PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MECHANICAL PROFILES OF INCARCERATED MALE MURDERERS IN MALAYSIA

by

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DECLARATION

I declared that the material presented in this thesis is all my own work except as specified in references, acknowledgement or in footnotes. The thesis has not been previously submitted for any other degree.

Date: 19 February 2015

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS AND SYMBOLS

Name	Definition
Act	Activity
AFFM	Alternative Five Factor Model
Agg-Host	Aggressive-Hostility
AM	Aggression Model
APA	American Psychological Association
AQ	Aggression Questionnaire
AQ-M-12	Malay version Aggression Questionnaire- 12 - Items
CD	Cognitive Distortion
CI	Confidence Interval
DSM-IV-TR	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
FFM	Five Factor Model
GTC	General Theory of Crime
GTP	Government Transformation Programme
HG_O	Group Null Hypothesis
HIT	"How I Think" Questionnaire
HIT-M	Malay version of "How I Think" Questionnaire
ImpSS	Impulsive Sensation Seeking
IqR	Inter-quartile Range
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
K-W Test	Kruskal-Wallis Test
M	Mean
M-PsychoQ	Malay version psychological questionnaire
MDP	Malaysian Department of Prisons

MechanQ	Mechanical Questionnaire
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MPC	Malaysian Penal Code
N	Number/ Frequency
N-Anx	Neuroticism-Anxiety
NGO	Non-Governmental Agency
NKRA	National Key Result Area
OA	Overall aggression
OCEAN	Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism
PA	Physical aggression
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
PCF	Participant Consent Form
PEN	Psychoticism, Extraversion, Neuroticism
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PIS	Participant Information Sheet
PMIG	PsychoMechanical Interview Guide
PMQ	PsychoMechanical Questionnaire
PsychoQ	Psychological Questionnaire
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RMP	Royal Malaysia Police
RO	Research Objective
RQ	Research Question
SCDM	Self-serving Cognitive Distortion Model
SCS	Self-Control Scale
SCS-M	Malay version Self-control Scale
SD	Standard Deviation
SLR	Simple Linear Regression

SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SSCD	Self-serving Cognitive Distortion
Sy	Sociability
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USA	United States of America
USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia
VA	Verbal aggression
WHO	World Health Organisation
ZKPQ-40-M-CC	Malay version Zuckerman-Kuhlman Personality Questionnaire Cross Cultural-40 Items
ZKPQ-50-CC	Zuckerman-Kuhlman Personality Questionnaire Cross Cultural-50 Items
α	Cronbach's Alpha Value
%	Percent

PROFIL PSIKOLOGI DAN MEKANIKAL PEMBUNUH LELAKI YANG TELAH DIPENJARAKAN DI MALAYSIA

ABSTRAK

Perlakuan membunuh manusia lain dengan niat merupakan satu perbuatan yang menyalahi undang-undang. Insiden pembunuhan kejam yang semakin meningkat, pencirian yang tidak lengkap tentang insiden kes bunuh pembunuhan di Malaysia, kekurangan kajian kriminologi di Malaysia berkaitan pembunuhan tentang kes bunuh dan pembunuh, dan kesan serta akibat pembunuhan adalah faktor penting dalam menjalankan kajian ini terhadap pembunuh lelaki Malaysia. Kajian ini adalah kajian yang pertama di Malaysia yang dijalankan terhadap pembunuhan dengan memberikan tumpuan pada sampel pembunuh lelaki Malaysia yang sedang dipenjarakan di Semenanjung Malaysia. Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk menyiasat profil psikologi dan mekanikal mereka. Sembilan objektif khusus telah dirangka. Kajian bermula dengan analisis trend untuk tempoh 11 tahun dengan mengkaji trend dan corak pembunuhan dan pemangsaan di Malaysia. Sebelum kajian utama, satu kajian pengesahan telah dijalankan untuk mengesahkan tiga instrumen psikometrik bagi fasa kuantitatif dan keputusan mendapati instrument tersebut boleh diterima dan memuaskan. Berikutan ini, kajian utama menggunakan reka bentuk penyelidikan jenis campuran dengan melibatkan pendekatan kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Dalam fasa kuantitatif, reka bentuk keratan rentas secara pemerhatian telah diaplikasikan menggunakan soal-selidik berpandu yang ditadbir sendiri untuk pengumpulan data. Rangka persampelan terdiri daripada 71 lelaki pembunuh Malaysia dari 11 penjara yang telah dipilih menggunakan kaedah persampelan bertujuan berdasarkan kriteria pemilihan yang telah ditetapkan. Soal selidik terdiri

