

Methods of Overcoming Parental Psychological Stress in Children's Education During the Period of Movement Control Order (MCO)

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Abstract

Methods of overcoming the psychological stress of parents in the process of educating children during the MCO period according to the Islamic perspective are among the issues that need to be addressed to overcome the crisis experienced by parents when managing children at home, especially in the learning process. Studies conducted on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on society revealed social barriers when the pandemic affected emotional and psychological well-being with symptoms of stress, stress, anxiety, worry, depression, and depression as well as persistent economic stress. Parents are no exception affected by the spread of COVID-19 and MCO with concern about the mental and emotional health of children during the MCO as well as stress and burdened with home-based learning and teaching (PdPR). Therefore, the crisis and stress that was found to exist among parents during the pandemic, especially in the aspect of children's education at home, should be taken remedial measures as a practice towards continued well-being and happiness in the family. Thus, this study was conducted to analyze the methods of overcoming the psychological stress of parents in the educational process of children during the MCO period. The design of this study was a survey study. The method of quantitative data collection was done using the distribution of questionnaires to 516 parents and analyzed descriptively using SPSS. The results showed that the majority of respondents always pray and rely on God (mean = 3.61) as the main step to overcome psychological stress. This study can be utilized by parents and all Muslim families next to the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), The National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN), and Department of Social Welfare (JKM) to provide continuous education and guidance to shape family well-being in Malaysia.

Keywords: Psychological Stress, Parenting, Education, Children, Islamic Perspective

Introduction

More and more studies on the pandemic have been done lately as the whole world is currently facing the COVID-19 pandemic, including a study conducted by Talha (2020); Greyling et al (2020); Brooks et al. (2020); Jiao et al. (2020); Orgilés et al. (2021); Sahid et al. (2020); Li et al (2020). Preventive measures such as the implementation of movement control orders that limit various social activities have led to changes in the daily lifestyle of the community compared to the previous life (Talha, 2020). This is not only the case in Malaysia but also experienced by the entire world population with the enforcement of curfews (lockdown) to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus (Greyling et al., 2020). From the point of view of community safety, this enforcement is recognized as an excellent preventive measure but has side effects that exist behind these social restrictions imposed on individuals, families, and society. The institution of the family is no exception to this epidemic when it is included in one of the social roles that invite its harm.

Although MCO period helped the rate of decline in COVID-19 cases, it still contributed to instability and threatened family harmony (Hamjah, 2020). Many studies highlight the experience of depression, family breakdown in the COVID-19. For example, stress due to financial problems has led to an increase in domestic violence cases by 32 percent within a week of the implementation of the curfew in France (Mapjabil et al., 2020). The same goes for the rising cases of domestic violence in China to lead to a trend of increasing divorce cases by 25 percent in mid-March 2020, in Xian and Dazhou counties During the curfew (Prasso, 2020). The stress of this financial crisis led to domestic misconduct such as beatings, running away from home, and suicide.

Meanwhile, the study from Majid (2020) which highlights the variety of routine changes in the family that must be undergone simultaneously such as housekeeping routines, work routines, and social routines have contributed to emotional dissatisfaction thus provoking different responses in a family. When a 'family manager' or wife is unable to prepare the mental and physical capacity to deal with any situation in the family during this difficult phase, it can be the cause of bad family dysfunction and eventually contribute to divorce. Parents were also found to be concerned about their children's mental and emotional health during the MCO period (Hayin, 2020). They also face stress and are burdened with the process of home-based learning and teaching (PdPR) (Megat, 2021).

Thus, according to Jodi et al. (2014) and Yusoff et al. (2020), the application of spiritual practices based on the teachings of Islam is one of the alternatives in managing human psychology based on and can influence the change of an individual including parental psychology during the process of educating children during the MCO period. Many methods can be practiced by individuals and parents to overcome the stress they face such as the recommendations through the approach Al-Ghazali (2000) with the process of soul training (*riyadhah al-nafs*) such as prayer, remembrance, reading the Qur'an, and praying to increase peace in life (Yusoff et al., 2020). In addition, train yourself to always be thoughtful, patient, confident, calm, and grateful with every determination of Allah SWT. This approach to the recovery of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) should be implemented in life because the nature of the self is always filled with various complex problems, heart disease, and wickedness due to lack of appreciation of religious values to make it difficult to enjoy peace and happiness (Hamjah, 2014).

Accordingly, the role of spirituality and psychotherapy during the pandemic period should be given attention in efforts to overcome parental pressure in the PdPR process of children to shape family well-being but no studies have been done related to it. This clearly shows that such a study is very necessary to do with a focus on methods of overcoming stress in the MCO period that it is hoped that the results of this study can contribute to the construction of a prosperous family. Therefore, the question arises as to how the ways and methods used by parents to overcome the psychological stress of the MCO period? Thus, this study was conducted to analyze the methods of overcoming the psychological stress of parents in the educational process of children during the MCO period.

