



## **MALAY VERSION OF SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING SCALE : Is Malay Spiritual Well-being Scale a Psychometrically Sound Instrument?**

Syed Sohail Imam<sup>1</sup>  
Noor Harun Abdul Karim<sup>2</sup>, Nor Radziah Jusoh<sup>2</sup>, Nor Ehsaniah Mamad<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

The purpose of the present study was to develop adapted Malay version of Spiritual Well-Being Scale and examine its psychometric properties and prepare percentile norms. 278 undergraduate students in years 1 – 4 (80.60 % female) voluntarily filled out the scale during their regular class hours. They aged 21.59 years on the average (SD = 1.59). 96.8 % of the respondents were Malaysian. The internal consistency coefficients for full Spiritual Well-Being Scale, Religious Well-Being and Existential Well-Being Subscales were .88, .86, and .81 respectively. Corrected item-total correlations were .34 to .64, .43 to .66, and .29 to .67 for SWB, RWB, and EWB respectively ( $p < .01$ ). Items exhibited higher correlations with their own subscale than the other subscale showing convergent and discriminant validity. The Spiritual Well-Being Scale correlated significantly positively with Religious well-Being Scale ( $r = .89, p < .0001$ ) and existential well-Being scale ( $r = .90, P < .0001$ ). Principal component analysis resulted in four factors as indicated by eigenvalues (1.10 to 6.95) and scree plot. Even two factor solution did not result in simple structure. A few items loaded on both the factors. The overall results indicate that for assessing spiritual well-being of Malaysian university students the Malay version of Spiritual Well-being Scale is a reliable and valid instrument, but it is multidimensional. Percentile norms for university students have been provided. It is expected that locally standardized Malay version of Spiritual Well-being Scale is likely to serve better. Discussion includes implications of the present findings.

**Key words:** Spiritual Well-being, Malay version, University students

### **Introduction**

Recently, spiritual well-being (SWB) has been defined as a sense of relatedness or connectedness to others, a provision for meaning and purpose in life, the fostering of well-being (through a stress buffering effect), and having a belief in and a relationship with a power higher than the self (Hawks, Hull, Thalman, & Richins, 1995). Lee, Sirgy, Efraty, and Siegel (2003) conceptualized spiritual well-being as satisfaction with one's spiritual life domain.

Extensive survey of research literature involving spiritual well-being, lead Hammermeister, Flint, El-Alayli, Ridnour, and Peterson (2005) to conclude that "spiritual well-being happens to have a positive influence on most aspects of health" (p. 80).

Furthermore, previous research results show that spiritual well-being has a number of positive and negative correlates. On the positive side, spiritual well-being is positively related to meaningful goals in life, positive affect, social support, lowered blood pressure, ideal body weight, and psychological and relational scales (Ellison & Smith, 1991; Emmons, 1999; Pargament, 1997; Schumaker, 1992). Spiritual well-being has positive impact on overall life satisfaction (Lee et al., 2003). On the negative side, spiritual well-being is negatively related

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Psychology, International Islamic University Malaysia



<sup>2</sup> Centre for Human Development and Applied Social Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia

to substance abuse, anxiety, depression, and other dysfunctional behaviours (Paloutzian, 1996). These empirical findings highlight the importance of spiritual well-being as a practically useful concept to be further investigated in future studies in organizational, educational, and clinical settings.

Keeping in view the need of assessing spiritual well-being as a crucial variable in basic and applied research several scales have been developed to measure this construct. The SWB scale is one such widely used self-report measure of spiritual well-being (Ellison, 1983; Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982) (Reviewed by Boivin, Kirby, Underwood, & Silva, 1999). This scale is based on Moberg's (1971) (cited in Gregory, 2007) conceptualization of Spiritual well-being as a two-dimensional construct consisting of a vertical dimension and a horizontal dimension. The religious, vertical dimension refers to an individual's well-being in relation to Allah or a higher power. The social psychological, horizontal dimension focuses on how well the person is adjusted to self, community, and surroundings. Given the popularity and nonsectarian nature of SWB, we developed its adapted Malay version. This paper evaluates the psychometric properties of the Malay SWB scale. Specifically, this study addresses the following questions:

1. Is Malay SWB scale an internally consistent measure of spiritual well-being?
2. Is Malay SWB scale a valid measure of spiritual well-being?
3. Is Malay SWB scale a two-dimensional measure of spiritual well-being?

