Analyzing How Spiritual Intelligence Affecting Stress Coping in Stress Management

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Abstract

The issue of stress is becoming more serious in today's disruption era in which management is urged to pay more attention since it affects individual and even more organizational performance. Failing to answer this issue would bring unwanted impacts to the organization. This issue is not relatively new, but the consequences it brings urge organizations to find new alternative ways to answer this issue. One answer is coming from the study of spirituality and Spiritual Intelligence. This paper tries to conceptualize how this Spiritual Intelligence plays as a predictive factor of Stress Coping and how an individual copes with stress. From the literature analysis, we assume that spiritual intelligence has a significant role in stress management, and we found that Spiritual Intelligence relates to stress Coping in which Stress Coping Resources become a mediating factor between both. Spiritual Intelligence relates to stress Coping through three factors in Stress Coping Resources: Self-Efficacy, Cognitive Resources, and Perceived Stress. Through its seven dimensions, Spiritual Intelligence helps people to boost their mental health condition that is a requirement in surviving stress.

Key words:
Coping Resources; Spiritual Intelligence; Stress; Stress Coping; Stress Management

1. Introduction

Stress is taking part in a human's life, and it is undeniable that everyone must be ever getting stress in their life. Stress in modern societies has become a prominent phenomenon, and there are some issues and majority concerns to employees, organizations, and state. Stress is an avoidable thing that this problem also bounds higher education. (Rok, 2011). Stress in high levels can lead to depression, which shows the inability to endure in certain situations with current problems with passive response, will come up and make ineffective people who suffer from this thing, and maybe end up with avoiding, exit choice from the problem without solving it. And this result will affect their performance, which can harm themselves, those who have business interest with them and can harm the environment. People who suffered stress might act irrationally and could end with harming themselves. Untreated stress could lead to depression and even committing suicide. In several countries, the number of suicides of young age is increasing respectively.
Moreover, stress at high levels could lead to mental disorder. About 90% of people who commit suicide are people with mental disorders, such as schizophrenia, depressive disorders, etc. In the United States, suicide becomes the second leading causes of death to young people from 12 to 19 years old and resulting in 4,600 losing souls every year. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, from WHO data from 2016, the number of suicides continuously increased, from 4.3% in 2012 to 5.2% in 2016 (Susilawati, 2019). This phenomenon shows that unresolved stress is something to worry about since not all of us recognize the appearance of this stress and to measure our capabilities to survive the stress.

Surviving this stress requires good mental health, and as stated by Thakur (2015), good mental health comes from a good spiritual level. Thakur (2015) explained some evidence that Spiritual Intelligence and experiences are having a significant role in improving health, especially mental health. He concluded that spirituality could be used as an instrument to improve individual mental health. Mental health could determine the individual's personality and how an individual could balance their behaviour and express his/her adjustment to his/her self, other people, and the environment. Spirituality is recognized as one primarily influential factor which not only influences flexibility and compatibility in resolving the problem but also upgrades the organizational function (Emamgholian, et al., 2015). Spirituality enhances people to solve the problem with relatable behaviour effectively. This finding seems to be new hope for not only individuals and organizations to manage stress to maintain high performance in the individual level and organizations as well, along with the emergence of spiritual management in the workplace.

The research of Safavi, et al. (2019) suggests that there is a significant correlation between the intelligence aspect of spirituality, namely Spiritual Intelligence, and stress and depression. They mentioned that spirituality had been a substantial factor for the patient to heal themselves. This spiritual force acts as a source of peace and happiness for patients and has been prominent in many nursing theories over the past decade. However, it left a more specific question of how this spirituality functions in coping and managing stress at the individual level. By focusing on spiritual intelligence, this paper is going to explore a conceptual explanation of how this kind of intelligence affects individual effort to resolve stress.