Research Methodology

The design of this study is a survey study using a questionnaire instrument on 516 respondents selected purposefully (purposive sampling) among Muslim parents in Malaysia. The main instrument used in this study for data collection is a questionnaire through the virtual platform google form. Overall, the questionnaire contains three main sections, but this paper will describe only one section related to methods of overcoming parental psychological stress in children's education during the period of MCO. The reliability of the instrument was obtained through a pilot study to test the consistency of the survey with the value of the Cronbach's Alpha index coefficient before conducting the actual study. The researcher conducted a pilot study on 50 parents among the staff of the Universiti Teknologi MARA Melaka branch to obtain the reliability of the questionnaire instrument of this study. Then, the results of the pilot study were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha (α) reliability test measurement tool and showed the value of the reliability coefficient reaching 0.882.

Therefore, the reliability value of the questionnaire instrument in this study indicates that the instrument is in a position of high reliability, effective and consistent, and can be used for actual research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). The selection of respondents answers in the survey was measured using a Likert-type scale with scores of 1 'being strongly disagreed' (STS), 2 'disagree' (TS), 3 'Agree' (S) and 4 'strongly agree' (SS). Next, the questionnaire data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for The Social Science (SPSS) program. The analysis process involves descriptive statistical methods and is presented through frequency (F), percentage (%), and mean value in highlighting the results of the study. The use of such methods is appropriate to answer the questions and objectives of the targeted study.

Result

Among the purpose of this study is to analyze this study was done to analyze the methods of overcoming the psychological stress of parents in the educational process of children during the MCO period. Table 1 shows 15 question items based on methods of overcoming parental psychological stress in the process of educating children according to the Islamic perspective. If viewed as a whole, respondents among parents overcame their psychological stress with the methods recommended in Islam as almost all items recorded a high level of interpretation of mean values. The results showed that the item with the highest mean value was the item 'I always pray and rely on God' (mean = 3.61), followed by the item 'I perform the obligatory prayers perfectly' (mean = 3.55), 'I read the Quran for get calm' (mean = 3.51), 'I train myself to be patient and persevere with tests' (mean = 3.45), 'I often reflect on myself in the face of tests' (mean = 3.43), 'I practice good relationships with my partner and children at home' (mean = 3.43), 'I often give alms to solve problems' (mean = 3.35), 'I provide learning tools for

children at home' (mean = 3.34), 'I am able to handle family finances well' (mean = 3.27), 'I get support and cooperation from my partner in educating children' (mean = 3.25), 'I practice congregational prayers with my family' (mean = 3.18), 'I deepen my knowledge of parenting to educate my children better' (mean = 3.13), 'I organize my schedule so that it is balanced between working and educating time children' (mean = 3.11) and the item 'I often follow spiritual programs through mass media to reduce stress' (mean = 3.05). Meanwhile, the item 'I seek counseling and family advice if necessary' got the moderate mean value (mean = 2.75).

Table 1

Methods of overcoming parental psychological stress in the educational process of children on MCO period

No	Statement	Percent (%) & Frequency (N)				Mean	Interpretation of Min
		Strongly disagree	Do not agree	Agree	Strongly Agree		
1	I always pray and hope in God.	0.4% (2)	1.6% (8)	34.9% (180)	63.2% (326)	3.61	High
2	I performed the obligatory prayers perfectly.	0.4% (2)	2.7% (14)	38.2% (197)	58.7% (303)	3.55	High
3	I read the Quran for peace of mind.	0.4% (2)	2.5% (13)	43% (222)	54.1% (279)	3.51	High
4	I trained myself to be patient and persevere with the test.	0.2% (1)	1.9% (10)	50.4% (260)	47.5% (245)	3.45	High
5	I often self-reflect in the face of tests.	0.4% (2)	2.3% (12)	50.8% (262)	46.5% (240)	3.43	High
6	I practice good company with my partner and children at home.	0.4% (2)	1.6% (8)	52.3% (270)	45.7% (236)	3.43	High
7	I often give alms to solve problems.	0.6% (3)	4.8% (25)	53.9% (278)	40.7% (210)	3.35	High
8	I provide child learning tools at home.	1% (5)	4.1% (21)	55% (284)	39.9% (206)	3.34	High
9	I am able to handle family finances well.	1.0% (5)	5.6% (29)	59.1% (305)	34.3% (177)	3.27	High
10	I get the support and cooperation of my partner in educating my children.	1.9% (10)	7% (36)	55% (284)	36% (186)	3.25	High
11	I used to pray in congregation	1.9% (10)	11.2% (58)	54.1% (279)	32.8% (169)	3.18	High

