Compilation of Abstracts

Malaysian Medics International Mental Health: A Novel Approach

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CONTENTS

Mental Health Research Project

Research Field: Psychology and Psychiatry

Objectives: The main aim for this research project is to allow participants in these Health Science fields to actively engage themselves in the area of research, offering them opportunities to present their research and gaining constructive criticism. Through these presentations, it is with hope that certain opportunities in research and opportunities beyond medical school can be enlightened to the students participating. In addition, this Research Project Competition also allows these participants to gain insight into the key psychology and psychiatry issues societies in Malaysia is facing today.

Abstracts Received:

Completed Researches (7)
Ongoing Researches (4)

Completed Researches

An Experiment to Investigate the Effect of Rhyming Tasks and Semantic Tasks on Memory Recognition

Sabrina Tee Zi Yi, Emily Ye

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Abstract

Introduction: This study is a partial replication of Elias and Perfetti's (1973) study on encoding tasks and recognition memory.

Objectives: The aim of this study is to investigate how acoustic and semantic encoding affects memory retention. According to the Level of Processing Model (Craik and Lockhart, 1972), semantic understanding will lead to greater memory retention. Thus, it was expected that the semantic group would correctly recognize more words than the acoustic group.

Methods: The independent variable was the semantic or acoustic encoding and the dependent variable was the average number of correctly recognized words. Participants were selected using a sample of convenience as stipulated by school regulations. Participants were divided into two groups and instructed to record either a synonym or rhyme associated with words presented in a slideshow. After a 3-minute distractor.

Results: Participants in the semantic group had a superior performance with mean 23.5/24 words recognized, while the acoustic group recognized a mean 15.75/24.

Conclusions: It can be concluded that semantic tasks lead to deeper levels of processing and a stronger memory trace, while acoustic tasks lead to shallow levels of processing and a weaker memory trace.

Eating Disorders, Body Image and Drug Use Among Healthcare Students

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Abstract

Introduction: Eating disorders are becoming increasingly common in Asian countries. Although body dissatisfaction is said to be an important risk factor that contributes to eating disorders, previous studies done on their associations were inconsistent. Stress among healthcare students could be a contributing factor to disordered eating, body image dissatisfaction and drug use.

Objectives: This study is aimed to determine the prevalence of these problems among healthcare students and their association with the demographic profile.

Methods: A set of standardized and validated questionnaires: Eating Attitudes Test (EAT-26), Body Dysmorphic Disorder Questionnaire (BDDQ) and Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST-20) were used to screen for possible eating disorders, negative body image and drug use among 471 healthcare students (16-33 years). Their socio-demographic details were obtained to test for any associations with the variables.

Results: More than half (54.8%) of the students are dissatisfied with their body image. 20.3% have a possible risk of obtaining eating disorders, while 4.7% of the students scored positive for drug use. There is a significant difference between BDDQ score and EAT-26 score. Dentistry students had a significantly higher prevalence of body image dissatisfaction among all healthcare students

Conclusion: The prevalence of possible eating disorders, negative body image and drug use among healthcare students were found to be similar with that of the general population. Healthcare knowledge was not found to equate with increased awareness or a decrease of these problems among the studied population. More emphasis should be given on increasing awareness and counselling students.

Prevalence Study of the Relationship of Chronic Back Pain and Depression Symptoms at Hospital Tuanku Jaafar, Seremban

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Introduction: Chronic back pain has been shown to be linked to depression. Depression can interfere with recovery in chronic back pain and similarly, chronic back pain can induce depression. Often if patients with depression are not treated well, their back-pain morbidity may be prolonged.

Objectives: This is a prevalence study of the relationship of chronic back pain and depression symptoms among patients at Hospital Tuanku Jaafar, Seremban.

Methods: A cross sectional study of 100 chronic lower back pain patients of the Orthopedics Clinic in Hospital Tuanku Jaafar, Seremban was performed. The patients were chosen through convenient sampling and the Ministry of Health (MOH) pain scale and Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) questionnaire was used as instruments to identify the severity of their pain and severity of their depressive symptoms. Statistical analysis was done to identify the relationship between pain and depressive symptoms.

Results: 100 patients with chronic lower back pain were recruited comprising of 71 females and 29 males. 68% scored positively on the PHQ-9 with 40% having moderate to severe rating scores. It appeared that Malays were less likely to suffer depression symptoms compared to other races studied. The risk of depression increased with severity of pain and 77.8% of the studied population with severe chronic lower back pain experienced depressive symptoms.

