



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***MODERATING ROLE OF COPING RESOURCES ON RELATIONSHIPS  
BETWEEN FACTORS AND INDEPENDENT LIVING READINESS AMONG  
INCARCERATED ADOLESCENTS IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA***

**THIRESYINIE A/P TAMIL CHELVAM**

**FEM 2022 22**



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**By**

**THIRESYINIE A/P TAMIL CHELVAM**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in  
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science**

**March 2022**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Science

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**March 2022**

**Chair : Mohd Najmi bin Daud, PhD**  
**Faculty : Human Ecology**

The process of incarceration among adolescents brings along potential implications before, during and after committing infringement acts. Despite that, numerous proceeding cases indicate that the problem remains as a stable threat at an alarming rate. Why is it that, even though sufficient guidance and support has been provided, repeated offences among these incarcerated adolescents are kept on increasing? The answer is unclear due to scarce research conducted in this concern area. Yet, little is known about how well these incarcerated adolescents are equipped with relevant knowledge and skills to ensure their readiness for an independent living. Despite the findings of previous studies, it was not well established as to whether the self-esteem and alexithymia regulation would predict and reflect upon the readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents. Additionally, the role of coping resources towards the interrelationships between self-esteem and alexithymia regulation on the readiness for independent living is unclear. This study is therefore directed along with the above research gaps in mind, which is designed (1) to examine the relationship between self-esteem and alexithymia regulation on the readiness for independent living and (2) to determine the moderating effect of coping resources. In line with the study objectives, a two-stage cluster sampling method was used by this cross-sectional study in selecting the respondents from selected Sekolah Tunas Bakti in Peninsular Malaysia. A total of 255 questionnaires were distributed to incarcerated adolescents aged 12 to 18 years old. The findings revealed that the inclusion of the interaction term between self-esteem and readiness for an independent living with a coefficient  $\beta$  value of ( $\beta = .520, p \leq 0.05$ ), shows that coping resources works as a moderating variable in influencing the relationship. Interestingly, coping resources also acts as a moderating variable in influencing the relationship between alexithymia regulation and readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents; coefficient  $\beta$  value of ( $\beta = -.380, p \leq 0.05$ ). Contrary to what has often been assumed, this study brings out the novelty findings of a new dimension and empowers experience of studying the moderating role of coping resources which moderated the relationships

of both self-esteem and alexithymia regulation on the readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents. Fundamental understanding on the readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents can be utilized as a source of output for the policy makers to provide supportive environment for these incarcerated adolescents especially in a Malaysia context. Therefore, interventions should be targeted on incarcerated adolescents' readiness to reintegrate with society and to live independently, namely, coping resources of his/her needs of support, information, and feedback to delineate the challenges lying ahead.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Master Sains

**SUMBER DAYA TINDAK SEBAGAI MODERATOR DALAM HUBUNGAN  
ANTARA FAKTOR-FAKTOR DAN KESEDIAAN HIDUP BERDIKARI  
DALAM KALANGAN JUVANA DI SEMENANJUNG MALAYSIA**

