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THE IMPACT OF SELF-CONTROL IN MALAYSIA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Abstract

Low self-control has also been associated with psychological distress, difficulties at work or in school, and the emergence of mental health issues, however, there is very limited information established in Malaysian curriculum and education. The aim of this research is to investigate the impact of self-control in education and it`s pattern in the Malaysian curriculum. This study examined 41 research papers published in recent years and met the inclusion criteria using the PRISMA screening technique. The most studied variables, according to the findings, were academic performance, emotion regulation, and well-being. The findings reveal the impacts of self-control in education as it promotes personal development, help-seeking behaviour, altruism, and coping mechanisms. The literature review conducted in this study indicates the importance of incorporating self-control into education to improve students' overall well-being. Thus, educators must be aware of the significance of practising self-control in the classroom.

Keywords: Self-Control; Tertiary Education; Academic Performance; Systematic Review; Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

The ability to modify one's own behaviour particularly to bring it in line with ideals, values, morals, and social expectations, as well as to support the pursuit of long-term goals, is referred to as self-control (Baumeister et al., 2007). For the past 50 years, researchers who are interested in the dynamics and structure of human motivation have used self-control as a lens through which to think about self-regulation and persistent goal pursuit. Deep theoretical questions are also raised by self-control. Even though it leads to important life outcomes, people frequently find it difficult to practice it [1], [2]

A significant amount of what is typically referred to as "willpower" is required in some situations to exercise self-control [3]. There are numerous examples of this in daily life, but something about it still seems paradoxical. Why do people have trouble using self-control when it is obvious that doing so improves their quality of life in general? Why do exercises that support worthwhile but otherwise simple goals demand a lot of effort from us, and why do people find that effort unpleasant? By identifying the types of situations in which our ability to maintain self-control is compromised, we can start to find the answers to these questions.

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This serves as a helpful generalization. Once one focuses on the situations that initially inspired them, the logic behind the various approaches to self-control becomes clearer. These situations frequently involve a lack of self-control rather than successful use of it. Individual differences in self-control, or trait self-control, can occur between people, indicating that some people are generally better at exercising self-control than others [4].

Early self-control is linked to a wide range of favourable long-term outcomes, such as good physical and mental health, higher educational attainment, better job prospects, and financial security [5]. Low self-control has also been associated with psychological distress, difficulties at work or in school, and the emergence of mental health issues [6].

Duckworth and Seligman's seminal work [7] identified self-discipline (mostly measured by self-control instruments) as critical to promoting academic achievement, even more, important than intelligence. Besides, high self-control allows people's impulses, thoughts, emotions, and behaviour to be overridden, inhibited, or modified to bring them into compliance with standards and personally endorsed overarching goals [8], [9]. In regards to Malaysian education and curriculum, there is still scarce attention given, despite its importance in classroom management.

Therefore, there is a need to emphasize and practice self-control in education as students who possess self-control are better able to persevere through difficult tasks and get past roadblocks that may appear along the way to their educational goals. Also, it aids in the development of the self-control and resiliency required for academic success. Hence, the current systematic review aims to analyse and synthesize research articles on the impact of self-control in Malaysia tertiary education published between in recent years in order to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the common variables studied related to self-control?

RQ2: What is the impact of self-control in education?

METHODS

The PRISMA technique was used in this study, which stands for recommended reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses. PRISMA's four phases are identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. The four steps are depicted in Figure 1. PRISMA was chosen as the best research methodology due to its comprehensiveness and adaptability to various types of systematic reviews. As a result, the stages of the current systematic review of this research are as follows.