In addition to these questions, this paper presents percentile equivalents of raw scores on SWB, RWB, and EWB scales.

## **Method**

### ***Sample***

The convenient sample included 278 undergraduate students (females 80.60 %) who voluntarily responded to the scale during their regular class hours. The participants were in education years 1 – 4 and aged 21.59 years on the average (SD = 1.59). 96.8 % of the respondents were Malaysians.

### ***Measure***

The SWB scale (Ellison, 1983; Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982) is a 20-item self-report measure consisting of two subscales, one that represents the vertical dimension (religious well-being, RWB) and one that represents the horizontal dimension (existential well-being, EWB). Each scale contains 10 items. All of the RWB items contain the word "God", which was replaced by "Allah" in the present study. The EWB items contain no specifically religious language, instead asking about such things as life purpose, satisfaction, and relations with the people and situations around us. In order to control for response set bias, approximately half of



the items are worded in a reverse direction so that disagreement with the item represents higher well-being. Each item is rated on a 6-point Likert Scale with answer options ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (6), with no mid point. These scores are summed in order to yield three scale scores: one score for RWB, one score for EWB, and one score for total SWB. RWB and EWB scores can range from 10 to 60. SWB total scores can range from 20 to 120. The scale is easily understood, requires 10-15 minute to complete, and has clear scoring guidelines. It is nonsectarian and can be used in a variety of religious, health, and research contexts. Previous studies reported high test-retest reliabilities ( $r = .73$  to  $.99$ ), internal consistency reliabilities ( $r = .78$  to  $.94$ ), construct validity and two-factor structure of the scale (Ellison & Smith, 1991). A more complex factor structure was suggested by Ledbetter, Smith, Fischer, Vosler-Hunter, and Chew (1991).

### ***Procedure***

The bilingual (knowing both English and Malay) co-authors of this study prepared the adapted translation of the English version of SWB scale into Malay using forward translation method. They finalized the Malay version of SWB scale by reaching a consensus about each translated item through group discussion. The scales were administered to the participants during their regular class hours either at the beginning or before the end of the class as agreed upon by the lecturer concerned. The participants were informed that the participation was anonymous and voluntary. No identification information was collected on the scales. It took about three weeks to collect the data. The participants were not paid any monetary reward for their participation in this study.

### **Result**

We examined reliability of SWB, RWB, and EWB scales by computing alpha coefficients (Cronbach, 1951) (see Table 1). The overall alpha coefficient for SWB scale was 0.89 ( $p < .0001$ ) and alpha coefficients, if item deleted, ranged from .88 to .89 ( $p < .0001$ ) (see Table 2). Alpha coefficients for RWB and EWB were .86 and .81 ( $p < .0001$ ) respectively. Thus, all the three scales displayed good internal consistency (e.g.,  $\alpha > .70$ ) for the present sample.

As evidence of construct validity we computed subscale – full scale correlations (see Table 1) and corrected item-total correlations (see Table 2) (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997; Cohen & Swerdlik, 2005; Gregory, 2007). The SWB full scale scores correlated significantly with scores on RWB ( $r = .89$ ,  $p < .0001$ ) and EWB subscales ( $r = .90$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). The RWB subscale scores correlated significantly with EWB subscale scores ( $r = .64$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). All the corrected item-total correlations were significant ( $r = .34 - .64$ ,  $p < .001$ ).



We evaluated convergent and divergent validities by correlating scores on each item with its own subscale as well as with other subscale (Green & Salkind, 2005). All the item-subscale correlations were significant (see Table 3). Correlation coefficients between RWB items and RWB subscale were higher than RWB items and EWB subscale. Similarly, EWB item scores correlated more strongly with EWB subscale scores than with RWB subscale scores. For RWB subscale, these correlation coefficients ranged from 0.60 to 0.73 for convergent validity and from 0.34 to 0.49 for divergent validity. In case of EWB subscale, these coefficients were 0.41 to 0.78 and 0.21 to 0.56 respectively. All the correlation coefficients were statistically significant.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Inter-Scale Correlations (n = 278).

Measures	M	SD	1	2	3
SWB	92.60	10.10	(.89)	-	-
RWB	48.18	05.55	.89	(.86)	-
EWB	44.42	05.73	.90	.64	(.81)

$r \geq .64, p < .0001$ , Correlation coefficients in the diagonal are coefficient alphas.

