

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE INVENTORY FOR ADOLESCENTS IN MALAYSIA**

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**Abstract:** The Psychological Profile Inventory for Adolescents (PPIA) is developed as a tool to identify positive and negative behaviours in adolescents, and uncover the reasons for such positive or negative behaviours. PPIA can also be used to identify adolescents at-risk from psychological disorders. PPIA is suitable for use by teachers, counselors and psychologists in schools. The resulting profile drawn can be used to understand the needs of adolescents, identify those at-risk, and plan for intervention. This paper describes the development of PPIA which took into consideration the multicultural aspects of the Malaysian population.

**Keywords:** psychological profile, adolescents, positive behaviour, negative behaviour

**Abstrak:** Inventori Profil Psikologi Remaja dibina sebagai satu alat ukur untuk mengenalpasti tingkah laku positif dan tingkah laku negatif pelajar, serta sebab-sebab mereka melakukan tingkah laku tersebut. Inventori ini juga digunakan untuk mengesan remaja berisiko kecelaruan psikologi. Guru, kaunselor dan ahli psikologi di sekolah boleh menggunakan inventori ini. Keputusan profil yang diperoleh boleh digunakan untuk memahami keperluan remaja, mengenal pasti mereka yang berisiko, dan membuat perancangan intervensi. Artikel ini menerangkan perkembangan Inventori Profil Psikologi Remaja yang mempertimbangkan masyarakat berbagai budaya di Malaysia.

**Kata kunci:** profil psikologi, remaja, tingkah laku positif, tingkah laku negatif

### **INTRODUCTION**

The process from childhood to adolescent may be reckoned as a transition that is accompanied by dramatic biological and psychological transformations (Ozer, Macdonald & Irwin, 2002; Arredondo, 2003; Reinherz, Paradis, Giaconia, Stashwick & Fitzmaurice, 2003; White, 2004; Papathanasiou & Lahana, 2007). Biological changes are obvious as the body prepares itself for breeding and propagating the species. Along with those changes come alterations in cognitive, emotive and social development.

Like a butterfly emerging from its cocoon, an adolescent faces pressure and new expectations. The lack of experience in handling such dramatic changes brings about problems and uncertainties in the process of development. This situation

See Ching Mey

can be stressful and is often a major cause of psychological dysfunction among them (Walker, 2005).

Maznah and Joseph (1998) declare that the lack of self-understanding becomes problematic among individuals who have difficulty adjusting themselves to roles which are often contradictory. They also state that adults and adolescents perceive conflict differently. This situation causes crisis in such adolescents. Experts agree that the failure to resolve this crisis brings about negative behaviours such as promiscuity, gangsterism, drug addiction, delinquency and crime.

In the year 2007, Malaysia had 2.6 million adolescents of ages between 15 and 19 years old (Malaysia Department of Statistics, 2007). This was about 10% of the total population. It is thus important to know what are the needs and problems of this large group of population and to identify those who are at-risk with psychological disorders before it is too late for remedial action.

## RATIONALE

Most studies on adolescents have been carried out in the West. Research in Malaysia on this theme is scarce. Available statistics show that disciplinary issues are a major concern for the authorities. In 2006, there were 66526 records of disciplinary problems amongst students in the schools (Malaysia Ministry of Education, 2008). There was an insignificant decline of 0.15% to 59,010 cases in 2007. Disciplinary issues include behaviours that contain elements of crime, pornography, impoliteness, destructive behaviour, messy dressing, truancy and naughtiness. Table 1 shows the number and percentage of the disciplinary problems amongst students identified in 2006 and 2007.

**Table 1.** Disciplinary problems amongst the students in Malaysia

No.	Types of Indiscipline	2006		2007		(+/-)
		Cases	%	Cases	%	%
1.	Elements of crime	8720	0.17	9,618	0.18	+0.01
2.	Elements of pornography	1758	0.03	1,675	0.03	0
3.	Impoliteness	16476	0.32	16,140	0.31	-0.01
4.	Destructive behaviour	2229	0.04	1,759	0.03	-0.01
5.	Messy Dressing	16096	0.31	12,811	0.25	-0.06
6.	Truancy	11495	0.22	10,461	0.20	-0.02
7.	Naughtiness	9752	0.19	6,546	0.13	-0.08
TOTAL		66526	1.28	59,010	1.13	-0.15

Source: Malaysia Ministry of Education (2008)

According to the Department of Welfare which comes under the Malaysian Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, criminal cases involving juveniles increased by 18.9% from 6056 cases in 2004 to 7201 cases in 2005 (Malaysia Department of Social Welfare, 2006).