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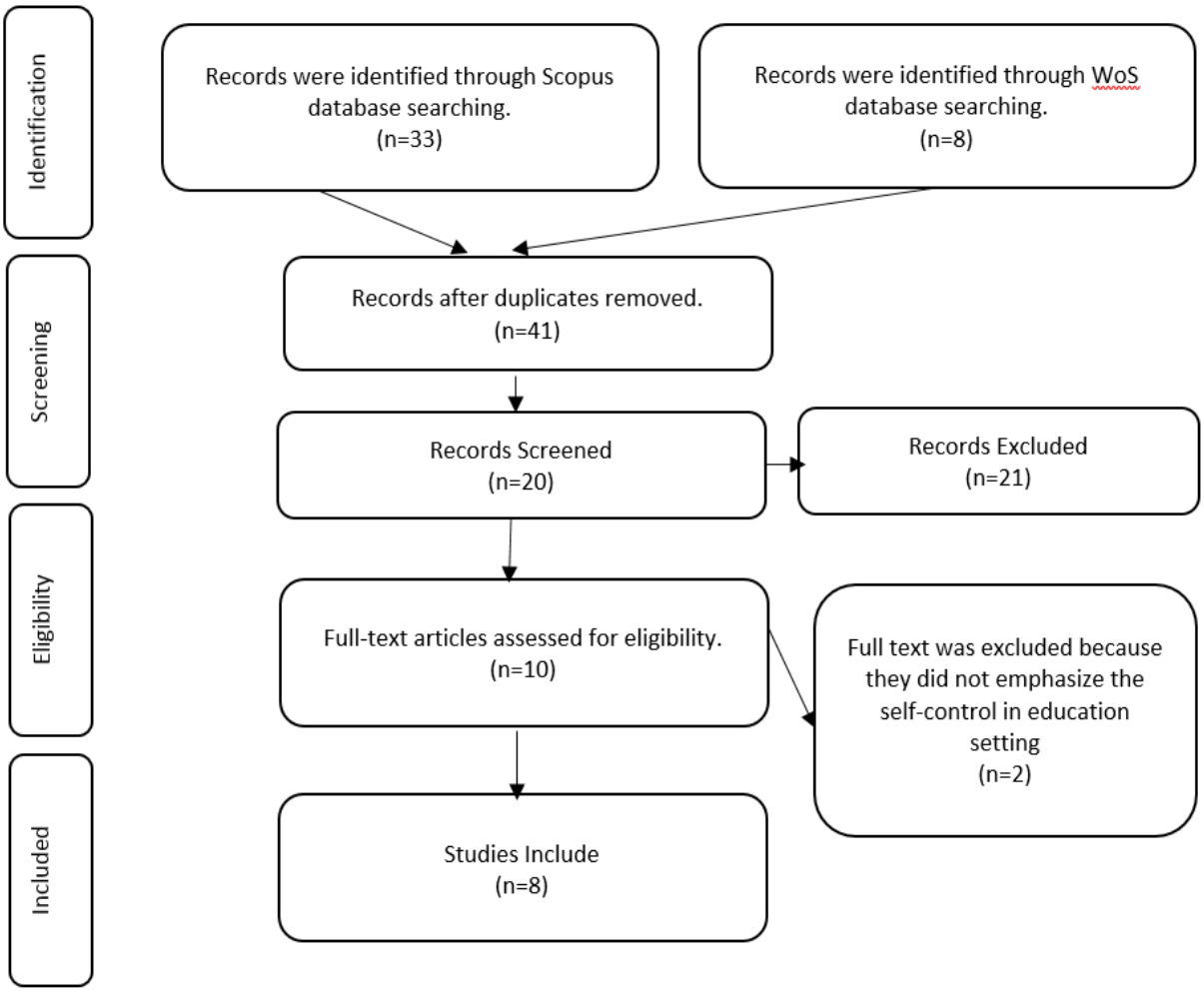

Figure 1: A systematic review using the PRISMA method.

Identification

According to the PRISMA standards, two databases were considered during the identification stage for the applicability of this research. Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) were among the databases used. The researcher created the essential phrases to consider the structures up for evaluation. The search strings for each database are shown in Table 1.