	with my family.						
12	I deepened my knowledge of parenting to educate my children better.	0.8% (4)	11.4% (59)	61.4% (317)	26.4% (136)	3.13	High
13	I organize my schedule so that it is balanced between working time and educating children.	1.0% (5)	12.2% (63)	62% (320)	24.8% (128)	3.11	High
14	I often follow spiritual programs through the mass media to reduce stress.	3.3% (17)	13.4% (69)	58.1% (300)	25.2% (130)	3.05	High
15	I seek counseling and family advice if necessary.	7.8% (40)	24.2% (125)	52.9% (273)	15.1% (78)	2.75	Moderate

Source: Questionnaire (2021)

Discussion

Among the main methods used by respondents among parents to overcome psychological stress in the educational process of children is to always pray and rely on God (mean = 3.61) by achieving a percentage of agreeing and strongly agree 98.1% (n = 506). This finding is supported by Al-Ghazali (2000) who explained that the process of soul training (*riyadhah al-nafs*) such as praying can increase peace in life. Meanwhile, Hamid (2007) stated that parents should practice prayer for the good of themselves and their children. Various recitations of prayers recited by Rasulullah SAW can be practiced in life, including prayers for the well-being of the hereafter, simplification of affairs, peace of mind, freedom from the burden of debt, and so on. Among other practices is *tawakkal* therapy which is a process that fully relies on hope and determination only to Allah SWT alone (Wan Yusoff & Amin, 2020). This action can overcome the problems of anxiety and depression experienced. Jalil (2017) also acknowledged the same in the effectiveness of the application of religious elements such as the attitude of trust to address social concerns.

In addition, the findings of the study also showed that the respondents tried to perform the obligatory prayers perfectly (mean = 3.55) with the percentage of agreeing and strongly agree reached 96.9% representing 500 respondents. This is in line with the writings of Azizan & Sa'ari (2009) who explained that the practice of obligatory worship is required in Islam, especially the prayers that must be performed by every Muslim. Worship recommended by Islam contains spiritual elements to treat liver disease. It binds human relationships with the creator directly. The ablution performed before the performance of the prayer makes a believer feel clean and their soul. The feeling of purity of body and soul prepares man to enter into a spiritual relationship with God and sends him to a state of calm

body and soul in prayer. After communicating with God in prayer will eventually gain peace and tranquility because of feeling close to the creator.

Meanwhile, 86.9% representing 448 respondents also agreed and strongly agreed with the item 'I practice congregational prayer with my family' (mean = 3.18) as a way to overcome psychological stress during the MCO period. According to Akhir (2011), child abuse can occur because the guidelines of Islamic family life are not practiced such as congregational prayers with children. Thus, congregational prayers together with family members at home can calm the heart and build the strength of brotherhood and friendship with each other. Now, the head of the family is an imam in performing prayers at home with the family (Mohad et al., 2020).

Worship such as reciting the Quran also has its therapeutic function and has a positive effect on the soul. This can be seen in the item 'I read the Quran to find peace' (mean = 3.51). A total of 501 respondents (97.1%) have stated agree and strongly agree with the item. Khaldun (1995) in his work "*al-Muqaddimah*" stressed that learning the Qur'an is important because it is the basis of all learning policies in the Islamic country as it is one of the symbols of religion and strengthens faith and belief. The various forms of remembrance that have been recorded in the Qur'an and hadith should be practiced in an orderly and continuous manner from time to time. This is because the cure for healing the soul is to remember God a lot.

The application of spiritual practices based on Islamic teachings is one of the alternatives in managing human psychology. Spiritual intelligence is defined by faith, true piety, always praying, *zikir*, and establishing prayers. One's life will be better and more orderly when one puts the spiritual aspect in the human being. This is because the appreciation and practice of spirituality that is closely related to the heart and mind play a role in empowering the human soul to become a pious person. In addition, human beings are generally created by Allah SWT to need physical and spiritual elements in a balanced way to ensure that a person functions well (Baharuddin & Ismail, 2014). Baharuddin & Ismail (2014) has formulated the main domains of spiritual intelligence, namely *al-ruh*, *al-qalb*, *al-nafs*, *al-aql*, *tauhid*, *ibadah*, and *akhlaq* which form spiritual intelligence in Islam. Thus, this spiritual practice can influence the change of an individual Yusoff et al., (2020) including parental psychology during the PKP period children's education process. A total of 130 respondents (83.3%) agreed and strongly agreed with the item 'I often follow spiritual programs through mass media to reduce stress' (mean = 3.05).