daripada pemboleh ubah sosio-demografi, pemboleh ubah mekanikal pembunuhan, dan empat instrumen psikometrik Melayu yang disahkan: Zuckerman-Kuhlman Personality 40-Cross Cultural Questionnaire, Skala Kawalan Diri, Skala Aggressif, dan soal selidik 'How I Think'. Kajian ini juga membandingkan pembunuh dengan kumpulan kawalan (n = 300). Data kuantitatif dianalisis dengan menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan inferensi. Hasil kajian deskriptif berjaya mengenal pasti trait psikologi dan mekanikal pembunuh lelaki. Analisis regresi menunjukkan bahawa beberapa personaliti mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dan boleh meramal pemboleh ubah psikologi lain. Analisis korelasi menunjukkan terdapat beberapa hubung kait yang signifikan antara pemboleh ubah psikologi yang dikaji. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan beberapa perbezaan yang signifikan dari segi min dan median skor pemboleh ubah psikologi dengan jenis aspek mekanikal yang dilakukan oleh pembunuh. Dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa terdapat beberapa perbezaan yang signifikan antara sifat-sifat psikologi pembunuh dan kumpulan kawalan. Dalam fasa kualitatif, sembilan pembunuh lelaki secara sukarela telah mengambil bahagian dalam temu bual separa berstruktur. Data kualitatif dianalisis dengan menggunakan analisis tematik. Enam tema utama: keganasan dan sejarah jenayah, sejarah penyalahgunaan dadah, pemangsaan pembunuhan, penyembunyian mangsa pembunuhan, profil psikologi, dan faktor-faktor pencegahan; telah diteroka dan beberapa tema baru telah muncul. Keputusan yang dibincangkan adalah berkaitan dengan aspek pembunuhan, teori-teori yang menyokong penyelidikan, konteks kriminologi dan viktimologi.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MECHANICAL PROFILES OF INCARCERATED MALE MURDERERS IN MALAYSIA

ABSTRACT

Murder is an unlawful act with the intention of killing a person. The increasingly violent murder incidents, incomplete characterisation of murder in Malaysia, inadequate Malaysian criminological studies on murder and murderers, and impacts and consequences of murder were pivotal in the desire to conduct this study on Malaysian male murderers. The present study is the pioneer national study that is conducted on murder by focusing on a sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers within Peninsular Malaysia. The main aim of the present study was to investigate their psychological and mechanical profiles. Nine specific objectives were formulated. The study commenced with a series of 11 year trend analyses to establish the trends and patterns of murder and murder victimology in Malaysia. Prior to the main study, a validation study was carried out to validate three psychometric instruments for the quantitative phase and the results were found acceptable and satisfactory. Following these, the main study employed explanatory mixed method research design using quantitative and qualitative approaches. In the quantitative phase, an observational cross-sectional design using a guided self-administered questionnaire was applied for data collection. The sampling frame consisted of 71 Malaysian male murderers from 11 prisons who were selected using purposive sampling method with predetermined selection criteria. The questionnaire consisted of socio-demographic variables, mechanical variables of murder, and four Malay validated psychometric instruments: Zuckerman-Kuhlman Personality Questionnaire-40-Cross-Culture, Self-control scale, Aggression Questionnaire and

"How I Think" Questionnaire. The present study also compares murderers and a control group (n = 300). Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive findings successfully identified prevalent psychological and mechanical traits of male murderers. The regression analyses indicated that several personality traits have significant relationships and are predictive of other psychological variables. The correlation analyses highlighted several significant associations among the psychological variables. Findings revealed some significant mean and median differences of psychological variables score with the types of mechanical aspects committed by the murderers. The findings also indicated that there are several significant psychological traits differences between murderers and control group. In the qualitative phase, nine male murderers voluntarily participated in semi-structured interviews. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. Six main themes: violence and criminal history, substance abuse history, murder victimisation, murder victim concealment, psychological profiles, and preventive factors; were explored and several new themes emerged. The results were discussed in relation to murder, theories that underpin the present research, contexts of criminology and victimology.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Murder is an unlawful act with the intention of killing a person (Alvarez and Bachman, 2003). It is the most atrocious and notorious crime that violates religious, social and cultural norms. It is perceived as the highest form of violence in most cultures (Mohanty, 2004). The act of murder is extremely detrimental to the moral order and relationships within society. This fatal violence represents the most serious end of the spectrum of violent crime and according to Cao, Hou and Huang (2008), murder is the most heinous crime of all crimes monitored in the Crime Index.

In Malaysia, there have been little evidence on research into this area. This is surprising given the degree of violence perpetrated against victims, the consequences of murder to the victim's family and friends, and the attention given by the mass media. In order to address this scarcity, the focus of this thesis is on the psychological and mechanical profiles of sample incarcerated Malaysian male murderers.

In order to provide better understanding on the psychological and mechanical profiles of incarcerated male murderers of this study, this chapter covers eleven sub-topics. These include background, study rationales, and research questions. Following this, research objectives and hypotheses are addressed. It also introduces the conceptual and operational definitions, research ethics, scope of the research, and subsequently, organisation of the thesis.

1.2 BACKGROUND

In this section, relevant information are discussed that led to conducting this research among murderers. The information include trends of murder on a global scale, murder trends in Malaysia, ineffectiveness of current legislations to curtail acts of murder, and the Malaysian government crime prevention initiatives.