Conclusion: This study shows that depression is common among those with chronic back pain. However, no patients of the population studied were given treatment for depression, and this can only serve to prolong their medical condition. It is important that consideration of depression co-existing with chronic back pain be part of the holistic management of it.

Emotion Processing, Illness Perceptions and Quality of Life in Patient's with Psychogenic Non- Epileptic Seizures: An Exploratory Study

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Introduction: A Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizure (PNES) is a dissociative disorder which presents with epileptic seizure-like convulsions, but without the characteristic neurological electrical discharges associated with epilepsy. PNES is highly comorbid with other psychiatric diagnoses and significantly impacts the patient's quality of life. The emotional processing dysfunction model of PNES states that patients tend to represent emotional states as physical symptoms rather than affective experiences.

Aims: To investigate the relationship between PNES and patients' illness perceptions, depression/anxiety, and impairment of daily function. We also test the emotional processing dysfunction model of PNES.

Methodology: This is a retrospective cohort study. The sample consisted of patients in London, UK, presenting for a first psychiatric assessment with a confirmed diagnosis of PNES and a negative diagnosis of epilepsy via video telemetry. The patients answered validated questionnaires, namely the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS), Illness Perception Questionnaire-Revised (IPQ-R), and the Dartmouth Coop chart. The data was retrospectively collected and analyzed.

Results: Patients reported non-specific symptoms more frequently than specific symptoms relating to internal dysfunction. More patients reported higher on the HADS Anxiety score than on the Depression score. The patients tended to attribute their illness to the psychological domain more than the physical domain on the IPQ-R. Patients reported a lower Quality of Life measured by the Dartmouth Coop chart.

Conclusions: Our findings reject our initial hypothesis that our patient population conforms to the emotional processing dysfunction model of PNES. We found that patients tended to attribute their primary illness to psychological rather than physical causes. There was also a higher rate of anxiety than depression, when we expected a lower rate of anxiety reporting. Our correlation analysis identified specific comorbidity and impact on quality of life, stressing the importance of tackling the psychological aspects of the patient's illness to improve Quality of Life.

Exploration of Women's Mental Health Status in Sabak Bernam and Kuala Selangor, Malaysia

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Introduction: The prevalence of mental health in Malaysia is higher among women and it is estimated to affect 40% of Malaysian population by 2020.

Objective: This study investigates the prevalence of stress, anxiety and depression among women living in semi urban-rural area within Selangor, Malaysia. It also explores the relationship of the women's sociodemographic characteristics with anxiety, depression and stress.

Methods: A quantitative, cross-sectional study was carried out on 1193 women aged 18 to 60 years in Kuala Selangor and Sabak Bernam. A validated, self-administered questionnaire with a component of DASS-21 was used to evaluate the women's mental health status.

Results: The study findings indicate that majority of the women reported normal levels of stress (85.4%), anxiety (61.9%) and depression (78.4%). However, 29% of the women experience mild to moderate levels of anxiety and 9.1% experience severe to extremely severe level of anxiety. A higher percentage of the women experience higher anxiety levels compared to stress and depression. There is a significant negative correlation between age and anxiety (r=-.15, p<0.01) and between age and depression (r=-.09, p<0.01). It was found that the single women experience higher levels of mental health issues when compared to married women. Higher levels of anxiety, depression and stress were also noted amongst women who are employed in part-time jobs; in comparison to those who are employed full time or unemployed.

Conclusions: The current findings suggest that women in semi-urban and rural areas also experience mental health issues like depression, anxiety and stress. Factors such as age, marital status and working status contribute to the severity of these mental health issues. Thus, emphasizing the need to apply holistic intervention which also encapsulates diagnosis and treatment for both physical and mental health services to women.

Perceived Self-Efficacy and Perceived Control in Predicting Likelihood of Freeze Response

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Introduction: Research reveals that response during instances of threat (Leach, 2004) are often inappropriate. Fighting or fleeing is typically the suggested response to aversive stimulus compared to freezing (Estes & Verges, 2008; Bados, Toribio & Garcia-Grau, 2008) but freezing was the most commonly occurring response (Sagliano, Cappuccio, Trojano, Conson, 2014).

Objective: Hence, a correlational study was conducted to investigate perceived self-efficacy and perceived control in predicting likelihood of freeze response to threat.

