

## **Children's Personality, Behaviour and Motivation**

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**Abstract:** *Children's motivation and behaviour have always been the topic of discussion among parties like the schools, parents, teachers and also the ministry. This is not an issue hard to believe because the rates of children dropout of school or badly behaved at schools are at alarming stage. This has led the author as a counsellor at school to further study this issue and wish to seek links between motivation and behaviour with personality. This article aims at discussing how personality is related to motivation and behaviour of the children hence, helping the stakeholders and counterparts to take appropriate actions to alleviate the problems.*

**Keywords:** *Personality, Behaviour, Motivation, Children.*

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### **I. Introduction**

In the process as developed country, human capital is crucial in order to move, boost and make changes on economy, education, politics and social. Hence, the continuous work of cultivating and nurturing our people starting when they are still young have to be taken seriously (Aishah, Junaida & Mahadir, 2012). Abdul Muqsih Ahmad et al. (2016) also stated that a holistic development can only be achieved through education. This statement puts emphasis on the importance of education not only for one to obtain nirvana in life but also admits that education is the key to help the economy as people have become the fundamental workforce of the country.

In Malaysia, the National Education Philosophy clearly stated that education is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonic. We can also understand this philosophy that the country does not only focus on the importance of academic, but also highly suggest that the ultimate goal is to achieve the best quality of children who are balanced in all aspects which are attitude, morality, humanity, behaviour and mental health.

Mustapha Kamal, Zahiah dan Abdullah (2010) agreed that the balance of all aspects must be emphasized in order to produce good human capital, which is that human must possess three main elements of the highest quality of mind, spiritual and physical. This is where the needs of counselling services are provided in schools. Not only the big companies, private schools or organisations, tertiary education colleges and universities are well equipped with counselling services, but the secondary and primary schools in Malaysia are also gradually filled up by the positions of counselors who are trained and knowledgeable. The main role and focus of counselling services is to produce individuals who are balanced in the aspects of intellect, physical, emotions and spirit which is included in the Philosophy of Counselling Service. (Manchelah 2017; Sapora Sipon 2010)

Only when we have children who are educated and brought up balanced in all aspects, they can become the prospective hopes of the nation and leaders of tomorrow to bring luminous future. Hence, their performance in a learning environment such as schools is given close attention. Nonetheless in fact, behavioural issues of the pupils in our country are at alarming stage. (Johari Talib et al., 2017) This concern is valid because the former Deputy Education Minister Datuk Chong Sin Woon admitted that 311 schools faced disciplinary problems while 91 others were disciplinary problem prone. Based on statistic, there were 111,895 pupils who made up of 16,849 primary students and 95,046 secondary students were found involved in disciplinary misconduct in 2016 which playing truant was the main concern.

Unfortunately, disciplinary misconduct is an underlying issue to many other bigger issues which are threatening and harmful. According to Johari Talib (2009), primary pupils who found having behavioural problems especially disciplinary problems, also involved in problems such as low achievement in studies, lack of motivation, laziness, theft, playing truant, physical and sexual abuse, drug abuse smoking all in the means of destructive behaviours. This is not an imaginary scenario but a painful reality which is bound to happen if no action is taken.

Topics and issues evolving the schools and often are frequently discussed by the educators are none other than the motivation and behaviour of the pupils. They are the major concerns of the stakeholders because it reflects a pupil's being and it will also affect his or her overall achievement at school. This consequence has a long way to go until the pupils go into the universities or the society. If these issues are not scrutinized carefully and they are slowly getting out of hands, we can predict that the quality of the pupils will deteriorate followed by increased drop-outs and thus affecting not only to the individuals but also the community, society and country.

The fact that most cases the counsellors are handling with on daily basis are related to disciplinary problems and motivational issues makes the reality clear. It represents a significant focus for the work of educational psychologists. (Hart, 2010) Counsellors then tried approaches like the group counselling or individual counselling to tackle the problems, in hope to alleviate the problems. However, the counterparts like parents and teachers want answers to their kids' behaviour as if there must be some reasons behind the low motivation and destructive behaviour. Hence, this paper is an effort to study past researches that seek relationships or links between personality, behaviour and motivation.

### **1.1 Personality**

A few researches that are done by the member of psychology showed that personality factor played a role in affecting the academic achievement of an individual. (Orpen, 1976; Kay Sandra 2001) Dorothea (2013) also claimed that a lot of researchers have proven that personality is one of the crucial factors that drives a person's behaviour and work motivation.