1.2.1 Global trends of murder

In order to identify the global trends and inter-comparison of murder between countries or regions, United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) collects statistical data on the murder from a variety of national and international sources such as the World Health Organization and the Global Burden of Injuries and Injury Mortality Data Collection (UNODC, 2004). According to UNODC (2011), the total number of estimated murders in 2010 was 468,000. 36.0% of those are estimated to have occurred in Africa, 31.0% in the Americas, 27.0% in Asia, 5.0% in Europe and 1.0% in Oceania. When relating these figures to the population size, the murder rate in Africa and the Americas (at 17 and 16 per 100,000 population respectively) is more than double the global average (6.9 per 100,000 population) (UNODC, 2011). Comparatively, in Asia, Europe and Oceania; it averages to 3.5 per 100,000 populations (Ibid).

In another perspective, World Health Organisation (WHO) estimated of 250 000 murder or homicide related deaths occur among youth 10-29 years old each year worldwide (WHO, 2011). Furthermore, murder or homicide related deaths seem to be the sixth most frequently cause of death in the world for the age group of 20 until 24 (Fazel and Grann, 2004) which put youths in most at-risk conditions. On top of

this, female murder is viewed as one of the leading causes of injury deaths among women (Mohanty et al., 2005).

In response to the WHO and United Nation's monitoring of health and crime trends, there is a need to investigate the socio-demographic, psychological, and mechanical profiles of Malaysian murderers since the background of murderers and modes of killing may vary corresponding to the history and the cultural background of a country (Milroy and Ranson, 1997; Karlson, 1998; Martin, Melki and Guimaraes, 1999; Mohanty, 2004). While there are many researchers from outside Asia, murder studies in South-East Asia are fairly rare. In addition, based on a 13 year literature search, there is almost no literature available on Malaysian murders and murderers.

Based on the above global trends of murder and importance of research on murder in each country, there is an urgent need to perpetuate empirical and in-depth studies in order to advance the understanding of murder and murderous act. The sharing of these analysed profiles increases the knowledge repertoire of criminal justice personnel in carrying out their duties and offers an opportunity to the public to expand their knowledge on murder prevention strategies which is vital for crime prevention efforts in ensuring a safer society. In addition, the research on murder in Malaysia would contribute valuable input in trends and patterns of murder at global level as it may suggest cultural and national difference in profiling murder and murderers as well as explanations of the murder incident itself.

1.2.2 Murder trends in Malaysia

Malaysia which is considered as one of the most rapidly developing countries in the Southeast Asia region (Wong, Shaw and Goh, 2006) is facing few challenges including increasingly violent murder incidents. In Malaysia, the murder rate and other violent crimes constitutes one of biggest social ills and poses a great challenge to eradicate. The prevalence of murder in Malaysia is worrisome as it fosters a) public fear, distrust, anger, and perceptual errors, and b) causes grief among family members and friends of the murder victim.

Based on the statistics obtained from Royal Malaysia Police (RMP), the number of murder incidents seems to be increasing from one year to another (RMP, 2012). Immediate approaches need to be taken to address the murder trends in Malaysia. The epidemiological knowledge of murder trends serve as important parameter to come up with various crime prevention efforts. However, to date, there is no epidemiological knowledge on murder trends in Malaysia although there is a surge in number of murder incidents revealed by RMP statistics. The incomplete characterisation of murder as well as the severe nature of murder in Malaysia is discussed in Section 1.3.1 and 1.3.2.

1.2.3 Ineffectiveness of current legislations

Despite harsh punishments and high number of occurrences every year, the nature and extent of murder are getting more severe and becoming increasingly complex as evidenced of number of gruesome murders within Malaysia (Jailani Harun, 2011). It can be perceived that the degree of murder in Malaysia is alarming and eye-catching.

This is evident thru gruesome accounts of murders that are featured as news headlines in local media over recent years.

Based on the increasing number of murder, it can be suggested that there is not much effective preventive measures which partially reflects the ineffectiveness of current legislations to curtail acts of murder within Malaysia. The implications of crime prevention efforts and legislations may not fit the current situations in Malaysia as almost the implications are derived from Westerns theories or findings from outside of Malaysia. This is largely due to the characterisation of murder that differs from one country to another because of cultural, geographical, and psychosocial differences. This means that legislation focusing murder prevention strategies should be based on research-based understanding especially within Malaysia context.

1.2.4 Malaysian government initiatives

Furthermore, the present research is carried out as an approach to combat against crime as 'crime' is amongst the 'National Key Result Area' (NKRA) in the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) and is an important element in Malaysia's Vision 2020. The NKRA Reducing Crime initiative is led by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA). Among the pertinent issues raised in NKRA Reducing Crime are process of combating crime, crime prevention, crime tracking and arrest, trial of offenders as well as prison and rehabilitation (Official Portal of MoHA, 2013).