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Proses penahanan dalam kalangan juvana berpotensi membawa implikasi sebelum, semasa dan selepas seseorang juvana itu melakukan sesuatu perbuatan yang melanggar undang-undang. Namun begitu, terdapat banyak kes prosiding yang menunjukkan bahawa masalah itu kekal sebagai satu ancaman pada kadar yang membimbangkan. Persoalannya, mengapa kesalahan yang berulang dalam kalangan juvana ini tetap bertambah walaupun bimbingan dan sokongan yang mencukupi telah diberikan? Jawapannya tidak begitu jelas kerana kurangnya penyelidikan yang dijalankan dalam bidang ini. Ironinya, tidak banyak maklumat tersedia mengenai sejauh mana para juvana ini dilengkapi dengan pengetahuan dan kemahiran yang berkaitan bagi memastikan kesediaan mereka untuk hidup berdikari. Walaupun dengan adanya dapatan kajian-kajian lepas, sejauh mana faktor harga diri dan faktor alexithymia ini akan membawa impak terhadap persediaan juvana untuk hidup secara berdikari selepas proses penahanan tidak dapat dipastikan. Rentetan itu, peranan sumber daya tindak terhadap hubungan antara harga diri dan alexithymia mengenai kesediaan juvana untuk hidup berdikari juga tidak begitu jelas. Dengan mengambil kira jurang penyelidikan tersebut, objektif kajian ini adalah untuk (1) mengkaji hubungan antara faktor harga diri dan alexithymia terhadap kesediaan juvana untuk hidup berdikari dan (2) untuk menentukan kesan sumber daya tindak sebagai pembolehubah moderator. Selaras dengan objektif kajian, kaedah persampelan kluster dua peringkat telah digunakan untuk memilih responden daripada Sekolah Tunas Bakti di Semenanjung Malaysia. Sebanyak 255 borang soal selidik telah diedarkan kepada juvana yang berumur dalam lingkungan 12 hingga 18 tahun. Dapatan kajian mendapati bahawa dengan memasukkan hubungan interaksi antara harga diri dan kesediaan untuk hidup berdikari dengan nilai  $\beta$  pekali ( $\beta = .520, p \leq 0.05$ ) membuatkan sumber daya tindak berfungsi sebagai pembolehubah moderator dalam mempengaruhi hubungan ini. Pada masa yang sama, sumber daya tindak juga berfungsi sebagai pembolehubah moderator dalam mempengaruhi hubungan antara alexithymia dan kesediaan untuk hidup berdikari dalam kalangan juvana; nilai  $\beta$  pekali ( $\beta = -.380, p \leq 0.05$ ). Bertentangan dengan apa yang sering diandaikan, kajian ini telah berkongsi mengenai penemuan dimensi baharu

dan memperkasakan pengalaman dalam mengkaji pembolehubah moderator, iaitu sumber daya tindak dalam hubungan kedua-dua faktor iaitu harga diri dan alexithymia terhadap kesediaan untuk hidup berdikari dalam kalangan juvana. Pemahaman asas mengenai kesediaan untuk hidup berdikari dalam kalangan juvana boleh digunakan sebagai sumber bagi penggubal dasar untuk menyediakan persekitaran yang baik kepada para juvana ini terutamanya dalam konteks Malaysia. Oleh itu, intervensi-intervensi harus disasarkan terhadap kesediaan juvana untuk berintegrasi semula dengan masyarakat dan untuk hidup berdikari, khususnya sumber daya tindak dari aspek keperluan sokongan, maklumat dan maklum balas bagi mengenal pasti cabaran yang mendatang.



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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The first chapter of this current study presents the background of the study, statement of problem, research questions, objectives of study, and hypotheses of the study. Also, the definition of key terminology was stated conceptually and operationally. Finally, this chapter closes with the significance of the study.

### 1.2 Background of Study

Incarceration is a socially relevant topic with substantial implications which has become the main issue underlying the discussion upon the adolescents' community of incarceration (Hockenbury, 2020). On top of that, every year thousands of adolescents throughout the nation are discharged from incarceration yet, findings testify around up to 1,163,146 juveniles' cases of incarceration occurred in the United States in the year of 2013 (Fida et al., 2015). Comparable, just as in United States and any other countries, so do in Malaysia, 16,489 violent crimes have been recorded back in 2019, of which 59.0% were robbery; 66,967 property crimes of 46.1% were vehicle theft and 26,080 drug addiction cases (Crime Statistics Malaysia, 2020). Also being said, the actual number of cases is estimated to be way higher than reported ones (Klatt et al., 2016). Subsequently, adolescence incarceration has long afflicted this topic, even though much has been said and disputed, the issue has not been fully addressed. Clearly, these indicators are red signs used as the main gauge for evaluating and defining these incarcerated adolescents' readiness for an independent living upon being discharge from their incarceration period.