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Table 1: Database Search Strings

Database	Search String
Scopus	self-control AND education AND PUBYEAR > 2018 AND PUBYEAR < 2024 AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "PSYC")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY , "Malaysia")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (OA , "all"))
Web of Science (WoS)	ALL=(self-control education) and Open Access and Article (Document Types) and All Open Access (Open Access) and MALAYSIA (Countries/Regions) and English (Languages)

Screening

Following the identification stage, the process of screening the articles began. By comparing the two databases, the researcher eliminated all duplicated articles. The first level of screening eliminated 0 articles, leaving 41 eligible for further review. Then, 21 articles were excluded from the 41 titles because they did not meet the screening criteria of title, abstract, and keywords. Only 20 articles remained after multiple levels of exclusion, and they were screened using the inclusion and exclusion criteria shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criterion	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Focus	Self-control in education	Non-English
Context	Malaysia	Non-Malaysia
Language Skill	English	Non-English
Sources	Journal Articles	Conferences, proceeding, book chapters, thesis, reports, Review articles
Field of Study	Education and educational research	Not in education and educational research
Language	English	Non-English
Year of Publication	Between 2019 - 2023	Before the year 2019

Inclusion

The articles in the systematic review were all directly related to self-control in education. Table 3 lists the research articles that were included. According to Table 3, seven articles from Scopus and one article from WoS were chosen. The majority of the research was conducted in higher education institutions such as universities and colleges, with a focus on self-control, academic performance, and using emotional intelligence to investigate students' well-being.

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Table 3: Summary of Search on Self-Control Within Education

Study	Database	Aim	Sample	Findings
Zulfaris et al [10]	WoS	To investigate whether financial literacy, parental socialization, peer influence and self-control have a significant impact on money management among students of a Malaysian public university.	This study is done among 186 students majoring in Economics and Management, at a Malaysian public university.	There is no significant influence on how final-year students manage their finances. This is due to the fact that most students acknowledge they lack self-control when it comes to managing their finances.
Ivascu et al [11]	Scopus	The objective of this study was to recognize whether there is a relationship between the psychological impact of DAS and the coping strategies adopted by the undergraduate students responding during the lockdown.	The 397 cohort of students encompassing the pre-university/Diploma, 1st–4th year undergraduate, and postgraduate students from private universities in Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Southern Africa, and China, representing the emerging economies.	With a sample size of 397, the findings of this study revealed that DAS had no significant impact on students regardless of gender, country, household income, or level of education. DAS was well managed, with a coping strategy and self-efficacy established. This study resulted in a better understanding of DAS among undergraduates in emerging economies, as well as their level of coping behaviour, providing a glimpse of how millennials will deal with DAS during the pandemic.
Win et al [12]	Scopus	The study aims to assess the level of readiness for Self-directed Learning (SDL) among undergraduate students of the Asia Metropolitan University (AMU).	Through convenience sampling, 320 AMU undergraduate students from various academic programs, including MBBS, Nursing, Foundation in Science, Diploma in Health Care Management, and Business, were enrolled.	The total mean scores for SDLR was 157.9 ± 20.5, whereas mean scores for self-management, desire for learning, and self-control were 57.6 ± 7.9, 48.5 ± 6.4, and 51.9 ± 7.8, respectively. About two-thirds of both age groups (≤ 20 and > 20) and females were found to be ready for SDL methods.