In order to achieve the above mentioned aims, research and knowledge regarding crime and criminal behaviour are considered vital elements. Such knowledge provide

key risk factors and triggers for offending in order to implement sustainable solutions and risk-focussed preventions. Therefore, it is anticipated that the present study would be a one of key research in addressing murder and murderers' behaviour parallel to the aim of NKRA Reducing Crime.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS AND RATIONALES OF THE STUDY

In this subsection, statement of the problems and rationales of the study are discussed. In generating the research rationales, four research problems were examined. These were: (1) incomplete characterisation of murder in Malaysia, (2) severity of murder in Malaysia, (3) insufficient Malaysian criminological studies related to murder, and lastly (4) impacts and consequences of murder. Figure 1.1 below illustrates the visual diagram of research problems of the present study. Following this, the rationales of the study for each problem statements are discussed.

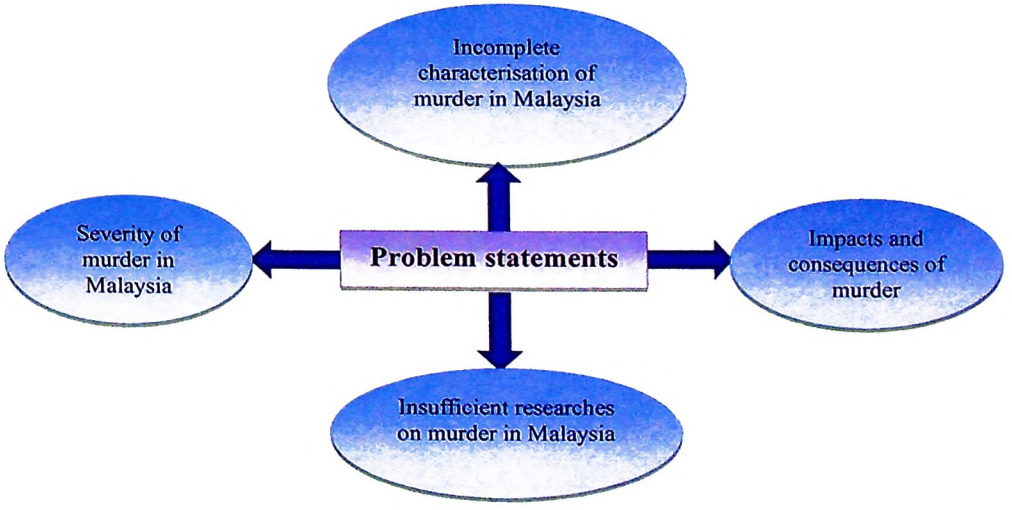

Figure 1.1: Visual diagram of research problems

1.3.1 Incomplete characterisation of murder in Malaysia

In murder-related studies, the complete characterisation concerning trends and patterns of murder are important foci to address murder prevention in a particular country or state. Research made in various countries and regions for example Alaska (Shai, 2010), Fiji (Adinkrah, 2000), Finland (Kivivouri, 2007; Wahlsten et al., 2007), Hong Kong (Au and Beh, 2011), New Zealand (Lo et al., 1992), Portugal (Coelho et al., 2010), Turkey (Buyuk and Kocak, 2009), and many more provide evidence for the attention and concern placed on the reprehensible act of murder. Despite the importance of epidemiological studies on murder, relatively little research attention has been paid in Malaysia.

There is a significant lack of information on socio-demographic markers, mechanical profiles, modes of killings, triggers and concealment of murder of Malaysian murderers and murders. With that, it can be concluded the epidemiological knowledge on murder incidents in Malaysia are insufficient. As such, scholars and the public within and outside of Malaysia may have incomplete or erroneous information regarding the phenomenon of murder in Malaysia.

Based on these lacks of information, this current study rationalises the importance of characterisation of murder in Malaysia. Having such knowledge will allow a better understanding regarding murder incidents in Malaysia. Due to these realisations, the present study seeks to provide the complete characterisation of murder in Malaysia which includes mechanical profiles of murder such as motives, modes of killings, weapon usage, and settings of murder. In addition, the present study also gathers

information of other pertinent issues of murder such as victims' roles and concealment of murder victim.

1.3.2 Severity of murder in Malaysia

In Malaysia, news programmes often start or end their broadcasts with violent crimes such as murder, rape-cum-murder and robbery-cum-murder committed by both locals and foreigners (Sidhu, 2010). In fact, gruesome murders continue to feature as news headlines of daily newspapers in this country as the acts of murder are getting more vicious. Statistics from the Department of Statistics (1990, 1991) and RMP (2012) showed that murder cases in Malaysia are escalating. There is a gradual increase in the number of murder incidents in which the number of cases in 2012 was almost 2.15 times higher than in 1980. Figure 1.2 below depicts the number of murder incidents in Malaysia for the past four decades.

