in selecting data reviews verifying the accuracy of review search. In this phase, researchers begin the process of data management accordingly. Familiarizing the secondary information into the structure of the framework, allows researchers to understand the content from the reviews of the literature, focusing on the accuracy of the selected 58 to extract the components of both spiritual well-being and intra-familial relations into the analysis of the current framework development. In this stage, factors which are specified by the selected theories and models are to present the comprehensive components of both spirituality and intra-familial relations. Such identified factors are to determine the process of developing selected themes to validate using some selected theories. In this phase, factors determine the procedure in the method of coding and indexing (Ward et al., 2013).

Phase 3

Incorporating components and features identified in phase 1 and verified in phase 2 into a framework analysis development. Proposing the conceptual model based on data management and interpretation for the procedure in framework analysis is used to facilitate the development of a conceptual model representative. After the selection of the components and features identified in phase 1 and verified in phase 2 by the researchers, the themes generated from the thematic coding in phase 2 is to be presented to facilitate the development of a model framework. In this phase, careful observation is given to the details of the generated themes from the thematic coding. The researchers analyze the use of the specific and selected features and components of both constructs with the development of model assessment before establishing the concept into a model framework. The specific details of generated themes from thematic coding show the conceptual framework incorporating the model to be used by the researchers as to further analyze the accuracy of the quantitative method to present research using questionnaires in the later stage. The testing and evaluation on the effectiveness of the model framework extracted from the conceptual model is to be used in the final stage of the current research procedures when dealing with statistical analysis.

Figure 1 portrays the development of the conceptual framework linked from both constructs as intra-familial relations becomes the mediator between spiritual well-being and the mental health. However, the use of such conceptual framework is to determine the components extracted from both constructs identifying the elements for individuals' resilient approaches used for their mental health. The analysis is to further determine the

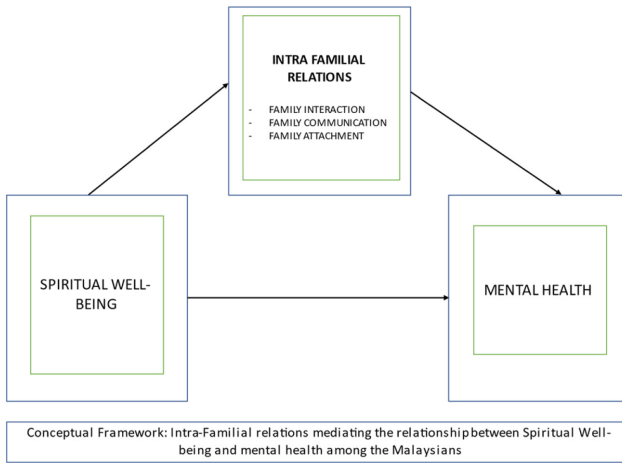


Fig. 1.

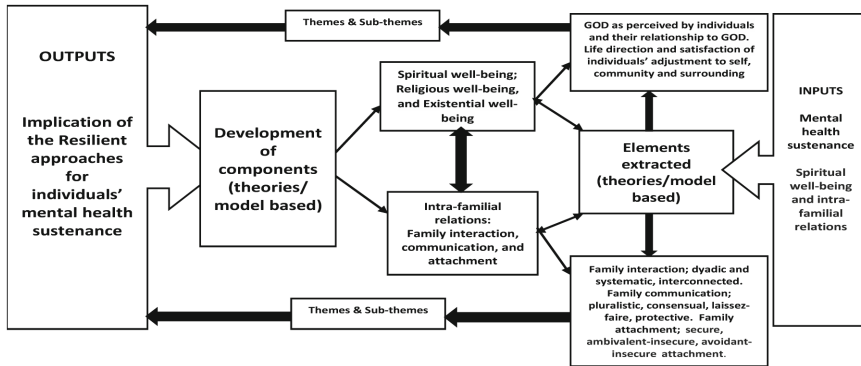


Fig. 2. Development of Framework Analysis (the resilient approaches) integrating spirituality and Intra-Familial relations for mental health sustenance.

procedures of the study into more accurate phases for data management and interpretation processes. Therefore, such a conceptual framework serves as basis in the development of framework analysis.

Figure 2 portrays the development of a framework analysis using the procedure of data management, technique, including familiarization, identification of thematic framework, coding, and charting, as well as interpretation method for the purpose of developing the final model of the individuals' resilient approaches, used for the purpose of model representation to test the effectiveness of each sub-themes from both construct in the future use of quantitative method.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

The mental health issues during the COVID-19 affects people worldwide, impacting the individuals' coping to deal with the pandemic differently. Tremendous life style changes take place in every aspect of an individual life. The working adults are working from home, the children are schooling from home, communication technologies take over the face-to-face communication and being with family at home handling the crisis is critical. One of the opportunities from the pandemic is that it gives an individual to explore and understand oneself and be close to family. The previous busy life before COVID-19 may have drift us in family relationship. Family interaction, communication and attachment impacting the life changes of people and transformation of their adverse life into more optimistic and engaging in positive activities with the family, providing each member of the family with support and encouragement (Wan Mohd Yusuf et al., 2020; Herfinanda et al., 2021). Through the approach of spirituality focusing on individuals' efforts in being close to God and implementing rituals and other religious routines at home, increase their spiritual aspects in life (Arslan & Yildirim, 2021). Such resilient approaches for the individuals are expected to increase resiliency and to reduce the psychological problems and other mental health issues which deteriorate their daily life functioning. The approach also highlights on the implications of responding to challenges and the role of the synergistic processes in resilience for a positive and transformative growth (Davis, 2021).

This study sets out to identify the conceptual framework on the approaches of resilience, developed from the selected constructs; the spiritual well-being and intra-familial relations approach. The generated themes and sub-themes are developed from multisystemic approach of Froma Walsh (2007). The theory is used to verify the selected coding upon developing the index. The final output of the research is the framework analysis (the resilient approach) integrating spirituality and intra-familial relations for mental health sustenance, which will contribute to individuals and community awareness in enhancing their mental health.

With the ethic reference number IUMW.DVC/IUMWREC_0412/21–22 received from IUMW research ethic committee, this study has rigorously been conducting this particular work of research until December 2022. Therefore, there would be further findings from the study involving the quantitative research analysis to report.

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