On drug abuse, Malaysia Anti-Drug Association (2005) stated that there were 1357 cases of drug abuse amongst the adolescents aged from 13–19 years old in 2005. Table 2 records the details.

**Table 2.** Drug abuse by age in Malaysia

Number of Adolescent Drug Abusers by Age			
Age	New Cases	Repeat Cases	Total
13–15 years olds	82	0	82
16–17 years olds	312	7	319
18–19 years olds	909	47	956
Total	1303	54	1357

Source: Malaysia Anti-Drug Association (2005)

It is therefore crucial to create an assessment and predictory inventory that can be used by counsellors, teachers or psychologists to outline the psychological profile of adolescents so that their needs and strengths can be identified, whilst allowing the isolation of those in the at-risk group so that intervention can be given early as a preventive measure.

## OBJECTIVE

The identification of the psychological needs of the adolescents and the factors, both internal and external, which cause positive and negative behaviours is the main objective of the research reported here. The output is an inventory that draws the psychological profile of a Malaysian adolescent.

## PROCEDURE

A prototype of PPIA was first constructed by standard qualitative and quantitative analyses of the response of a randomly selected population of adolescents in the preliminary research phase. This was evaluated and validated with a larger population.

*See Ching Mey*

### **Preliminary Research**

The preliminary research was carried out on 157 students randomly selected from five secondary schools in Penang. The purpose of this preliminary research was to collect the opinion of these students regarding: The categorisation of good/positive and bad/negative behaviour; and the reasons why they displayed good/positive or bad/negative behaviour. There were 61 male students and 96 female students, comprising Malays ( $n = 76$ ), Chinese ( $n = 61$ ) and Indians ( $n = 20$ ). They were from the Arts ( $n = 25$ ), Science ( $n = 13$ ), Economics ( $n = 37$ ), Accounts ( $n = 42$ ) and Vocational ( $n = 40$ ) classes.

### **Procedure in Collecting Data**

In a preliminary stage, a free response question paper (Part I) was distributed to the students and they were asked to write and describe freely what they perceived as good/positive behaviours and the reasons for displaying such behaviours. The students were given 40 minutes to answer the two questions. At the end of this session, the students were next asked to repeat the task with bad/negative behaviours and supply reasons why they behaved badly or negatively (Part II). A further 40 minutes were allocated. Part I and Part II together took 80 minutes.

Statements from the responses were selected, converted into items and edited into several categories or scales. Seven scales for good/positive behaviours (Table 7), four scales for reasons for behaving well (Table 10), seven scales for bad/negative behaviours (Table 6), and nine scales for displaying bad/negative behaviours (Table 9) could be identified.

A team consisting of the researchers and five other counsellors then reviewed several existing inventories such as Mooney Problem Checklist by Mooney and Gordon (1950), California Psychological Inventory by Gough (1957), Daily Stress Inventory by Brantley and Jones (1989), Cognitive Distortion Scales by Briere (2000), and the review led to the inclusion of one or two additional items to the PPIA prototype. Three experts reviewed the contents from the language aspect.

The PPIA eventually consists of two sections. Section A is the Inclination Profile of Adolescents to Perform Certain Behaviours. There are 86 items, categorised into three components. The three components are (a) types of negative behaviour, (b) types of positive behaviour, and (c) psychological disorder. Each item has five responses placed on a Likert score as follows: Never (1), Very Seldom (2), Sometimes (3), Often (4), and Very Often (5), perform that behaviour relating to the item. Section A reveals a tendency or inclination for a particular behaviour.

Section B is concerned with the Profile of the Reasons Why Adolescents Perform These Behaviours and it consists of 52 items. Again, each item has a selection of five responses placed on a Likert score. The five responses are Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), and Strongly Agree (5), to the reason for a particular behaviour. Section B reveals their reasons for the profiled behaviours.

### Demography

Validation of the PPIA was carried out in ten secondary schools from the northern states of Penang, Kedah and Perak in Peninsular Malaysia with a total of 351 students. Three schools were from urban area, three schools from a rural setting, and the four suburban schools participated in this research. There were 176 male students and 175 female students in the sample.

Further demographic descriptions of the students who participated in this research are presented in Tables 3, 4 and 5.