In line with that, The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), conducted a review of studies demonstrating that incarcerated adolescents are in danger of vagrancy and help reliance upon being released from rehabilitation centre as ways of implementation need to be implemented for effective readiness for independent living among the incarcerated adolescents. With, adolescents set in imprisonment confront high dangers impediments when transitioning to adulthood due to the individual and natural circumstances (Petrosino et al., 2022). Ready to know when they are being discharged, they confront prompt challenges as they endeavour to reintegrate into the community where they go up against critical adolescents to alter their lives after a period of incarceration. Stein (2008) argues that these incarcerated adolescents can be categorised into distinct groups: "moving on", "survivors", and "victims". The 'moving on' gather are those who are considered most likely to have developed into well balanced and fruitful adults; 'survivors' have managed to pull off their lives together with plenty of resources and finally, 'victims' are those who were left out without proper guidance and have been re-involved in relapse cases of crimes involvement. Thus, one may argue that

the readiness to leave rehabilitation centre is one of the key variables in determining their capacity to attain a settled future (Dempsey et al., 2021).

In concordance with the above statement, one option to assist these affected adolescents, particularly in the context of present study, is by admitting them in approved schools or known as Sekolah Tunas Bakti (STB). This approach is consistent with the Malaysian Child Protection Act 2001, which provides for the protection and rehabilitation of juvenile offenders (Frick et al., 2014a). Indeed, current study was carried out at Sekolah Tunas Bakti or Tunas Bakti Schools (STB), approved school establishment under the Welfare Department (Jabatan Kebajikan Malaysia). Also, these schools were occupied with lots of educational treatments, activities and with confinement of the incarcerated adolescents (Section 65, Children's Act 2001; Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat Malaysia, 2016). Likewise, these incarcerated adolescents conceded in this schools do possess several similar characteristics as to with (1) detained on the composed request by their parents or guardians to the Court for Children, (2) aged range between 10 to 18 years old, (3) committed in crimes of any offense breaking the law and regulations and (4) needing of institutional recovery. According to SWD (2010b), the incarcerated adolescents in the school undergo variety of services as rehabilitation and care treatment, counselling and educational lessons of readiness and IT basic. Perhaps, mainly they do practice vocational training like few hands-on workshops, and even outdoor activities. Under Section 65 (1) of the Child Act of 2001, it was dispatched that the purpose of these rehabilitation procedures upon the adolescents were to care and guide these incarcerated adolescents who were uncontrolled and associated with violations like burglary, illicit drug usage, and weapon possession. The primary aim of these diverse rehabilitation centres is to educate the incarcerated adolescents a strong foundation of resiliency, positive behaviour and lots of versatile skills and adaption for them to know the exact meaning of living in a positive environment despite being in the approved schools or upon their leaving for readiness for independent living (SWD, 2010). The usual length of detained or rehabilitation period in Sekolah Tunas Bakti is for 3 years but they can be discharged earlier, after a year of incarceration as prior to the approval from the Board of Visitors (SWD, 2010b). Consequently, concurring to the experiences of the Imprison Division of Malaysia shows up that, most of the incarcerated adolescents who are released from the incarceration period commit infringement again and re-enter the rehabilitation centre (Rafedzi et al., 2018). In fact, towards the reality that it may be unfortunate circumstances or an occurrence, but it is the truth in our nation.

Generally, statistics indicate that most of the adolescents who were released from the rehabilitation centre relapsed and were re-admitted (Department of Prison Malaysia, 2019). Repeated offences among Malaysian juveniles increased by 37.5% from 491 cases in 2017 to 675 cases in 2018. In 2017, property crimes recorded a total of 77,802 cases, while violent crimes recorded a total of 21,366 cases (Ng et al., 2020). Additionally, while between 10% and 40% of teenagers formerly in rehabilitation centres were unemployed, many struggled to maintain stable work and mobility. They did not only encounter difficulties in various issues upon re-integrating into society but also experience unemployment that contributes to homelessness (Kong et al., 2012). According to Wagner et al., (2018), more than a third of adolescents formerly in care reported a perceived lack of preparedness in a variety of skill areas.