Several researches studied by Asghar Hazrati-Viaria, Ali Tayarani Rada and Sayed Saeed Torabib in 2012; Dorothea Wahyu Ariani (2013); Tin et al. (2017); Angelica Neomia Lumanisa (2015) and Abdah Ishak (2015) were in the search of implications of personality towards behaviour and motivation. Moreover, most of the instrument that has been used was the Big Five Personality Traits that looked into openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism of an individual. It has been considered as one of the most proposed theories after traits approaches. (Zamani, Abedini and Kheradmand, 2011) Although attention were gathered and given to this field, they concluded in unison that this area of topic needed more studies to have better understanding.

An established and reliable personality instrument is a useful tool to help researchers predict and relate the variables they are interested in. This is because they believe personality traits indicate a relatively stable profile in people's morale. These characteristics are appeared as consistent and coherent throughout their life when faced with different situations. Not only can it be used to study the human behaviours and motivation, in finding the connection between internet addictions of high school students is also based on personality characteristics.

Besides, it was also used as a psychological test administered and evaluated by psychologists. The Big Five Questionnaire for Children (BFQ-C) is also made available for children. In a research done by Serra-Negra et. al. (2013) aims to seek relationship between tasks performed, personality traits and sleep bruxism in Brazilian school children, the result shows that children whose personality domain has a high level of Neuroticism and who perform household chores imposed by the family are more vulnerable to sleep bruxism.

Interesting enough is that we can also examine the association between personality traits and job performance. A study done towards Malaysian public secondary school teachers reveals that there is a positive association between some scales of personality traits and job performance. The implications of this study claims that understanding the influence of personality traits on job performance is essential. (Noraini, Norashikin and Lily, 2015) The importance of understanding personality traits is no longer foreign. In order to predict a school success, personality traits (conscientiousness) were used as a measure of typical performance of school students. (Ivcevic and Brackett, 2014)

All these findings in the past studies have given us space to enhance our professionalism as an accountable and efficient school counsellor. With the input of knowledge, we now aware that the importance of understanding children's personality traits and how the traits will reflect in their behaviour and motivation. It leads and inspires us to further study this area so that the services provided are relevant and effective not only to the children but also stakeholders. As Sanja Tatalović-Vorkapić (2013) says, the main purpose of knowing a pupil's personality is never to judge or intend to modify his or her behaviour. Instead, it serves the purpose to learn and explore their personality and behaviour in and outside of school. With better comprehension of a pupil's personality, we can work around it, looking for the best solution and alternatives to escalate the development of a pupil to his or her full potential.

According to Sanja Tatalović-Vorkapić (2013), there would be a few implications if this issue is not looked into properly. Firstly, children will never truly know their type of personality traits. Knowing clearly our personality traits brings advantages and realistic insights about us. It benefits the children in planning and working out their plans in the future based on their understanding of their own personality. In the working environment, especially in big companies or professional careers like teachers, personality tests are given as a tool to filter candidates and recruit the suitable types of people. This step aims to avoid taking in unmatched personality to the job environment because certain jobs require certain qualities and personalities to perform.

## **1.2 Behaviour**

A problematic behaviour from the psychological perspective often refers to actions that are inappropriate and against the social norms. However, behaviours do not dominantly exist when an individual is born and it is not determined by genes or inheritance. Human behaviours are learnt through observation from surrounding and it can be an action of copy and paste. This mechanism calls for hope because behaviours can be shaped through behavioural theories.

Disturbing, problematic or challenging student behaviour is said to be among the greatest challenges facing today's school life. (Lanas and Brunila, 2019) Despite this fact is clearly known by the public, there is very thin analysis of what becomes disturbed, challenged or problematized. Behind the veil of disturbing behaviour, there are normal development course taking part and an idealised student transforming, though management and measurement in school are still in dire need.

In the school content, conflicts will continue to exist between pupils and teachers if both parties are not aware of the role and impact of personality towards behaviours. Diversified different types of pupils' personalities as well as the personality of the educators should be well known by themselves to avoid perpetual misunderstanding and dispute. Without well engagement and collaboration between educators and pupils, it is certain that it will be lose-lose situation. Consequently, mental health is at stake and sometimes compromised. In such case, Slunjski (2003) in Sanja Tatalović-Vorkapić (2013) explains that the awareness of relationships between personality and behaviour does not by all means deny their nature. In fact, it should be seen as an opportunity to embrace personality by knowing their strength so that it can be developed and deployed in the future at the same time identifying their weakness so that it can be controlled or under supervision.

In learning the 'student behaviour', Millei and Peterson (2015) argues that the definition is often narrowly viewed by educators. 'Student behaviour' does not always have to be associated with 'problem behaviour' such as disruptive and deconstructive. Educators should no longer be seen either in control or out of control of their classroom. According to mainstream educational psychology, there are 'challenging behaviours'. In the researchers' paper, they are keen to see changes focus from 'fixing problems' to looking at the constitution of 'learner subjectivities' and explore how student's behaviour appears significantly different.