SWB = Spiritual well-being, RWB = Religious well-being, EWB = Existential well-being.

Table 2 Corrected Item-Total Correlations ( $r$ ) and Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ), if Item Deleted (n = 278)

Items	$r$	$\alpha$
1.Saya tidak mendapat kepuasan sepenuhnya semasa menunaikan solat secara berseorangan kepada Allah.	<b>.44</b>	<b>.89</b>
2.Saya tidak tahu siapa diri saya, dari mana saya datang dan ke mana saya akan pergi.	.36	.87
3.Saya percaya Allah menyayangi dan mengambil berat tentang diri saya.	<b>.62</b>	<b>.88</b>
4.Saya merasakan kehidupan ini adalah suatu pengalaman yang positif.	.59	.88
5.Saya percaya bahawa Allah tidak mempunyai sifat insani dan tidak berminat dengan kehidupan seharian saya.	<b>.57</b>	<b>.88</b>
6.Saya merasa bimbang tentang masa depan saya.	.45	.89
7.Saya mempunyai hubungan peribadi yang bermakna dengan Allah.	<b>.49</b>	<b>.88</b>
8.Saya merasakan kehidupan ini bermakna dan amat memuaskan.	.56	.88



Items	<i>r</i>	<i>α</i>
9.Saya tidak mendapat kekuatan dan sokongan secara peribadi daripada Allah.	<b>.59</b>	<b>.88</b>
10.Saya merasakan kesejahteraan terhadap hala tuju hidup saya.	.47	.88
11.Saya percaya Allah mengambil berat tentang masalah saya.	<b>.53</b>	<b>.88</b>
12.Saya tidak menikmati kehidupan ini sepenuhnya.	.46	.88
13.Saya tiada hubungan peribadi yang memuaskan dengan Allah.	<b>.55</b>	<b>.88</b>
14.Saya merasa mempunyai masa depan yang baik.	.61	.88
15.Hubungan dengan Allah membantu saya untuk tidak merasa kesepian.	<b>.64</b>	<b>.88</b>
16.Saya merasakan kehidupan ini penuh dengan konflik dan kesedihan.	.34	.89
17.Saya merasa amat bermakna bila berkomunikasi secara rapat dengan Allah.	<b>.54</b>	<b>.88</b>
18.Kehidupan tidak mempunyai banyak pengertian.	.52	.88
19.Perhubungan saya dengan Allah menyumbang kepada kesejahteraan.	<b>.50</b>	<b>.88</b>
20.Saya percaya kehidupan saya mempunyai tujuan yang hakiki.	.53	.88

$r \geq .34, p < .0001$ , Correlation coefficients in boldface type represent religious well-being.

Table3 Convergent and Discriminant Validity Coefficients for Religious and Existential Well-being Scales (n = 278)

Items on SWB Scale	RWB Scale	EWB Scale
1.Saya tidak mendapat kepuasan sepenuhnya semasa menunaikan solat secara berseorangan kepada Allah.	<b>.60</b>	.36
2.Saya tidak tahu siapa diri saya, dari mana saya datang dan ke mana saya akan pergi.	.35	<b>.41</b>
3.Saya percaya Allah menyayangi dan mengambil berat tentang diri saya.	<b>.73</b>	.47
4.Saya merasakan kehidupan ini adalah suatu pengalaman yang positif.	.56	<b>.60</b>
5.Saya percaya bahawa Allah tidak mempunyai sifat insani dan tidak berminat dengan kehidupan seharian saya.	<b>.69</b>	.43
6.Saya merasa bimbang tentang masa depan saya.	.32	<b>.63</b>
7.Saya mempunyai hubungan peribadi yang bermakna dengan Allah.	<b>.61</b>	.37
8.Saya merasakan kehidupan ini bermakna dan amat memuaskan.	.39	<b>.70</b>