Furthermore, what motivates to study further this core problem is the question of whether these incarcerated adolescents are ready to live independently in the outside world. Readiness for independent living pertains to individuals' ability to meet their own needs, to feel comfortable with themselves, and to be satisfied with their relationships with significant others (Mariani et al., 2017). To achieve these goals, these adolescents must be willing to pursue further education, find and maintain employment, and sustain intimate relationships, to name a few (Nooraini et al., 2018). However, there is no one-size-fits-all indicator that takes into consideration the diverse needs and capabilities of incarcerated adolescents that can be utilized as the foremost gauge for evaluating and characterizing this issue. Now, the existing structure at the approved school in Malaysia is more towards one fit all approach where all cases are referred to the counselling process regardless of their severity (Hassan & Rosly, 2021). Thus, this present study is directed towards finding answers to fulfil the satisfaction and better responses towards the readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents.

Nevertheless, in line with the seriousness and severity of the issue of readiness for independent living, this present study also linked up with few other key developmental factors which are exempted into this core issue. In fact, incarcerated adolescents are placed in a vulnerable situation which may involve other external factors revolving them. For instance, their self-esteem plays a major role on the self-evaluation part of being accepted by others which leads to the ability to form new relationships and enhance socialization towards the readiness element. As such, according to Mouatsou & Koutra (2021), 40% of incarcerated adolescents with low self-esteem suffer from depression upon released which contributes indirectly towards a low level of readiness too. Besides, the element of self-esteem, stimulating towards the internal emotions of incarcerated adolescents, alexithymia regulation shed the stand of response towards the mental health of adolescents is also penetrated in depth in this present study. Grabe et al., 2008 said that research upon alexithymia regulation is relatively limited, as growing evidence are needed to overcome the consequence of fear of socialization and lower level of readiness among them. Furthermore, upon the factors of self-esteem and alexithymia regulation being studied, the inclusion of moderating role, coping resources is added to enrich, improve, and address the gaps of actual and perceived level of readiness. Peace et al., (2017), stated that when there is an additional element of support of coping resource, then the reluctance or lacking readiness factor might be overcome. Although a plethora of studies have established causal relationship between varieties of individual factors, research uncovering the direct and indirect links between self-esteem and alexithymia regulation on readiness for independent living; coping resources acting as a moderating variable in this study is inconclusive.

Hence, this research is designed to explore the relationship of incarcerated adolescents' readiness to integrate with their outside social world following their release from the approved schools that confer one's self-esteem and alexithymia regulation; coping resources moderates the linkages are crucial elements for incarcerated adolescents to make strides toward readiness for independent living.

### 1.3 Statement of Problem

Numerous studies and investigations have been conducted on these incarcerated adolescents throughout the world but still the nation has long been plagued by adolescents' incarceration (Gomes et al., 2021). How these adolescents are handled can have a profound impact on their readiness prospects, whether they grow up to become productive individuals or fall into a life of an inmate (Barnert et al., 2021). The desired state of readiness for these adolescents following their incarceration should be way more positive as they should be able to live independently, carry out their daily chores without any obstacles and meet their basic needs, just like other adolescents. These adolescents should be psychologically and physically healthy, receiving all necessary services to ensure their overall well-being. However, the primary issue is that consistent with the Children Crime Statistics (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2016), repeated offence increased suggesting that the failure of the incarcerated adolescents to reintegrate with the society.

Additionally, these incarcerated adolescents in Sekolah Tunas Bakti are highly vulnerable group of population in which their development and rights are widely private and confidential within the criminal justice system (Mustaffa, 2021). Placing adolescents in rehabilitation centres without sufficient guidance and support might exhaust them and overwhelm their ability to cope with their current circumstance (Rickwood et al., 2007). Thus, proper guidance and efforts should be implemented for the well-being of these incarcerated adolescents. Besides, the latest update concerning incarcerated adolescents in Malaysia shows the number of children involved in repeated crimes has improved by 13.3 percent as compared to the previous year, which was about 675 cases in 2018 and 585 cases in 2019 respectively (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). However, the instance of the total number of cases indicates that the problem remains a stable threat and it is still alarming. Despite that, numerous preceding studies show that the incarcerated adolescent faces several demanding situations during their recovery process of adjusting to the real world in the aspects of educational (Rafedzi et al., 2016); behavioural (Hassan et al., 2020); poorer social relationships with family (Shong et al., 2019); society popularity (Azam et al., 2021) and a vulnerable self-resiliency (White et al., 2010). When these adolescents leave the rehabilitation centre, they leave behind their disciplined lives and daily routines, and they may find themselves in a vacuum.