Methodology: 120 participants aged 18 to 35, with no physical disabilities were recruited. They were required to fill in the Generalized Self-Efficacy (GSE) scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995), Revised Anxiety Control Questionnaire (ACQ) (Brown et. al., 2004) and Fight Flight Freeze Questionnaire (Maack, Buchanan & Young, 2015) via Google Forms. Forced entry multiple regression was administered.

Results: The first hypothesis showed a significant negative correlation between perceived self-efficacy and likelihood of freeze response was supported. The second hypothesis showed a significant negative correlation between perceived control and likelihood of freeze response was not supported. The third hypothesis showed perceived self-efficacy as a stronger predictor of likelihood of freeze response to threat compared to perceived control was also supported.

Conclusion: Theoretically, this research marginally contributes to the important notion of sexual consent here in Malaysia and provides a new light for research focused on defense response by arguing that these responses could be altered via cognitive factors. An extension of present research could serve as early detection mechanism for individuals prone to maladaptive freezing in situations of threat before providing survival training. The role of self-efficacy and perceived control in behavior (freezing) that leads to the development of threat related disorders such as PTSD is also highlighted. Primarily, this research emphasizes on the need for self-efficacy building and practice of practical perceived control not just as a self-help mechanism, but also to effectively deal with daily expected and unexpected stressor.

War Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Among Tawerghean Refugees Children

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Introduction: Post-traumatic stress disorder is a psychiatric disorder which results from the experiencing of or the witnessing of traumatic events. During the Libyan revolution in 2011 residents from Tawergha a small community around 300 km from Tripoli became volunteers and joined forces with the regime's soldiers to fight against the opposing members of the war. After the Military won the war, the militias killed many of the unarmed Tawerghean people. Those remaining were either arrested or banished from the town and as a result they became refugees. Currently, there are thousands living in refugee camps and as a consequence are at high risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder.

Objective: To assess the association of the war and post-traumatic stress disorder in children.

Methodology: A cross-sectional study was conducted within a one month period about the Libyan Tawarghean refugee children who had been living in the camp for 6 years. 70 children aged 9 to 15 years old participated in this study. The consent forms were signed by the parents and these children were interviewed individually as they were required to answer all the questions in the questionnaire which were read to them and verbal answers were recorded. The interview was based on the diagnostic criteria of PTSD DSM-V.

Results: Based on DSM-V criteria of PTSD, the children reported high rates of PTSD scores. 44.2% of total participants met the disability criteria.

Conclusion: PTSD is not something to be taken lightly upon, and should definitely be considered in the care and education of refugee children.

Ongoing Researches

Symptoms at First Contact as Predictors of Evolution towards Schizophrenia in Patients with Schizophreniform Disorder

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Advisors: Dr Sivakumar Thurairajasingam, Dr Cindy Niap

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Introduction: Schizophreniform disorder presents with schizophrenia-like symptoms for a duration greater than 1 month but less than 6 months. From this population, one third is known to remit fully by 6 months whilst the remaining two thirds progress to schizophrenia. From early research, factors that predict full remission includes an acute onset of psychotic symptoms, the presence of confusion, good premorbid functioning and the absence of blunted affect.

Objective: To identify the prognostic value of specific symptoms at first contact in predicting the progression of schizophreniform disorder to schizophrenia.

Proposed Methodology: This is a retrospective study to be conducted at the Psychiatric Clinic of Hospital Sultanah Aminah, Johor Bahru, Malaysia. A random selection of patients with a diagnosis of schizophreniform disorder at first contact, from January 2010 to December 2016, will be included in the study. The selected patients will be categorised into two arms (1) Patients with full remission by 6 months who retain the status by 24 months and, (2) Patients who progress to schizophrenia. Patient information obtained will be compared between both arms utilizing: (1) clinical symptom checklist derived from the Positive and Negative Symptoms Scale; (2) Patient socio-demographic questionnaire. Exclusion criteria include (1) inadequate details of initial symptoms; (2) presence of comorbid psychiatric disorders (e.g. schizoaffective disorder, mood disorders, anxiety disorders etc.); (3) substance abuse; (4) revision of diagnosis to mental disorders other than schizophrenia during follow-up.

Expected Results: It is anticipated that progression from schizophreniform disorder to schizophrenia could be predicted by specific clinical symptoms present at first contact.

Conclusion: Identifying these predictive clinical symptoms will help clinicians distinguish patients at risk of evolving into schizophrenia. Close monitoring and specific interventional programs implemented for these patients could ensure a better diagnostic outcome.