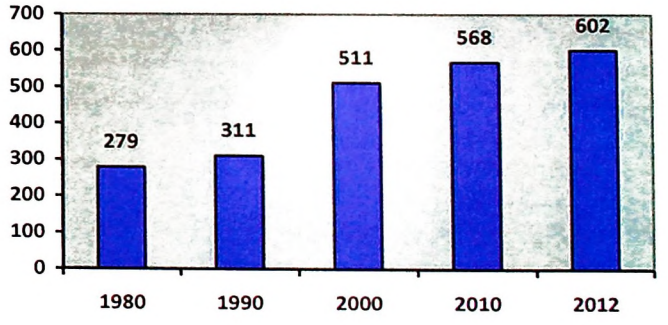

Figure 1.2: Number of recorded murder incidents in Malaysia from 1980-2012

(Source: Adapted from RMP and Department of Statistics)

It is worth noting that the present statistics on the recorded number of murder cases do not include those cases which have been reclassified as murder during court trials. Also, it should be noted that, this figure does not include cases of attempted murder or missing person cases. Recent statistics by RMP (2012) had revealed that the number of missing persons in Malaysia in the year 2012 was 5,689 individuals which is considered very serious and alarming. Figure 1.3 below shows the statistics of missing persons in Malaysia for the past five years (2008-2012).

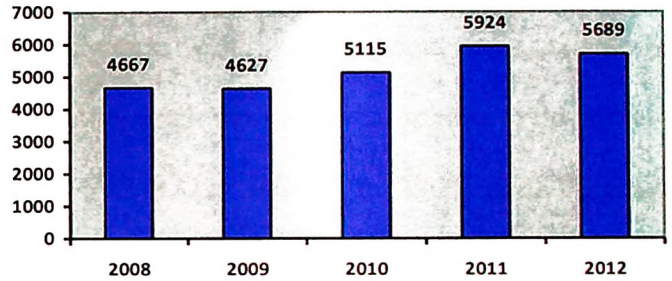

Figure 1.3: Number of missing persons in Malaysia from 2008-2012

(Source: RMP, 2012)

Some of these missing person cases are still unsolved and what happened to these people remains unknown. Perhaps, they are victims of murder as in the case of the late Nurul Jazlin who was reported missing and later discovered as a murdered victim (Jailani Harun, 2011). It is possible that some of these missing persons have been murdered and have not been found.

Apart from the high number of cases every year, what is more disturbing is that the nature and the extent of murder are getting more severe and horrific. For instance, in 2011, the nation was shocked by the murder of Sosilawati and her companions (Jailani Harun, 2011). Sosilawati and her companions were found to have been burnt

after their torturous death (Ibid). This brutal murder took place in Banting, Selangor (also known as Banting murders) where the victims were murdered, burnt and ashes thrown in the river for the purpose of concealment. This depicts an inhumane act of murderers beyond the level of atrocity.

Incidentally, burning and other methods of concealment such as dumping and chopping into several pieces appear to be a common practice among murderers in Malaysia within the past few years for the purpose of crime concealment and to prevent victim identification which hardly happened a decade ago. Such practices can be observed in other high profile cases in Malaysia including the murder of Along Spoon (2000), Canny Ong Lay Kian (2003) and Altantuya Shaaribu (2006), Nurin Jazlin Jazimin (2007), P. Yoga Ambiga (2012) and many more (*see* Jailani Harun, 2011). The following news headlines are the clear depiction of the severity of murder and murderous acts in Malaysia.

> *"Elderly couple stabbed 38 times" (New Sunday Times, 20th June 2010)*
> *"Body parts found in sewage tank" (New Straits Times, 1st January 2011)*
> *"Boy, 5, strangled to death by tie back" (New Straits Times, 6th January 2011)*

Based on the increasingly violent murders, this current study rationalises that there is an immediate need to obtain an in-depth understanding of the violent criminal psyche. Very little is known about the reasons for killing with such a degree of violence. Whether the criminal is psychologically violent or via social learning becomes violent, is a question that has been posed in the literature. The former alludes to an aggressive predisposition while the latter alludes to social conditioning and reinforcement. This will be also helpful to facilitate early intervention among at risk groups and provide safer conditions for vulnerable groups of potential victims.

1.3.3 Insufficient Malaysian criminological studies related to murder and murderers

Crime rates, neither violent or property crime; are often used as a barometer in reflecting the safety level of a nation. In western countries, the horrific nature of murder has prompted in-depth studies concerning the causes and factors that trigger murderous behaviour, and how to prevent it. However, in Malaysia, although the seriousness of murder is largely recognised, the studies of murder and among murderers are almost ignored. It is interesting to note that none of criminological research was devoted to study the issue of murder and murderers in Malaysia. This is partly due to the higher prevalence rates of less serious crimes and difficulty in obtaining access to murderers and victim's family members.

A review of Malaysian crime studies evidenced focus on other crimes such as rape (Rohana et al., 1997; Alina, 2002; Gan Kong Meng, 2007; Roslinda and Norlesuhaila, 2007; Ridzuan, 2008), incest (Abdul Hadi, 1996), juvenile delinquency (Rohany Nasir et al., 2010; Nadiah Syariani, 2014), burglary (Zaihairul Idrus, 2014), motor vehicular theft (Nor Hafizah, 2014), illegal drugs offenses (Chuah, 1990; Mahmood et al., 1999), prostitutions (Rohany Nasir et al., 2010), and other petty crimes. The above studies have focused on socio-demographic markers, psychological functioning, and modus operandi of the criminals or delinquents who involved in such crime. The above studies serve important contribution to Malaysian criminology in understanding such crimes as the information are obtained from the perspectives of perpetrators.