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Samsudin et al [13]	Scopus	This study investigated the effect of outdoor education camp programs on the levels of resilience among Physical Education students from two selected universities in Malaysia.	A total of 162 undergraduate students were studied using a pre-test and post-test approach and a modified version of the Connor-Davidson in a 25 items self-report scale.	A paired t-test analysis revealed differences in variables involved in resilience variables, such as personal competence, instincts and tolerance for negative behavior, positive acceptance of change, control, and spiritual influence.
Yong Shee Mun et al [14]	Scopus	This study aims to examine the location learning environment, learner-instructor interactions, and self-efficacy of students more succinctly on their learning motivation during an unplanned transition to online learning.	This study used a sequential explanatory mixed method strategy with a sample size of 535 randomly collected from public and two private higher education institutions in Malaysia.	The findings of this study revealed the importance of the learning environment's location in fostering student motivation, as well as the positive influence of learner-instructor interactions on students achieving the desired learning outcomes, which was revealed during an unplanned transition to online learning.
Abd Hadi NH et al [15]	Scopus	This formative study aimed to explore Malaysian parents' and teachers' cultural conceptualization of adolescent SECs.	This qualitative study interviewed 12 Malaysian parents and 10 Malaysian teachers comprising of Malay (82%), Chinese (9%), and Indian (9%) races in an online focus group discussion	Two of the emotional competency themes represent the established CASEL constructs: (a) practicing self-regulation, (b) demonstrating help-seeking behavior, and the other two themes signify Asian values: (c) upholding altruism, and (d) maintaining cultural display rules.
Benlahcene [16]	Scopus	The current study investigates personal best (PB) goals as the mediating variable in the relationship between flourishing and the four aspects of student engagement (behavioral,	The data were collected from a total sample of 617 undergraduate students in Malaysia.	The findings show that flourishing predicted PB goals, behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and agentic engagement significantly, and significant indirect relationships were discovered between flourishing and behavioral, emotional,

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		emotional, cognitive, and agentic)		and cognitive engagement via PB goals. The findings provide important insights into the role of PB goals as one of the mechanisms by which flourishing may be associated with aspects of student engagement.
Wekke et al [17]	Scopus	To investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among students.	A correlational study was performed on 100 students studying clinical psychology.	The findings reveal a significant difference between emotional intelligence and academic achievement.

Data Analysis

The chosen journal articles were imported into the citation manager, Mendeley. Following that, a thematic analysis was conducted with the goal of responding to the stated research questions. The analysis was carried out by the researcher by interpreting the contents of the articles and categorizing the themes in accordance with the research questions. The themes were classified in the first research question based on the common variables studied related to self-control. Concerning the second research question, the articles were classified based on the impact of self-control in education.

RESULTS

RQ1 What are the common variables studied related to self-control?

Based on the findings, there were 3 common variables being studied related to self-control (a) academic performance, (b) emotion regulation, and (c) well-being. As a result, Table 4 displays the variable classifications based on the findings of the journal articles.

Table 4: Common Variables Studied

Variables	Study
Academic performance	[17], [12]
Emotion regulation	[16], [15], [13], [14]
Well-being	[11], [10]

In accordance with self-control, the most commonly studied variable is emotion regulation where most studies emphasize stress coping level, motivation, emotional engagement, and help-seeking behaviour. Besides, there are also some studies that focus on self-control and self-regulation as the predictor of academic performance. Lastly, there are two studies that relate self-control with overall student well-being such as psychological impact, and coping strategies.

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RQ2 What is the impact of self-control in education?

There is an ability to control undesirable behaviours during a stressful period which helps in being a protective function, especially during the pandemic [11]. Moreover, self-control assisted in studying coping mechanisms for managing stress, anxiety, and depression among students. Besides, students are able to work on self-directed learning well by having self-control over things related to their studies [12]. Students are also able to have better personal development, and high resilience when they have self-control over factors that affect their lives [13]. Self-regulation does assist in help-seeking behaviour among students and upholding altruism [15]. On the other hand, it promotes student engagement in cognitive, behavioural, emotional, and agentic [16]. Finally, emotional intelligence predicts academic achievement in terms of problem-solving, independence of action, self-awareness, responsibility, and sympathy [17].