**Table 3.** Number of students by ethnicity ( $n = 351$ )

Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Malay	170	48.4
Chinese	146	41.6
India	34	9.7
Others	1	0.3
Total	351	100.0

**Table 4.** Number of students by class level ( $n = 351$ )

Class Level	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Form 2	162	46.2
Form 4	189	53.8
Total	351	100.0

**Table 5.** Number of students by academic streaming ( $n = 351$ )

Academic Streaming	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Science	70	19.9
Art	61	17.4
Commerce	58	16.5
Form 2 (No Stream)	162	46.2
Total	351	100.0

See Ching Mey

### The Features of PPIA

This inventory has two parts. Section A consists of three components such as Types of Negative Behaviour (seven scales), Types of Positive Behaviour (seven scales) and Psychological Disorder (three scales).

The first component on Negative Behaviour has seven scales. Examples of the items in each scale are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6.** The scales and examples of items of negative behaviour

Scales/Items		Total Items
<b>1. Actions Violating the Law</b>		9
	I like illegal motorbike racing.	
	I steal whenever I need something.	
<b>2. Obscene Behaviour</b>		5
	I vandalise public properties by drawing pornographic pictures.	
	I am involved in sexual relationships.	
<b>3. Involvement in Illegal Behaviour</b>		5
	I drink beer/other alcoholic drinks.	
	I am involved in activities/campaigns to show my dissatisfaction.	
<b>4. Undisciplined Behaviour</b>		10
	I throw rubbish anywhere I like.	
	I don't go to school whenever I don't feel like it.	
<b>5. Actions Against Social Norms</b>		11
	I do whatever I like without thinking of my pride and my family.	
	I take revenge when hurt by others.	
<b>6. Self-Projection Behaviour</b>		2
	I show off to attract the attention of other people.	
	I am willing to do anything for the benefit and importance of myself.	
<b>7. Impulsive Behaviour</b>		7
	If someone were to do something bad to me, I will take revenge instantly.	
	I threaten people so as to hurt them.	

The second component on Positive Behaviour has seven scales. Examples of items in each scale are shown in Table 7.

**Table 7.** The scales and examples of items of positive behaviour

Scales/Items	Total Items
<b>1. Practice Moral Values</b> I adopt a give and take attitude. I am concerned about my pride/dignity.	5
<b>2. Effective Interpersonal Relationship</b> I respect and am considerate towards my parents/teachers/elders. I treat others well and with sincerity.	4
<b>3. Disciplined Behaviour</b> I am able to solve my problems well. I obey rules/regulations.	5
<b>4. Healthy Thought Pattern</b> I am positive/optimistic. I forgive those who have wronged me.	5
<b>5. Considerate Behaviour</b> I am sensitive towards people's needs. I have more concern for others than myself.	3
<b>6. Living Together in Cooperation</b> I help my parents with household chores. I foster harmony and cooperation in teamwork.	3
<b>7. Social Service Behaviour</b> I am ready to share resources/things with others. I do work without thinking of rewards.	4

The third component on Psychological Disorder has three scales. Examples of the items in each scale are shown in Table 8.

**Table 8.** The scales and examples of items of psychological disorder

Scales/Items	Total Items
<b>1. Disruptive Behaviour Disorder</b>	
<b>(a) Conduct disorder</b> I will molest someone whom I am attracted to. I lie to get what I want or to get away from doing something.	12
<b>(b) Oppositional defiant</b> I blame others for my own mistakes. I like to do things that violate the norms of society.	7

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**Table 8.** (continued)

	Scales/Items	Total Items
<b>2. Psychotic Disorder</b>		8
	I feel that someone is following me or wants to hurt me.	
	I see things that cannot be seen by others.	
<b>3. Drugs and Substance Abuse</b>		4
	I try drugs/ecstasy pills.	
	I use gum/inhalent.	

Nineteen items from the Negative Behaviour component are repeated in the Psychological Disorder component.

Section B consists of the two components – Reasons Why Negative Behaviours are Performed and Reasons Why Positive Behaviours are Performed. There are nine scales on Reasons Why Negative Behaviours are Performed and four scales on Reasons Why Positive Behaviours are Performed.

The nine scales and examples of items in each scale for the component Reasons Adolescent Performed Negative Behaviours are given in Table 9.

**Table 9.** The scales and examples of items of reasons adolescent performed negative behaviours

	Scales/Items	Total Items
<b>1. Lack of Recognition/Attention Seeking</b>		4
	I feel that I am not being loved and appreciated.	
	All my actions are not given due attention.	
<b>2. Mental-Emotional Disturbances</b>		5
	I am confused and mixed up.	
	I am always being accused of and unjustly treated by others.	
<b>3. Dysfunctional Family Background</b>		5
	I am being neglected/not supervised by my parents/guardians.	
	I always quarrel with or go against the wants of my parents.	
<b>4. Loose Religious Belief</b>		3
	I lack exposure to religious teachings.	
	I do not believe in religious teachings.	
<b>5. Self-Projection</b>		5
	I want to be famous and popular.	
	I want to show my capability.	