There are very few studies on murder with the exception of limited national studies. Noteworthy examples based on autopsy reports of murder victims include Kumar et al. (2005), Bhupinder, Kumara and Syed (2010), and Nor Zaimah (2013). What is known is official statistics of forensic pathological clues on murder victims, but not psychological traits that influences the murderers to kill, how they kill, how they select victims, and more importantly, how to prevent more occurrences. In brief, the knowledge on murder is dismal as it failed to result in implementation of sustainable preventive solutions.

As a consequence, scholars, law enforcement agencies, and the public; know relatively little about murderous behaviours and their antecedents from a localised criminological perspective. References regarding murder are often adopted from western countries and fitted into the Malaysian context. This is inappropriate due to differences in culture and social norms. Applying non-localised explanations to a local phenomenon raises validity and reliability concerns. These subsequently negatively influence and impact any crime prevention initiative.

The better approach is to apply evidence-based local knowledge. According to Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions's Theory (2001) a society's culture influences values and behavior, in this case the reasons why murders are becoming more violent (Hofstede, 2001). As such, in order to reduce and prevent new occurrences of murder incidents in Malaysia, researchers, practitioners, and legal personnels must be involved to bridge the gap between research and practice based on local criminological empirical evidence. This matter requires immediate attention since the literatures focusing on criminological aspects of murder in Malaysia are too few to

make reference to. As such, the present study would be the one of the pioneer and ground-breaking criminological research on murder and murderers in Malaysia.

1.3.4 Impacts and consequences of murder

Murder is a social perpetual problem and their impacts and consequences are devastating. The impacts of murder and other violent crime are well written in criminological as well as sociological literatures. Generally, Malaysians practice collectivistic living (*see* Hofstede, 2001) whereby extended families live together or within the same communities.

The consequences of murder in one community would adversely affect most of the community members as the victim was likely a family member or well-known. The effect that particular victimisation has on other members is known as vicarious victimisation (Daigle, 2012). Vicarious victimisation is one of the widely studied construct with regard to murder survivors such as family members and significant others (Daigle, 2012). Through a 'ripple effect', impact is also felt by family members, friends, and neighbours of the victim (Ibid). Below is a brief discussion on the effects of murder on family members as well as society.

1.3.4.1 Psychological distress

In general, psychological distress is the most common consequence to family and friends of the murdered victim, especially if they had witnessed the murder taking place. According to Amick-McMullan, Kilpatrick and Resnick (1991), family and friends experience a loss of sense of security and a dramatic disruption in their routine activities. Thompson et al. (1998) added that family members of murder

victims also exhibit higher levels of distress, depression, overwhelming anxiety, and hostility.

In some instances, the traumatic event of murder of a loved one may result in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Kilpatrick and Tidwell (1989) found that family members of murder victims are more likely to develop PTSD compared to other crime victims. This may result in impairment of social functioning, emotional liability, physiological hyper arousal, displaying diverse stress responses, depression and interpersonal problems (Carlson and Dutton, 2003).

1.3.4.2 Social dysfunction

Rates and severity of crime are social mirrors which reflect the unwellness of the society. The increasing incidence of violent crime such as murder has become a major concern in countries across the world (Fajnzylber, Lederman and Loayza, 2002). This is because, violent crimes like murder is the social function dynamics of victims' families and the immediate society.

While public members may feel angry and furious about murder related news, it also triggers fear among them. Fear of crime is viewed as a major urban stressor (Nasar and Jones, 1997) and natural response to crime, especially violent crime. The increasing stream of murders that are committed within Malaysia triggers fear among the public as to their safety and the safety of their loved ones instilling a sense of distrust between members of society, especially when variables linked to a particular murder are perceived out of proportion to the actual incident.

Previous literatures (i.e., Rountree, 1998; Lane and Meeker, 2003) have stated that fear of crime is more evident when an individual perceives his/her neighbourhood as dangerous. This higher perceived vulnerability tends to heighten the fear of crime in a person. As such, criminal events like murders within a neighbourhood tend to increase the feeling of vulnerability and suspicion among members of the community.

Most notably, individuals with high levels of fear of crime tend to alter their daily routines and restrict their mobility (Jackson and Stafford, 2009) which lead to symptoms of isolation and withdrawal from the community. In addition, such individuals tend to drain community cohesion, trust, and neighbourhood stability (Hale, 1996; Jackson and Stafford, 2009). In other words, there emerges an environment of social dysfunction due to fear of crime victimisation and rates of actual crime occurrences which in turn may entice criminals to commit more crimes.

Due to these realisations, it is important to curb and reduce the number of possibilities of murder incidents in Malaysia as the impacts and consequences are devastating which causes psychological distress and social dysfunction among Malaysians. One of the steps that can help to reduce such traumatic incidents is by implementing sustainable solutions which can be derived through research-based findings among Malaysian murderers.