2. Literature Review

STRESS

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) described coping as continually changing, cognitive and behavioural efforts, aimed to master specific external and internal expectations, evaluated by a person as aggravating or exceeding his/her resources. Stress becomes part of our life, happens when we are facing existing problems, and increasingly increases with the lack of relations with an environment that might always change (Rok, 2011). Stress could also happen due to a gap between our capacity to adapt to the situation that leads to being unable to solve the problem. Based on the literature, there is no assumption to make generalizations between one's stress with another because all individuals have their differentiation; they have different problems with different capacities.

Stress has been a research topic in years such as by Looker and Gregson (2008) who explained that the gap between how we perceive the demands and how we perceive our capabilities to cope with it causes stress. Similarly, Hammer and Organ (in Garg, 2014) defined stress as a
whole activity while the individual cannot respond correctly with the current situation which slows down the process to achieve the goals or threatening soul. It can be tension, worry, physical damage, nervous, mental breakdown or loss of self-esteem. Ivancevich and Matteson (2002) defined stress as an interaction between person and environment, and how they react to their adopted response that is influenced by their diversity. Greenberg and Baron (2000) stated stress is an intricate pattern of emotional and physiological reactions that relate to external demands (workloads, interpersonal relations). And the most dangerous thing is when the stress becomes accumulated, it will lead to deviations from the typical pattern of human behaviour and thus might consequence to the depression and lack of mental health.

Types of Stress
There are four types of stress (Garg, 2014). The first is Eustress, which appears to motivate and inspire people, also known as "Good Stress". Alshahrani (2019) also supported this kind of stress and mentioned that when stress has a positive impact on a person, it can be the stimulator for them to inspire them in doing some actions. An optimal level of stress is categorized by high energy, linked to improving learning ability, increased academic achievement, a boost in personal and professional development, calmness under pressure, improved memory and recall, and an optimistic outlook. The idea is not to reduce stress; the current issue is the levels of stress most individuals in our society experience are hardly optimal. When there is not an optimal level of stress, that is when an individual is affected negatively by stress, and he or she could have feelings of distress. Distress is the second kind of stress, which has a negative impact that might lead us to change rapidly in a negative way. It may be acute stress either will disappear quickly or stand for a long-term period. Their mood can quickly change. The third one is Hyperstress. It happens when people reach their limit of what the people can deal with. Almost all Hyperstress occurs by having so many pressuring jobs, and they will be very emotional for a little reason or even no reason at all that will build frustration and depression. And the last one is Hypostress. This kind of stress can occur when there is insufficient stress.

Stressors
Alshahrani (2019) proposed that stress may come from both internal and external, which can cause stress to a person. Stressors may be related to the environment, from daily stress events, the life changes, situations in the workplace, a chemical, and social stressor. How the person interprets the situation in which stressors appear and determines their cognitive appraisal of stress. According to Garg (2014), there are so many stressors that might come from various factors. The external factors might come from the environmental stressor (technology, financial demands, or family conditions), organizational stressors (strict regulations, design and structure of the organization, processes and working conditions), and group stressors (lack of cohesiveness, social support, and conflict between members). Meanwhile, the internal factor may come from within the individual or called Individual Stressors (personality traits that can affect the behaviour, the change of life and career and also the interpersonal skills).

Stress is unique and categorized as an illness and people should be aware of the symptoms of stress. Riskind and Black (2005) argued that the stress could appear because of faulty beliefs, cognitive biases, or structures hypothesized to set the stage for later psychological problems, and it can influence the people to have suicide themselves. Alshahrani (2019) mentioned that it is essential to know both stress symptoms and signs to avoid any negative health consequences. Nuernberger (as cited in Garg, 2014) suggested that the symptoms of stress
include three broad categories such as Psychosomatic, which consist of two words: psyches (mind) and soma (body). The symptoms appear a malfunction of the body or attacked by a disease. The disease comes from mentally down or other emotional factors.