DISCUSSION

The findings for this systematic review concluded that there are 3 common variables widely being studied in Malaysia in regard to self-control within education. Firstly, academic achievement where is the strength and main pillar of role for the students. Students spend years of their effort, time, and energy in order to achieve higher grades, fulfil the course outcomes and achieve their desired dreams. Meanwhile, some students are left behind struggling to pick up from where they left off without having proper guidance or control over things that might cause them to not succeed. Thus, self-control plays an essential role in how students are able to strive for their academic success. So, why do the majority of students need to practice self-control to succeed in academic settings? The response appears to be simple where students understand the value of academic work for their future, but they typically do not enjoy it while they are completing it. Hence, it is in the educator's control when they can make their lessons enjoyable and cultivate the culture of always practicing self-control in daily tasks such as completing the homework or assignments on time where this helps to educate students to get rid of procrastination and piling up work. Students frequently multitask with academic work while using screens. For instance, many teenagers check their social media accounts (50%), watch television (51%), and send and receive texts (60%) while doing their homework [18]. Multitasking frequently slows learning [19], [20], [21], despite the fact that the majority of teenagers think it has no effect on their work [18]. So why do students engage in it? Distractions offer a way out of schoolwork. For instance, in a behavioural task where students could choose to do math problems or, alternatively, watch videos or play Tetris, boredom steadily increased for students who chose to do math but did not increase for students who chose to amuse themselves [22]. Unsurprisingly, more disciplined students willingly committed more time to the former. Students between the ages of 12 and 24 spent an average of less than 6 minutes studying before getting up, moving around, texting, or checking their social media accounts [23]. Hence, self-control is essential in order to achieve greater academic performance.

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Moreover, the findings from this review also reveal that self-control aids emotion regulation among students. Thompson [24] defines emotion regulation as "the external and internal processes in which the individual is responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and changing their emotional responses, particularly their temporal and intense characteristics." Emotion regulation can be defined as a set of processes through which a person attempts to redirect the flow of emotions. Emotion regulation is the process by which a person manages situations such as emotion, affect, mood, and stress [25]. As students begin their university journey, it is becoming more widely acknowledged that common stressors like environmental changes, loss or reduction of social support networks, peer relationship development, and academic pressures can negatively impact students' mental health [26]. Therefore, self-control is fundamental, and it helps students to manage their emotions well and cope according to the situation.

Furthermore, self-control does promote overall well-being among students. Youths' psychological well-being is heavily influenced by the level of development of their behavioural self-regulation system and their own motivation [27], [28]. A variety of factors influence student learning activity motivation, including the level of self-regulation. People who have a low level of psychological well-being have not had the experience of positive close relationships with others, so they are constantly on the lookout for resources to improve this type of well-being. They constantly expect others to have a positive attitude towards them, but they are afraid of being unacceptable in different groups. They typically have a negative emotional background and poor self-control. They believe that the socio-cultural environment is mostly unfair and dangerous to them. According to Pozdniakova [29], the cognitive component of life satisfaction is present in the personal experience of feeling well-being and is dependent on the presence of a person's stable positive emotional background and a positive subjective assessment of reality. It is important to remember that the level of psychological well-being is determined by whether the needs of different levels are met. This review has one limitation in that it only focuses on tertiary education settings in Malaysia. This was due to the review's primary focus on examining the impact of self-control among Malaysian tertiary education students. As a result, they tended to have a variety of outcomes in tertiary education settings rather than in general education settings in Malaysia.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, self-control predicts academic performance, manages emotional regulations, and promotes well-being among students. Therefore, the importance of self-control should be highlighted well among educators and policymakers in order to generate high-quality graduates in the near future. Based on the results obtained, the impact of self-control is huge as it does not solely promote well-being, emotional regulation, and academic performance, but it does contribute to help-seeking behaviour, practicing altruism, personal development, and coping strategies. Therefore, future researchers may address the following issues such as focusing on identifying best practices for promoting and enhancing self-control within classrooms and other educational settings. Researchers can explore various techniques and interventions that help foster self-control

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too. Besides, future researchers may investigate the long-term outcomes of self-control training and interventions in educational contexts, including academic achievement, social-emotional development, and overall well-being.

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