Incarcerated adolescents face uncertainty, a scarcity of work opportunities and a dearth of essential skills. All the above-mentioned unavailability is due to the different nature of cases exist that occur because of limited approach being implemented (Wylie & Rufino, 2018). The term 'limited approach' is explained by the fact that all incarcerated adolescents originate from diverse backgrounds which reflects the circumstances surrounding the crimes they commit, even when the crimes committed are similar in form (Perveen et al., 2018). Thus, it is necessary to improve the implementation of a reflective studying order to gain better understanding from the adolescent's perspective themselves. On the other hand, without intending to undermine the existing efforts and implementations, there must be something missing or lacking in the efforts as the number of incarcerated adolescents has remained relatively constant over the years and several relapse cases continue to rise (UNICEF, 2020). Hence, it is critical to build on

these findings, to improve data and to gain a better understanding of institutionalization, including the drivers and circumstances of placement in rehabilitation care.

Nevertheless, not only grasping towards a good placement of rehabilitation care, but it is also vital priority that research aim to investigate the underlying causes upon the problem of readiness for independent living in that rehabilitation centre. Thus, the present study aims to fulfil the need to examine factors, which is thought to underlie the mechanism of readiness for independent living among these incarcerated adolescents. With that, self-esteem and alexithymia regulation are studied on their individual dimensions and how coping resource further moderates and reinforce the relationships.

Prior empirical studies support the claim that self-esteem is impaired by imprisonment; indirectly it results in a low level of socialization with others, impeding the adolescent's readiness for independent living (Orth et al., 2018). Development of self-esteem throughout incarceration period solely depends to a large degree of adolescent's available resources and environmental consequences and thus is vary and different between individuals (Schanz, 2014). Hence, in line with the readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents in Malaysia, the present study aims to fill the gap in literature by determining the relationship between self-esteem and readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents in Malaysia.

On the other hand, past studies on incarcerated adolescents' identified relapses; approximately 35% have a high level of alexithymia regulation (Gatta et al., 2016). Furthermore, many incarcerated adolescents who are eventually detained already have underlying symptoms of alexithymia (Velotti et al., 2016). It has been found that adolescents who suffer from long term untreated alexithymia do possess poor interpersonal functioning, substance abuse and recurrent episodes of depression (Hammen et al., 2008; Richardson et al., 2014), thereupon not being accepted by society upon release (Yosuff et al., 2020). In brief, extant research on alexithymia regulation upon readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents in Malaysia is examined in this present study.

Apart from that, half of the population of adolescents left the rehabilitation centre suffers from stress-related psychiatric disorders due to a lack of coping resources, which is associated with a low level of readiness for independent living (Abrams, 2012). Concerning the coping resources available for adolescent's readiness for independent living, previous research suggests that the incarcerated adolescent anticipated some challenges in their recovery process; which becomes a stumbling block for them to change (Al Sayed Mohamad et al., 2013; Daud, 2017; Lim et al., 2014). Thus, the uttermost gaps between adolescents' available coping resources and actual capabilities of using it can lead to serious issues to the adolescents' capabilities to upfront all the obstacles upon leaving the rehabilitation care are left largely unacknowledged, and therefore little coping strategies are put up (Coates, 2016). In short, in this current study, implications regarding this type of provision in terms of the coping resources of incarceration and readiness are explored.

Although an array of replete literature has established a link between coping resources and readiness for independent living among the incarcerated adolescents in Malaysia (Garofalo et al., 2017 & Lonnqvist et al., 2015); there has been a lack of research on the moderating effect of coping resources on self-esteem, alexithymia regulation and readiness for independent living. Principally, this notion is associated with the incarcerated adolescents' readiness for their recovery and reintegration into their external world upon being released from the approved schools. (Gagnon & Barber, 2015). The current study sought to address the research gaps that build upon the existing and past findings, which revealed other influential factors on how the coping resources acts as a moderating variable to enrich and enhance the product of readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents. Although this issue has received much attention, but it is less emphasised scientifically, especially in the Malaysian context as most of the past research examines the direct relationship towards readiness of incarcerated adolescents to re-socialize back with society and better future. Thus, to improvise this existing circumstance, the present study extended the previous findings by examining coping resources as a possible moderator in the relationship between self-esteem, alexithymia regulation and readiness for independent living.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