For the item 'I get the support and cooperation of spouses in educating children' (mean = 3.25), a total of 452 respondents (91%) have stated agree and strongly agree with the item. This happens because children cannot go to school as usual due to limited interaction, so online learning is a solution to ensure that they do not lag behind in education. This causes parents to need to work to take on the role of educators at home (Jarnawi, 2020). This is due to the order to close all education centers at every level to break the COVID-19 chain. Next, a total of 506 respondents (98%) agreed and strongly agreed with the item 'I practice good socializing with my partner and children at home (mean = 3.43). Therefore, to achieve a sense of *sakinah* in oneself, all forms of implementation of Allah SWT command to

his servants such as being considerate, tolerant, and doing good to spouses and children must be completed.

Many studies highlight the experience of depression, familial dysfunction in the COVID-19 phase. All of them show how these pandemics lead to implications that invite depression in both individuals and families. Depression is a form of emotional disorder caused by a person's form of thinking about himself, the life around him, and his environment (Yahya & Sham, 2020). Thus, counseling services can reduce the problem of depression. A total of 351 respondents (68%) agreed and strongly agreed with the item 'I seek counseling and family advice if necessary' (mean = 2.75). Islamic psychotherapy has a spiritual value that covers all aspects of human life in the process of the therapy of spiritual and physical illnesses (Sa'ari & Muhsin, 2012). The basis of the Islamic model of counseling or psychotherapy has placed four *maqamat* to curb the collapse of morals and social symptoms, namely *tawbah*, *sabr*, *raja'*, and *khawf*. These *maqamat* can affect the change and development of spirituality for the perfect (Musa & Sa'ari, 2019).

In terms of financial management, a total of 482 respondents (93.4%) agreed and strongly agreed with the statement 'I can handle family financial affairs well' (mean = 3.27). This is supported by the National Caring Assistance (BPN) which is one of the assistance provided by the government in the People's Caring Economic Stimulus Package (Jabatan Perdana Menteri, 2020). To manage finances, one needs to understand their financial situation first before making any decision, especially in the current uncertain situation. This is because the ongoing MCO period at this point will result in an increase in costs in kitchen expenses due to the failure of the head of the family to cover the cost of living of a large number of family members while feeling at home (Mapjabil et al., 2020). Another finding that refers to the financial aspect is through the item 'I provide children's learning tools at home. A total of 490 respondents (94.9%) agreed and strongly agreed with the statement. Therefore, parents need to plan the use of their money to ensure the perfection of the facilities for their children is not compromised.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the psychological state of parents in their children's education can be disturbed, especially when Malaysia has to carry out the MCO period due to COVID-19. However, it can still be controlled through the methods already discussed. The study found that the method of prayer and its total dependence on Allah SWT is the most important method that can overcome the pressure of parents in the education of children during this MCO. The majority among parents always pray and trust to Allah SWT so that the stress they face during the pandemic can be well controlled. This is because prayer is a source of spiritual strength that can overcome the feeling of stress with a problem or challenge of parents in educating children especially with the process of home-based learning and teaching (PdPR) during MCO. The application of spiritual practices based on the teachings of Islam is one of the alternatives in managing human psychology based on and can influence the change of an individual including parental psychology during the process of educating children during the MCO. Therefore parents should make efforts to deal with stress in their children's education by always praying and trusting in Allah to always be calm and be able to get out of the problems faced towards a more prosperous life even in the pandemic phase.

Furthermore, various other methods also be practiced especially parents such as performing obligatory prayers, self-reflection, being patient with every test from Him, getting along well with wife and children, read the Quran for peace of mind, provide child learning tools at home, handle family finances well, getting knowledge of parenting skills, organize time schedule, follow spiritual programs and seek counselling and family advice if necessary.

In addition, this study is expected to help parents who may have lost the idea of how to cope with their psychological stress in this MCO. Apart from that, based on sources from the National Family Policy (DKN) issued by LPPKN which aims at the direction of total family well-being which emphasizes health not only in terms of external but also prioritizes internal health such as mental. This is because it believes that the family is the basic thing in producing a good generation in the future. So to ensure continuity, this study proves from the methods discussed following the policy which is also one of the strategies that have been started by the LPPKN itself. So JAKIM, LPPKN, and JKM can take action by focusing on the methods stated. The government can also take these measures to make the community aware of overcoming the psychological pressure in the education of children during this MCO period, especially for parents.

Overall from this study, the researcher found that some gaps can still be studied in future studies. Especially the follow-up study using inferential statistical analysis through correlation and Mann-Whitney U test. In addition, another study proposes to focus on parents who are among the educators themselves. This study is due to the existence of different environments for parents with different backgrounds as well as contributing to different opinions on methods of overcoming the psychological stress of parents in their children's education.

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