Stress has a significant impact on the physical and behavioural of an Individual. Alshahrani (2019) stated that in general, stress tends to make people do unhealthy ways of life, such as poor diet choices, smoking habits, lack of physical activity. It can end up with physical illness and restrictions inactivity that can lead to a great deal of stress in the lives of individuals. According to Garg (2014), people who can maintain their high performance in their job have less stress compared to people who have low performance.

**STRESS MANAGEMENT**

All might agree that people should manage stress to reduce the negative impact of stress (Alshahrani, 2019). People should learn how to manage stress which contributes to an individual’s overall health as well as the overall health of the community by examining factors and predictors of stress to help them manage their stress effectively. Looker and Gregson (2008) recommended managing stress by adjusting the level of burdens (either shedding or taking) and improving the abilities to manage stress. Garg (2014) suggested that the first action for stress management is analyzing the root cause of stress. It will be difficult because the root cause is not the same as the symptoms itself. There is no standard measurement for doing stress management because every individual has a unique response for their stress, and maybe it takes a lot of experience and a variety of approaches to learning to manage stress and searching for the fittest one. Stress is manageable when we can understand the root cause and its level. The stress of individuals will influence people around him/her, and the action should be taken to overcome the negative impacts of high stress. Stress management is required to help the individual, especially the person who is unable to cope with the demand of his or her environment. Actions should be made either at the individual level or organizational level, to minimize the negative impacts of high stress, especially the declining performance of the individuals.

**Stress Coping**

Scheck and Kinicki (2000) and Mitchell (2004) viewed stress coping as a dynamic process, specific not only to the present situation but also to the encounter stage. In essence, coping is all activities that a person makes in stressful situations (Heszen, 2013) to maintain their life by changing cognitive and behaviours by the individual’s resources to manage the demanding environment (either from internal or external). The activities are compound and dynamic, aimed at changing the problematic situation. These activities constitute a set of behaviours called strategies, various particular activities included in the stress-coping process.

Coping can be categorized into two general forms: Emotion-focused and Problem-focused. Emotion-focused Coping usually occurs when an individual evaluates his/her current condition and finds that there is nothing he/she can do to help him/her self from challenging or threatening situations.

Maryam (2017) viewed stress coping as a response of an individual with his/her stress either by thoughts or behaviours, using available resources either from his/her self or external environments to face stress consciously to reduce or manage their conflict (internal and external) so he/she can have a better life. Coping is also defined as transactions done by an
individual to overcome a demanding environment (external and internal environment) as a burden of life and interrupt continuity life. Coping strategy for handling the demanding situation is considered as a burdened challenge that is beyond the capacity of the resources. The resource to cope with will be very influential for the person to take any action to cope with their problems.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed that stress is the condition which happens to the individual that will affect the negative impacts either physiologist or psychologist. The individual naturally will not let the negative effects continuously occur, and they will do something to overcome stress unconsciously or consciously called coping strategy. Coping strategy is usually affected by the cultural background, experiences in resolving the problem, environmental factors, self-conceptual, personality thread, and so on.

Safavi, et al. (2019) divided the Coping Strategies into two significant parts: Problem-focused Coping and Emotion-focused Coping. Problem-focused Coping subscales are Seeking Social Support, Positive Reappraisal, and Planful Problem Solving. Meanwhile, Emotion-focused Coping subscales are Confrontative Coping, Distancing, Self-Controlling, and Escape-Avoidance.

**Coping Resources and Cognitive Resources**

Trouillet, et al. (2011) stated that Coping Resources and Cognitive Resources are two essential factors to cope with stress. Coping Resources refers to the individual’s perceptions about the stressfulness of his/her life (what is known as Perceived Stress) and the individual’s ability to solve the problems (Self-Efficacy) successfully. Often confused with self-confidence, self-efficacy refers to the personal resource factor that may stimulate active and positive coping when actions are pre-shaped, and efforts are invested in solving problems. Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as the extent or strength of one’s belief in one’s own ability to complete tasks and reach goals. Self-efficacy was expected to predict an increase in problem-focused coping. Meanwhile, Perceived stress can be used to predict the rise in emotion-focused coping but a decline in problem-focused coping.