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**Table 9.** (continued)

	Scales/Items	Total Items
<b>6.</b>	<b>Craving For Pleasure</b> I will do anything to please myself and give myself a sense of pleasure. I crave for pleasure.	2
<b>7.</b>	<b>Frustration/Anger</b> I am jealous of others. I do not care what happens to me or others.	4
<b>8.</b>	<b>Influence By Subversive Elements</b> I am challenged by my friends to react. My behaviour is influenced by the mass media and publishing media.	5
<b>9.</b>	<b>Poverty/Monetary Reasons</b> I am short of money or having financial problems. I want to possess branded goods.	4

The second component, Reasons Adolescent Performed Positive Behaviours has four scales and examples of the items in each scale are shown in Table 10.

**Table 10.** The scales and examples of items of reasons adolescent performed positive behaviours

	Scales/Items	Total Items
<b>1.</b>	<b>Self-Management Skills</b> I can differentiate between good and bad actions. I can control myself to be well-behaved.	3
<b>2.</b>	<b>Upholding Positive Attitudes</b> I want to take care of my image without affecting others. I feel happy if everyone lives in harmony.	6
<b>3.</b>	<b>External Positive Encouragement</b> I want to be praised, to be honoured and to be respected. I want to carry out my responsibilities as a citizen.	6
<b>4.</b>	<b>Sense of Responsibility</b> I have a role to play in building a peaceful and harmonious society. I must behave appropriately to foster good will.	2

See Ching Mey

## Scoring

Scores from the inventory were transferred to a scoring sheet by items and scales. The scores for each scale were converted to mean scores. The mean score of each scale was then plotted on the profile form to see the overall configuration of the adolescent's profile (refer to Appendix A). Profile interpretation is simple as the counsellor, teacher or psychologist looks at the distinctive high mean score in all the scales in the five components. The counsellor, teacher or psychologist then draws the adolescent's profile and plan counselling strategies to help individuals who may need counselling.

## Reliability

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the degree of internal consistency and thus the reliability of PPIA. For Section A, the reliability coefficients of the various scales for the component on Negative Behaviours were found to be between 0.56 to 0.85 (Table 11). The coefficients of the scales in the component on Positive Behaviours on the other hand were found to be between 0.72 to 0.86 (Table 12). The coefficients of the scales for the component on Psychological Disorders were found to be between 0.68 to 0.77 (Table 13). The results indicate that Section A of the PPIA had a considerably high degree of internal consistency.

**Table 11.** Reliability coefficient for each scale in the component of negative behaviours ( $n = 351$ )

Scales of Negative Behaviors	Total Items	Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha
Actions violating the law	9	0.723
Obscene behaviour	5	0.666
Involvement in illegal behaviour	5	0.561
Undisciplined behavior	10	0.854
Actions against social norms	11	0.742
Self-projection behaviour	2	0.634
Impulsive behaviour	7	0.749
Total/Average	49	0.704

**Table 12.** Reliability coefficient for each scale in the component of positive behaviours ( $n = 351$ )

Scales of Positive Behaviors	Total Items	Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha
Practice moral values	5	0.860
Effective interpersonal relationship	4	0.750
Disciplined behaviour	5	0.798
Healthy thought pattern	5	0.809
Considerate behaviour	3	0.771
Living together in cooperation	3	0.721
Social service behaviour	4	0.727
Total/Average	29	0.777

**Table 13.** Reliability coefficient for each scale in the component of psychological disorders ( $n = 351$ )

Scales of Psychological Disorder	Total Items	Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha
Disruptive behaviour disorder		
(a) Conduct disorder	12	0.753
(b) Oppositional defiant	7	0.767
Psychotic disorder	8	0.684
Drug and substance abuse	4	0.732
Total/Average	31	0.734

Section B: The reliability coefficients of the scales in the component on the Reasons Why Adolescents Performed Negative Behaviour were found to be between 0.47 to 0.80 (Table 14) whilst the coefficients of the scales in the component on Reasons Why Adolescents Performed Positive Behaviours were found to be between 0.62 to 0.82 (Table 15). The average coefficients of these two components exceeded 0.65 and pointed to a high degree of internal consistency as well.