This study aims to determine the moderating role of coping resources on the relationship between self-esteem, alexithymia regulation and readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents in Peninsular Malaysia. In summary, there are five questions address in this present study:

1. What is the background of the incarcerated adolescents?
2. What are the levels of self-esteem, alexithymia regulation, coping resources and readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents?
3. Is there any relationship between self-esteem, alexithymia regulation, coping resources and readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents?
4. Does coping resources moderates the relationship between self-esteem and readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents?
5. Does coping resources moderates the relationship between alexithymia regulation and readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents?

## **1.5 Objectives of Study**

### **1.5.1 General Objective**

This study aims to determine the moderating role of coping resources on the relationship between self-esteem, alexithymia regulation and readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents in Peninsular Malaysia.

### **1.5.2 Specific Objectives**

The present study proposes the following objectives:

1. To describe the demographic background among the incarcerated adolescents.
2. To describe self-esteem, alexithymia regulation, coping resources and readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents.
3. To examine the relationship between self-esteem, alexithymia regulation, coping resources and readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents.
4. To determine the moderating effect of coping resources on the relationship between self-esteem and readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents.
5. To determine the moderating effect of coping resources on the relationship between alexithymia regulation and readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents.

## **1.6 Hypotheses of Study**

The following research hypotheses were formulated in this study:

- Ha1: There is a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents.
- Ha2: There is a significant positive relationship between alexithymia regulation and readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents.
- Ha3: There is a significant positive relationship between coping resources and readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents.
- Ha4: Coping resources moderates the relationship between self-esteem and readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents.
- Ha5: Coping resources moderates the relationship between alexithymia regulation and readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents.

## **1.7 Definition of Key Terminology**

### **1.7.1 Incarcerated Adolescent**

Conceptual: Incarcerated adolescent means a person aged from 10-18 years and, in relation to criminal proceedings confined within Malaysian welfare institutions of violating the law (Malaysia, 2016; Percetakan Nasional Berhad).

Operational: Incarcerated adolescents in this study refer to those sent to approved schools' Sekolah Tunas Bakti by court-order as they were aged between 10-18 years old only (inclusive).

### **1.7.2 Self-Esteem**

Conceptual: Self-esteem can be characterized as an individual's by and large emotional assessment of his or her value and an individual's feeling of pride and is firmly connected with his or her self-consciousness and psychological well-being (Augestad, 2017).

Operational: Respondents' level of self-esteem was measured by using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) which comprises of 10 items with employing a 4-point Likert scale. Higher score indicates greater self-esteem (Reivich et al., 2013).

### **1.7.3 Alexithymia Regulation**

Conceptual: Alexithymia regulation is a cognitive processing and regulation disorder of having difficulties in recognizing, describing, and communicating one's own emotions. It involves the deficits in the ability to identify feelings and pay attention to personal thoughts and inner experiences rather than focusing on external details of everyday life (Velotti et al., 2017).

Operational: Respondents' level of Alexithymia regulation was measured by using the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS) developed by (Bagby et al., 1994). The TAS-20 is a self-report instrument which comprises 20 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The TAS-20 total score (with higher scores meaning greater alexithymia) is computed by summing scores on three dimensions: difficulty in identifying feelings, difficulty in describing feelings, and external-oriented thinking style.

### **1.7.4 Coping Resources**

Conceptual: Coping resources is characterized as the method involved with executing a reaction to a stressor, where stress is seen as the



experience of encountering significant difficulties in one's goal-related endeavours (Abrams, 2012).

Operational: Respondents' coping resources was measured by using The Brief COPE scale (Carver, 1997). There are 14 two-item subscales within this scale which sums up into a 28-item self-report inventory. It is a 4-point Likert scale, in which higher scores indicates higher level of coping resources (Garcia et al., 2018).