Omar (2019) defined this Self-Efficacy as the perception of an individual on what they can do in dealing with situations by using their resources and capabilities. He said that self-efficacy has four domains in an individual: cognitive, motivational, mood or affect. The person who explores the cognitive area will most likely have higher aspirations, think critically and see the opportunity to overcome the challenge. The motivational domain people will have high resiliency of the pressures and determine themselves with how long their persevering individuals with increased self-efficacy. In mood or affect domain people were able to cope their stress effectively by distracting themselves with other issues next to them, changing their attention from what made them stressed, and seeking for support from their closed people. Individuals with lower self-efficacy tend to have less effectiveness to cope with their stress. He has argued that religiosity can enhance cognitive processing which is correlated to the belief within the individual to be able to have resiliency with their current conditions, which is linked to self-efficacy. He found that the concepts of religious and spirituality are overlapping and uneasy about being separated. The research showed significant positive results in victims who have coped with their stress. An individual practice has significantly contributed to finding valuable meaning and closeness to something transcendence with them. He also pointed to the role of spirituality in enhancing self-efficacy to cope effectively with their stress, along with hope in the future and boosting well-being.
SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE

Spiritual Intelligence is one of intelligence humans have besides cognitive, emotional, and social that we often hear. Spiritual Intelligence is not a discovery, but the term "spiritual intelligence" just has been found by Zohar and Marshall (2000). Spiritual Intelligence is more about our ability to choose between spirit and ego. Spiritual Intelligence utilizes people for being ready with multiple dimensions of self, and for integrating humans with all aspects of their life (Thakur, 2014). It is supported by Vaughan (2002) that explained Spiritual Intelligence enables people to create meaning with a deep thought as the foundation in understanding fundamental questions of existential matters and affected the awareness of the intertwining aspects, relate with transcendental matters, self, each other, the world, nature and all beings, and with multiple levels of consciousness in solving the problem.

Wigglesworth (2012, in Arbabisarjou, et al., 2013) mentioned four basic intelligence: Spiritual Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence, Intellectual Intelligence, and last Physical Intelligence. As a baby grows, first they tend to control their body with physical intelligence. Then they try to use their cognitive information with Intellectual Intelligence. Next, they try to behave well to interact with others and use Emotional Intelligence and in the higher level are aware of the meaning of life with Spiritual Intelligence. Spiritual intelligence has surpassed physical and cognitive intelligence. It enters the transcendent realm intuitively from an individual's perspective to the whole of life, including an individual's personal experiences that are affected by the overall worldview of an individual. Referring to Zohar and Marshall (2000), Spiritual Intelligence is the tool that enables people to overcome their problems of values and meanings that enhance people to have a richer context of life and provide guidance on how to live. Spiritual Intelligence is the necessary fundamental foundation for both Intellectual Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence or might be called the ultimate intelligence. Spiritual Intelligence allows us to improve our skills in imaginary improvements, and it will boost our capabilities in decision making.