There are also studies about behaviours from the psychological perspectives. (Nash, Schlosser and Scarr, 2016) It shows evidence that for the most troubled pupils, effective behaviour management at school necessitates a more nurturing and collaborative approach alongside current disciplinary policy.

The findings in a paper claim that teachers most encountered disengaged behaviours and low-level disruptive behaviours. The prevalence of these behaviours is high and even though they are not violent behaviours but teachers find it very difficult to handle. They are usually disengaged and do not do well academically. Researchers argue that the effectiveness of punishment as it does not address the underlying causes of that behaviour. Instead, changing the method from controlling discipline policies to engaging students

is believed to be more effective and reduce the reliance on intervention strategies is equally important. (Sullivan, Johnson and Conway, 2014)

A past research done by Hathaway and Monachesi (1963) was also interested to study the relationship between adolescent personality and behaviour. Researchers were inspired to look for connection between personality and behaviour when they realized some of the students were more prone to maladjustment and delinquency than others. The results show that bad conduct and delinquency were generally associated with high scores on the psychopathic, schizoid and hypomanic scales of the MMPI. However, it was found that personality patterns of delinquency-prone adolescents are diverse, and not monotonic.

In the book of Ajzen (2005) also acknowledged that much work in the past years has served to confirm that attitudes and personality traits affect behaviour. In other words, behaviours can be predicted by innovations in the implicit assessment of attitudes and personality.

### **1.3 Motivation**

A study done by Hakimi, Hejazi and Lavasani (2011) wished to see the relationships between personality traits and students' academic achievement. The results concluded that personality traits were significantly related to academic achievement. Interesting results also include the fact that gender differences in the personality characteristics were not significant to academic achievement. Regression analysis indicated personality traits accounted for 48 percent of variance in academic achievement.

In predicting academic success of psychology students in higher education, researchers also included personality and achievement motivation to be the variables. For the Big Five personality factors (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience), a consistent, positive association for conscientiousness with academic success was found. (Busato et. al., 2000)

Research also suggests that by using ASEBA instrument, it is effective in self-assessing for adolescents. It is a questionnaire designated to assess behaviour and motivation by the individuals. It is said to be holistic and could help to reflect the reality. Self-assessment is the key to firmer self-motivation and higher achievement. (McMillan dan Hearn (2008) Moreover, self-assessment is the main component of cognitive and constructivist learning theory. It explains that pupils are believed to watch and assess their behaviour and motivation. By doing that, it builds their responsibility towards their own actions.

In identifying the level of motivation, researchers Hazrati, Rad dan Torabi (2012) are interested to categorize them into intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. They found that pupils with higher score in 'awareness' personality are expected to have higher intrinsic and extrinsic motivation while 'openness' personality only predicted higher level in intrinsic motivation. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation exists with different proportion in every individual. Certain individuals work perfectly fine only with intrinsic motivation and it drives them forward. We also cannot deny that some individuals work even better when extrinsic motivation is asserted. It is worth to study how different types of personality work with intrinsic or extrinsic motivation.

In most of the cases, children in schools are well behaved but lack of motivation. Hence, this paper is to study the importance and relationship between personality, behaviour and motivation. It serves as a wake-up call to researcher to factor in personality traits when studying children's behaviour and motivation. It encourages researcher to explore and study deeper to understand and to contribute updated knowledge. The earlier the study is done, the more stakeholders are going to be benefited. For instance, low motivation across children for extended period of time will definitely give impact negatively to the development of a pupil's intellect, emotions and social. Lack of motivation can be tumorous in the long run for both teachers and pupils. Importantly, we must be able to identify the factors that cause lack of motivation and find ways to ease the tension while escalate it.

Therefore, Akhbar Soleiman Nezhad and Majid Vahedi (2011) suggest finding causes of low motivation in class using psychological approach. It is believed that education and psychology are inter-related. It is crucial for teachers to take affective aspect into account when dealing with children. When a pupil experiences low self-esteem, depression or anxiety, the level of motivation will certainly be affected. Hence,

understanding personality is one of the ways to prepare ourselves and the classroom so that it meets the needs of the children.

## II. Conclusion

To date, there scarcely are researches in Malaysia targeting the children's personality, behaviours and motivation. The amount of researches in this field is saddening even though the importance is getting its spotlight in general. There are not many papers and data based in Malaysia that can be used to effectively help solve the issues.

It is a great move and initiative that in primary schools in Malaysia, aptitude test is given to Year 6 pupils to assess their potential in various fields. However, in my humble opinion, personality test should also be given and documented individually so that it can be traced and analysed.

As a school counsellor, this paper opens up an opportunity to not only give attention to role of personality in play by every child but also be prepared to plan intervention and follow-ups strategies.

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