Cognizant of these four research problems (Section 1.31 until 1.3.4), the present study takes an in-depth approach using multi-fold methodologies to investigate psychological and mechanical profiles of sample of incarcerated male murderers in

Malaysia. Unlike past studies carried out on Malaysian prisoners, this study also compares murderers and public data in order to establish a more reality and psychological-based understanding of why some Malaysians commit murder and others do not. In addition, this current research seeks to narrow the gap of information on what is known about murderers in general and specifically Malaysian male murders.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the light of the discussion of the problem statements of the study, nine research questions (RQ) have been identified. This research attempted to shed some light and answer the following research questions.

RQ1: What is the trend of murder and murder victimology in Malaysia?

RQ2: What are the similarities and differences among the incarcerated murderers and victims?

RQ3: What is the descriptive psychological profile of these murderers?

RQ4: What is the descriptive mechanical profile of these murderers?

RQ5: What is the relationship between personality traits with low self-control, aggression, and self-serving cognitive distortions?

RQ6: What is the association between low self-control, aggression, and self-serving cognitive distortions?

RQ7: What are the differences between psychological profiles of the incarcerated murderers and the control group?

RQ8: What are the differences between the psychological profiles with types of mechanical aspects committed by the murderers?

RQ9: What are the murderers' perspective regarding their criminal history, substance abuse history, murder victimisation, murder victim concealment, psychological profiles and preventive factors?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This section presents the purpose of the present research. Based on the problem statements, rationales and research questions presented previously, the aim of the present research was to investigate and determine the psychological and mechanical profiles of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers. The psychological profiles consisted of personality, aggression, self-control, and cognitive distortions. The mechanical profiles covered self-reported motives, methods of killing, choice of weapon, settings, targeted body parts as well as murder concealment.

In order to achieve this aim, nine specific objectives have been identified. The following section described the specific research objectives (RO). The objectives are ordered from least to most pertinent and according to the phases of the present research.

RO1: Perform a trend analysis of murders and murder victimology in Malaysia for the period of 12 years (2001-2012).

The purpose of this trend was to provide a comprehensive characterisation of murder in Malaysia. This trend analysis focused on the extent of murder incidents and examines the nature of these tragic incidents. Also, it discusses the salient features of murder incidents such as victimisation patterns and several mechanical aspects of

murder. This approach is the first of its kind in Malaysia comprising all the states in the country. Achievement of this objective is presented in Chapter Four and discussed in Chapter Five.

RO2: Obtain socio-demographic profiles of sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers and their murder victims.

Socio-demographic information such as age, ethnicity, religion, educational status, occupational status, and marital status were obtained in order to determine a likely pool of murderers and also to determine the most vulnerable groups to be victimised in murder. Involvement of murderers in illegal activities and substance abuse history prior to commission of murder were obtained as well. Achievement of this objective is presented in Chapter Four and discussed in Chapter Five.

RO3: Obtain descriptive psychological profiles such as personality, self-control, aggression, and self-serving cognitive distortions among sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers.

This specific objective measures the mean score of psychological aspects and the prevalence of each psychological trait among sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers. This objective was achieved by administering the Malay validated psychometric instruments among them. The obtained data were discussed in relation to theories and context of crime. Achievement of this objective is presented in Chapter Four and discussed in Chapter Five.

RO4: Identify the descriptive mechanical profiles of sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers such as self-reported motives, methods of killing, choice of weapon, settings, targeted body parts and murder victim concealment.

This objective was intended to gather the details about the mechanical aspects pertaining to the murderous activity itself. Based on the literature, gathering information on mechanical aspects of murder may provide clues to the dynamics of the murder incident. Achievement of this objective is presented in Chapter Four and discussed in Chapter Five.

RO5: Predict the relationship of personality traits with low self-control, aggression, and self-serving cognitive distortions among sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers.

In this objective, the personality traits are operationalised as predictors while other psychological aspects were the outcome variables. The level of prediction and association of each personality trait for particular psychological aspects are measured. The purpose of this objective was to predict the relationship of each personality traits with specific psychological variables (low self-control, aggression, and self-serving cognitive distortion) among sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers. Achievement of this objective is presented in Chapter Four and discussed in Chapter Five.

RO6: Examine the associations between low self-control, aggression, and self-serving cognitive distortions among sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers.

The purpose of this objective was to ascertain the associations between low self-control, aggression, and self-serving cognitive distortions among sample of murderers. This was achieved by distributing the validated psychometric instruments to the murderers after considering the selection criteria of the respondents. Data was analysed using bivariate analyses. Achievement of this objective is presented in Chapter Four and discussed in Chapter Five.

RO7: Compare the personality traits, self-control, aggression, and self-serving cognitive distortions between sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers (study group) and male adult members of the public (control group).