Referring to Thakur (2015), the importance of Spiritual Intelligence is it enables people to have a direction to their life in critical moments. People should be aware that spiritual intelligence has powerful tools to transform our life, giving a path on how to live in a community, and the planet and its history. Spiritual Intelligence is inner life matters which relate with a minded spirit connected with the world's existence. It gives the capacity for humans to deeply think about the existential questions and insight, which will affect many aspects of consciousness. It will provide us with awareness about the rules of orders that created the living world, think about the life of vegetables, trees, animals, and human existence. A person with high spiritual intelligence will more likely believe in the Rules of Orders (regularity of how this world exists) rather than think that the world is created with no order. He suggested Spiritual Intelligence turns into three components: the capacity to explore the meaning of life based on deep understanding and thoughts of existential questions, awareness of the ability to utilize multiple levels of consciousness in solving a problem, and awareness of the interconnectedness of all beings in the world to each other and the existing transcendent. Also, Safavi, et al. (2019) found that the subscale that can have a significant role in predicting the Spiritual Intelligence are Planful Problem Solving, Positive Reappraisal, Seeking Social Support (Problem-focused Coping subscale), and also Self Controlling (Emotion-focused Coping subscale).
Amram (2007) concluded that all definitions of Spiritual Intelligence turns into seven dimensions of Spiritual Intelligence such as: Meaning: which have a sense of purpose for service, either it is to have happiness or pain; Consciousness: Aware of transcendental existing, using networking to improve awareness such as praying, dreaming, and meditation, also aware of purposes of life being; Grace: Aware of love of transcendental cause, have power to give and having thankful feeling, it also enables an individual to have an optimistic view of the future based on trust; Transcendence: An holistic worldview, an wholeness of the world; Truth: Responding the truth by imitate the good thing according to what their beliefs, enable an individual to love, forgiving, accepting other, and openness, which have open minded for the truth; Peaceful surrender: giving peaceful mind and enhancing to taking self, are likely surrender all thing to the Almighty; and last is Inner-Directed: allows an individual to have freedom aligned in thinking, telling and acting according to the truth and values.

3. Methodology of Research

In answering the research questions, this research uses integrative literature review research method. For a number of research questions, literature review, as a research method, is used to evaluate theories in a certain area or to examine the validity or accuracy of the theories (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003), for example to see the relationships between variables to provide an overview of a particular research topic (Snyder, 2019). Compared to the systematic and semi-structured approaches to literature review, integrative literature review aims to assess, critique, and synthesize the literature on a research topic in a way that enables new theoretical frameworks and perspectives to emerge (Torraco, 2005). In this case, a literature review provides the basis for building a new conceptual model or theory (Snyder, 2019).

The data for this research is collected from various literatures, such as journal papers and books related to the topic of spiritual intelligence and stress coping. While there is no strict standard, the data analysis process is conducted through textual examination and critical analysis on literatures to find the main ideas and relationships of the issue to produce a conceptual framework yang that explain how the spiritual intelligence affecting stress coping. In the last step, data and theory triangulations are used to validate the findings.

4. Result and Discussion

A recent clue on how Spiritual Intelligence relates to stress coping came from Rahmanian, et al. (2018) who suggested that Spiritual Intelligence allows people to have a significant worldview conceptual mapping about the meaning of life. It also encourages people with those kinds of available resources to resolve problems, and deal with their daily matters. Moreover, Thakur (2015) said that the capability of a person to cope with their stress is affected by many aspects; the most significant element is Spiritual Intelligence. A person who is aware of their spiritual condition and has high spiritual intelligence can face the problems easily in the whole aspects of their life. They cannot avoid any problem, but they learn to handle them under full consciousness and peaceful mind. Spiritual Intelligence is an influential factor to enable people to face their problems. If people understand themselves, they will be able to withstand the problem wiser and prepare them for facing stress. Moreover, it can avoid them from being depressed and can help them to stabilize themselves and maintain their performance (Thakur, 2015).
As an element of stress management, stress coping is one activity people use to manage stress, moreover on how to reduce the negative impact of stress. Its effectiveness depends on the coping resources: Self Efficacy, Perceived Stress, and Cognitive Resources (including Working Memory and Mental Condition) (Scheck, 2000; Trouillet, et al., 2011). These three factors determine how good an individual is at coping with his/her stress, so the consequence of the stress is less harming. Moreover, recent research has suggested a relationship between self-efficacy and effective stress coping (e.g., Shen, 2009; Nicholls, et al., 2010) including in professional work settings (Schaubroeck & Merritt, 1997).