Pilot Laughter Yoga and Stress Study (PLAYS), a Randomized Controlled Trial

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Introduction: Various studies have proven that laughter yoga can reduce a subject's stress levels. However, there is no literature yet to compare the stress coping capability of a subject before and after the intervention of laughter yoga by using both questionnaires and biological markers to assess the level of stress before and after being mentally stressed.

Objectives: To investigate the effect of laughter yoga on a person's ability to respond to mental stress and the sensitivity of Salivary Alpha Amylase (sAA) as a stress biomarker when compared to standardized questionnaires for stress assessment. To establish the stress level amongst the medical students of Monash University Malaysia.

Proposed Methodology: Questionnaires, i.e. Depression Anxiety and Stress Scales (DASS 21) and Visual Analogue Scale Score (VAS Score) will be administered before and after the induction of stress along with the collection of salivary sample to measure the level of sAA from each participant. The induction of stress will be done by using a modified Stroop Colour Word Test and Paced Auditory Serial Addition Test (PASAT Test). These would be repeated at the end of the study after the intervention with laughter yoga. All data analysis will be done by using Analysis IBM SPSS Version 25.

Expected Results: Intervention with laughter yoga would reduce the difference between the post-test and pre-test level of stress as measured by using DASS 21, VAS Score, and sAA.

Conclusion: To establish laughter yoga as a lifestyle intervention to enhance stress coping capabilities. To establish efficacy of sAA by comparing its results with the standard stress measurement questionnaires' i.e. DASS 21 and VAS Score. To establish the baseline stress level of the medical students at Monash University Malaysia.

Depression, Anxiety & Stress (DAS) Among Patients with Idiopathic Parkinson's Disease (IPD) and their Quality of Life - A Cross-sectional Study in One Center of Johor State, Malaysia

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Introduction: Idiopathic Parkinson's Disease (IPD) is a concern due to its increasing prevalence with greater number of younger patients resulting in premature retirement and earning loss, eventually adding burden to the caregivers and health care resources. Besides classic motor symptoms, the non- motors symptoms have been increasingly recognized of which depression, anxiety and stress (DAS) have been found to be associated with poor Quality of Life (QoL) of IPD patients in several studies. In Malaysia, the prevalence of DAS among IPD patients is not well established, recognized and no statistical evidence of mental health care as part of proper management of IPD.

Objectives: To determine the prevalence of DAS and assess the quality of life of IPD patients. To also determine the proportion of patients with DAS who have been assessed and treated by psychiatrists.

Proposed methodology: This will be a cross-sectional study conducted in Neurology Clinic HSA. Target sample of 200 patients whom meets the inclusion and do not meet exclusion criteria and with all stages of disease according to Hoehn & Yahr staging will be recruited with informed consent. The tools used to interview the patients are DASS-21 scale to determine prevalence of DAS and PDQ-39 to assess the QoL. Prevalence of mental health services and past records of DAS will be assessed via medical records, interview with patients and physicians.

Expected Results: It is anticipated that prevalence of DAS in Malaysia will be as high as reported worldwide with significant impaired to quality of life. The study may reveal lack of psychiatric input in this group of patients that reflects the need of a holistic approach and awareness in recognizing DAS symptoms in management of IPD.

Conclusion: Increasing awareness of recognizing DAS symptoms and involvement of mental health service earlier in the disease with an attempt to improve the QoL of IPD patients and reducing burden of care.

Moving on and Letting Go: The Relationship Between Personality, Coping Strategies, and Non-Death Grief in Relationship Dissolution among Young Adults

Damian Chuah, James Yeow

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Introduction: Grief reactions are commonly expected to only follow a death loss event; however, it is possible for non-death loss events to invoke grief.

Objective: As the majority of grief studies primarily focus on death loss, this study hopes to examine the risk factors of non-death loss grieving in hopes of understanding it better as a whole and identify any potential differences it may have with death loss grief.

Proposed Methodology: About 120 participants who have experienced a break ups within the last twelve months would be recruited to complete the Revised Grief Experience Inventory, the Brief COPE, and the Big Five Inventory.

Proposed Results: It is predicted that emotional-oriented coping would mediate the relationship between neuroticism and non- death grief while task-oriented coping would mediate the relationship between extraversion and non- death grief. Task-oriented coping is expected to alleviate grief intensity while emotion-oriented coping is expected to increase grief intensity.

Conclusion: Results from this study could be utilised by counsellor to better construct intervention strategies when treating grief.