**Table 14.** Reliability coefficient for each scale in the component of reasons why adolescents performed negative behaviour ( $n = 351$ )

Scales of Reasons Why Adolescents Performed Negative Behaviour	Total Items	Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha
Lack of recognition/attention seeking	4	0.645
Mental-emotional disturbances	5	0.649
Dysfunctional family background	5	0.797
Loose religion belief	3	0.674

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**Table 14.** (continued)

Scales of Reasons Why Adolescents Performed Negative Behaviour	Total Items	Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha
Self-projection	5	0.747
Craving for pleasure	2	0.736
Frustration/anger	4	0.622
Influence by subversive elements	5	0.526
Poverty/monetary reasons	2	0.469
Total/Average	35	0.652

**Table 15.** Reliability coefficient for each scale in the component of reasons why adolescent performed positive behaviour ( $n = 351$ )

Scales of Reasons Why Adolescent Performed Positive Behaviour	Total Items	Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha
Self-management skills	3	0.775
Upholding positive attitude	6	0.824
External positive encouragement	6	0.776
Sense of responsibility	2	0.624
Total/Average	17	0.745

Two items belonging to the Involvement in Illegal Behaviour scale and the Poverty/Monetary Reasons scales were found to be ambiguous in language and edited for improvement.

## CONCLUSION

There were no significant differences in the score between students in the urban, suburban and rural area; and between male and female students. Therefore, this inventory is suitable for identifying good/positive and bad/negative behaviours for all adolescents. The information obtained from the profile can then be used during counselling sessions to reinforce good behaviour and discuss action plan to avoid bad/negative behaviour. The reasons perceived by the respondents for each particular behaviour are useful as they enable professionals to understand the background of the students which can then be used to re-evaluate the directions they are heading to and find reasons for expressing good behaviour. The professionals need to pay special attention to the psychological disorder component as well. If a student is at-risk of disruptive behaviour disorder; psychotic disorder; and/or drug and substance abuse, the professionals can then

intervene early and provide guidance and counselling to prevent it from worsening.

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*See Ching Mey*

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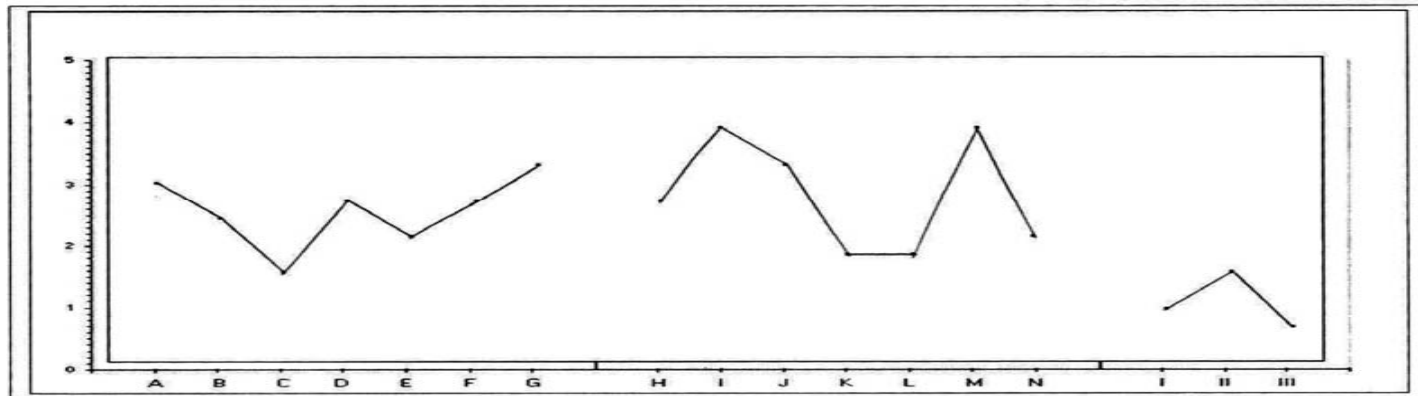
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## APPENDIX A

### PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE INVENTORY FOR ADOLESCENT

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_



	Negative Behaviours	Positive Behaviours	Psychological Disorders
Scales	A – Actions Violating The Law B – Obscene Behaviour C – Involvement In Illegal Behaviour D – Undisciplined Behaviour E – Actions Against Social Norms F – Self Projection Behaviour G – Impulsive Behaviour	H – Practice Moral Values I – Effective Interpersonal Relationship J – Disciplined Behaviour K – Healthy Thought Pattern L – Considerate Behaviour M – Living Together In Cooperation N – Social Service Behaviour	I – Disruptive Behaviour Disorder a. Conduct Disorder b. Oppositional Defiant II – Psychotic Disorder III – Drugs And Substance Abuse