Findings by Omar (2019) completed the missing link between Spiritual Intelligence and Stress Coping. He found that Spiritual Intelligence has a significant effect on Self-Efficacy, especially in providing comfort and hope. This finding is in line with what Thakur (2015) found that Spiritual Intelligence has a substantial role in boosting mental health conditions. Spiritual Intelligence is enhancing the coping system in individuals to manage their stress and maintain their performance through its dimensions: Meaning, Consciousness, Grace, and Peaceful Surrender. Meaning provides systematic thinking of the purpose of life; it could enhance self-awareness to improve Self-Efficacy. The consciousness of the Supreme Being and Peaceful Surrender offers a peaceful feeling and hopes for individuals. Thus, this awareness relates to the Grace recognition of being helped by that Supreme Being.

On the other hand, the quality of dress coping is determined by Cognitive Resources. Trouillet, et al. (2011) assumed coping efforts rely on two aspects of processing the information: Working Memory and Mental Condition. These two aspects are cognitive resources. These Cognitive Resources work by enabling people to take relevant information in their long-term memory and keep them by allowing them to select the most suitable ways to cope. He argued that the higher level of cognitive resources, the higher probability of them to use task-focused coping strategies, and the lower level of cognitive resources the higher likelihood of using avoidance strategies. Meanwhile, a decline in executive functions efficiency (e.g. mental condition and working memory) would predict the increase of use of emotion-focused coping strategy, which is out of our focus here.

The relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and Cognitive Resources mediated by the Mental Condition becomes evident under the explanation of Thakur (2015) that good mental health is determined by good spirituality. Since Spiritual Intelligence allows us to deeply understand life, body, mind, spirit, soul, and matter, Spiritual Intelligence is more than only individual mental ability. Still, it is more likely connected with transpersonal and the self of spirit, it allows people to think beyond their conventional thought. Spiritual Intelligence also implies self-awareness, which affects human relationships with themselves, other people, and the earth with all beings. The dimensions of the Spiritual Intelligence that may influence the Mental Condition are Meaning, Consciousness, Truth, and Inner-Directed. How an individual perceives the meaning of life and the consciousness of the Supreme Being improves an individual's awareness to shape themselves with the Truth one, and the Inner-Directed also affects an individual to align themselves to one value.

The last of Stress Coping Resources is Perceived Stress. Since stress is a problem that appears from the gap between the individual with the demanding environment (both internal and external), it seems promising that Spiritual Intelligence may allow an individual to understand his/her self and environment (Thakur, 2015). It will enhance the apprehend of life, including
stressfulness of life. It gives a clue that the dimensions of the Spiritual Intelligence that may affect Perceived Stress as a mediating factor to stress Coping are Meaning, Grace, and Peaceful Surrender. By being conscious of the meaning of life, individuals will have different perspectives of what happens in his/her life. Additionally, the terms of Grace that can be defined as the experiencing moment of mercy from the Supreme Being will add another insight to the problem. Peaceful Surrender dimension also will give a different perspective of the problem. Believing that the Supreme Being gives mercy and will show sovereignty over human beings in his/her life may help him/her in coping the stress and reduce the negative consequences of stress.

Our model of how Spiritual Intelligence takes part in Stress Coping as human's initiatives to manage their stress is presented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1.
The Relationships of Spiritual Intelligence, Stress Coping Resources, and Stress Coping in Managing Stress

5. Conclusion

Stress is an unseparated part of human life. Sometimes it becomes so heavy to bear that it turns into depression. Even some stressful situations bring positive effects to life, but it has a
sharp image as something negative and needs to be resolved. In the discussion, we argued that there is an opportunity in studying Spiritual Intelligence as a source of stress coping. Spiritual Intelligence is believed to have a significant role in improving mental health and self-efficacy as the resources of coping with managing stress. Enhancing the spiritual intelligence will increase the capacity of stress coping resources that in turn, will strengthen the individual in coping stress to reduce the negative consequences of stress.

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