Comparisons were made to identify and determine the mean differences between both groups viz. murderers and adult members of the public (non-criminal population). These findings may help to identify distinct psychological aspects associated with murderers. This is important because the criminal behaviour can be better understood by looking at criminal and non-criminal population. Achievement of this objective is presented in Chapter Four and discussed in Chapter Five

RO8: Examine the difference of psychological profiles with types of mechanical aspects committed by sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers.

This objective was formulated to ascertain the relationship between psychological and mechanical aspects of the murderers. Gaps in the available literature depict that acts of murder occur due to various variables that may be present at the same time. What specific psychological traits are present were unknown prior to this current study. Achievement of this objective is presented in Chapter Four and discussed in Chapter Five.

RO9: To obtain in-depth self-perceived understanding of criminal history, substance abuse history, murder victimisation, murder victim concealment, psychological profiles and preventive factors from the sample of murderers via interview sessions.

The criminological and sociological literatures contain knowledge gleaned from largely quantitative studies. This current study differs as it includes a qualitative approach to the phenomenon under study in order to obtain knowledge that cannot be obtained via quantitative approaches. Semi-structured interview sessions were conducted in the qualitative phase with an aid of the semi-structured interview guide. Achievement of this objective is presented in Chapter Four and discussed in Chapter Five.

1.6 RESEARCH HYPOTHOSES

Four group null hypotheses (HG_O) have been hypothesised based on the specific objective presented above. In addition, sub-null hypotheses are presented. There are a minimum of three sub-hypotheses for each HG_O. All the hypotheses were derived based on the review of literatures that relavent to the objectives of this research.

Personality traits are very useful in predicting the criminal behaviour and provide a better understanding of how an individual reacts to problems, make decisions and communicate with their surroundings (*see* Caspi et al., 1994). It was stated that personality traits seem to act as an independent factor in predicting, explaining, developing and shaping the antisocial, violent, criminal, and delinquent behaviour (*see* Caspi et al., 1994; Robinson, 2004). With the support of above mentioned literatures, the following group hypothesis (HGo1) was generated to seek relationship between personality traits with other psychological profiles.

HG_o1: There is no significant relationship between personality traits with low self-control, aggression, and self-serving cognitive distortions among sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers.

HG_o1a: There is no significant relationship between personality traits with low self-control among the sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers.

HG_o1b: There is no significant relationship between personality traits with aggression among the sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers.

HG_o1c: There is no significant relationship between personality traits with self-serving cognitive distortions among the sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers.

A growing body of criminological literatures have indicated significant correlations between low self-control, aggressive behaviour and cognitive distortions among criminal population. For example, General Theory of Crime (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990) emphasized the importance of self-control processes in shaping aggressive behaviour among criminals. Other studies (e.g., Barriga et al., 2000; Walters, 2002; Palmer, 2007) also asserted cognitive distortion as underlying factor for wide ranges

of aggressive and anti-social behaviour. With these in mind, the following group hypothesis (HGo2) was formulated to ascertain the associations between aggression behaviour, low self-control, and cognitive distortion among murderers.

HG_o2: There is no significant association between aggression behaviour, low self-control, and self-serving cognitive distortion trait among the sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers.

HG_o2a: There is no significant association between low self-control and subscales of aggression among the sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers.

HG_o2b: There is no significant association between low self-control and subscales of self-serving cognitive distortion among the sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers.

HG_o2c: There is no significant association between subscales of aggression and subscales of self-serving cognitive distortion among the sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers.

The following group hypothesis (HGo3) was formulated in order to identify the differences in psychological traits between murderers and control group. A variety of mechanism and theories have been proposed to indicate the psychological traits differences between these groups. For example, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argued that one of the great differences between criminals and non-criminals is the level of self-control. In addition, several researchers highlighted cognitive distortion as distinctive marker among criminals (Liau, Barriga, and Gibbs, 1998; Barriga et al., 2000) while other studies (Heaven, 1996; Wiebe, 2004) have shown that certain personality traits are highly associated for criminal population compared to non-

criminal population. Therefore, it is important to identify the psychological traits differences among Malaysian murderers and control group.

HG_O3: There is no difference in psychological profiles between the sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers and adult male members of the public.

HG_O3a: There is no difference in personality traits between the sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers and adult male members of the public.

HG_O3b: There is no difference in low self-control between the sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers and adult male members of the public.

HG_O3c: There is no difference in aggression between the sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers and adult members of the public.

HG_O3d: There is no difference in self-serving cognitive distortions between sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers and adult members of the public.

Although many investigations and evidences have been put forth to explain the potentially associated factors for different mechanical aspects (Geberth, 2006), the underlying psychological traits for different killing methods among the murderers have still remained underexplored. Therefore, it is essential to shed some empirical perspectives on the underlying psychological traits of the murderers in the context of different mechanical aspects. With this in mind, the fourth group hypothesis (HGo4) was generated to test the differences in psychological profiles with types of mechanical profiles committed by the murderers.

HG_O4: There is no difference in psychological variables profiles with types of mechanical aspects committed by sample of incarcerated Malaysian male murderers.