### **1.7.5 Readiness for Independent Living**

Conceptual: The readiness for independent living among these incarcerated adolescents is defines as the capacity to provide for their necessities, to feel comfortable and convenient with themselves, and be happy with associations with others too (Zeira & Benbenishty, 2011).

Operational: The readiness for independent living was measured using The Readiness for Independent Living (Benbenishty & Schiff, 2009) which consists of 21 items on a 5-point Likert scale. A higher score indicates higher levels of readiness for independent living (Rosfizah, 2014).

## **1.8 Significance of Study**

### **1.8.1 Body of Knowledge**

This study is also essential for the knowledge development as it helps to provide important value to the future researcher by improving existing knowledge and creating new knowledge and insight for the body of knowledge. This systematic study is essential to be conducted to fill the knowledge gap in understanding readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents from various elements. It has been stated that, their readiness to cope and ability to live their life along with the potential implications before, during and after their rehabilitation period remains elusive. Self-esteem and alexithymia regulation have been widely associated with readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents. Despite the findings from past research, it was not well established as to whether self-esteem and alexithymia regulation would predict and reflect upon the readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents.

Along with that either, the inclusion of coping resources to moderate the relationship is unclear and most of the previous findings evolve around the direct relationship only. Little is known on how well these incarcerated adolescents are equipped with relevant necessities and skills to ensure their readiness for an independent living. Will a relationship be enriched by including the coping resources as a moderating variable which can enhance the product of readiness for an independent living? Therefore, with a questionable statement of research gaps in mind this research is designed (1) to examine the relationship between self-esteem and alexithymia regulation on the

readiness for independent living and (2) to determine the role of coping resources as a moderating variable towards the interrelationships between self-esteem and alexithymia regulation on the readiness for independent living. Thus, the findings of the study also provided more information in this field of scientific evidence, which will enrich the knowledge in developmental psychology field. In developmental perspective, the current study chooses to focus on adolescents as the target sample as it has been found that the characteristics regulation in adolescence may direct into adulthood later (Arnett, 2015).

More importantly, this study particularly increases the knowledge of the effects and experience of Malaysia's incarcerated adolescents by also examining several factors into this study. Not only by knowing and enhancing our knowledge towards this readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents but also this study brings out the best approach for incarcerated adolescents by knowing them better individually in every aspect. Moreover, for the incarcerated adolescents themselves, they would feel more engaged in the support systems and study offered to them as this research is centred on them. For the upcoming future studies involving incarcerated adolescents, this study is going to be very useful to be applied to them, as it is significantly related to them that will work best in meeting the diverse need and capabilities of them.

### **1.8.2 Policy Development**

For the rehabilitation centres themselves, it helps to contribute and enhance guidelines and policies geared towards the implementing intervention that can help in readiness of incarcerated adolescents for independent living. Also, for the society, this research will create awareness and what they can do to help and support these incarcerated adolescents. The findings of the present study also are useful for practitioners specifically for the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, the governments, and private agencies in addressing the issues of readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents and consequently eliminate the external risks, improves and enlightens the focus towards preparing the affected adolescents mentally and emotionally in facing the adversity of real world.

Since readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents could be a critical formative assignment, the present study is also additionally imperative for the intervention and avoidance steps arranging by highlighting the prevalence components that will contribute to the readiness for independent living among incarcerated adolescents and outcome behaviours. Based on this research, practitioners and policy makers may consider those measurements when emphasising recovery process and reintegration into the social environments to improve and engage potential defensive components and diminish possible risk components that put these incarcerated adolescents at risk. Additionally, this also benefits the incarcerated adolescents themselves, as changes in policy and interventions indirectly will cause and create a change upon the readiness aspects before, during and after the period of incarceration. Thus, these incarcerated adolescents will experience changes in a more practical way which can be implemented and practiced.

## 1.9 Summary of Chapter

This present study focus and study the linkages between self-esteem, alexithymia regulation and coping resources, with readiness for independent living as the main variable concern of this study. With moral depravity as the context, the hypotheses of the study are known along with the study rationale. In the upcoming next chapter, theoretical understandings will be discussed to form the primary research framework



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