Items on SWB Scale	RWB Scale	EWB Scale
9.Saya tidak mendapat kekuatan dan sokongan secara peribadi daripada Allah.	<b>.73</b>	.43
10.Saya merasakan kesejahteraan terhadap hala tuju hidup saya.	.28	<b>.67</b>
11.Saya percaya Allah mengambil berat tentang masalah saya.	<b>.67</b>	.39
12.Saya tidak menikmati kehidupan ini sepenuhnya.	.33	<b>.64</b>
13.Saya tiada hubungan peribadi yang memuaskan dengan Allah.	<b>.68</b>	.44
14.Saya merasa mempunyai masa depan yang baik.	.43	<b>.75</b>
15.Hubungan dengan Allah membantu saya untuk tidak merasa kesepian.	<b>.73</b>	.49
16.Saya merasakan kehidupan ini penuh dengan konflik dan kesedihan.	.21	<b>.78</b>
17.Saya merasa amat bermakna bila berkomunikasi secara rapat dengan Allah.	<b>.71</b>	.36
18.Kehidupan tidak mempunyai banyak pengertian.	.44	<b>.61</b>
19.Perhubungan saya dengan Allah menyumbang kepada kesejahteraan.	<b>.64</b>	.34
20.Saya percaya kehidupan saya mempunyai tujuan yang hakiki.	.52	<b>.53</b>

$r \geq .21, p < .0001$ , Correlation coefficients in boldface type represent convergent validity.

Table 4 Rotated Component Matrix (n = 278)

Scale Items	Components			
	1	2	3	4
1.Saya tidak mendapat kepuasan sepenuhnya semasa menunaikan solat secara berseorangan kepada Allah.	-	-	-	.71
2.Saya tidak tahu siapa diri saya, dari mana saya datang dan ke mana saya akan pergi.	-	-	-	-
3.Saya percaya Allah menyayangi dan mengambil berat tentang diri saya.	.79	-	-	-
4.Saya merasakan kehidupan ini adalah suatu pengalaman yang positif.	.66	-	-	-
5.Saya percaya bahawa Allah tidak mempunyai sifat insani dan tidak berminat dengan kehidupan seharian saya.	.77	-	-	-
6.Saya merasa bimbang tentang masa depan saya.	-	.62	-	-
7.Saya mempunyai hubungan peribadi yang bermakna dengan Allah.	-	-	.78	-



Scale Items	Components			
	1	2	3	4
8.Saya merasakan kehidupan ini bermakna dan amat memuaskan.	-	.72	-	-
9.Saya tidak mendapat kekuatan dan sokongan secara peribadi daripada Allah.	.44	-	-	.50
10.Saya merasakan kesejahteraan terhadap hala tuju hidup saya.	-	.79	-	-
11.Saya percaya Allah mengambil berat tentang masalah saya.	.57	-	.47	-
12.Saya tidak menikmati kehidupan ini sepenuhnya.	-	.56	-	.54
13.Saya tiada hubungan peribadi yang memuaskan dengan Allah.	-	-	.46	.55
14.Saya merasa mempunyai masa depan yang baik.	-	.70	-	-
15.Hubungan dengan Allah membantu saya untuk tidak merasa kesepian.	.53	-	.53	-
16.Saya merasakan kehidupan ini penuh dengan konflik dan kesedihan.	-	.51	-	-
17.Saya merasa amat bermakna bila berkomunikasi secara rapat dengan Allah.	.41	-	.64	-
18.Kehidupan tidak mempunyai banyak pengertian.	.64	-	-	-
19.Perhubungan saya dengan Allah menyumbang kepada kesejahteraan.	-	-	.78	-
20.Saya percaya kehidupan saya mempunyai tujuan yang hakiki.	.67	-	-	-

Table 5 Percentile Equivalents of Raw scores on SWB, RWB, and EWB scales (n = 278)

Percentiles	SWB Raw Scores	RWB Raw Scores	EWB Raw Scores
5	73	38	33
10	79	40	36
15	82	44	40
20	85	44	40
25	86	44	41
30	89	46	42
35	90	47	43
40	92	48	44
45	93	49	44
50	94	50	45
55	94	51	46
60	96	51	46
65	98	52	47
70	99	52	47



Percentiles	SWB Raw Scores	RWB Raw Scores	EWB Raw Scores
75	100	53	48
80	102	53	49
95	106	54	53
99	109	54	56

Exploratory factor analysis was performed to examine the factor-structure of SWB scale. Kaiser-Myer-Olkin statistic ( $KMO = .91$ ) and Bartlett’s test of sphericity (chi-square = 2149.18,  $df = 190$ ,  $p < .0001$ ) indicated that the correlation matrix was suitable for factor analysis. A principal component extraction was used, after which the number of factors was determined by both eigenvalues ( $> 1$ ) and the scree test (Cattell, 1966 as cited in Field, 2000). These criteria suggested a four-factor solution (eigenvalues 6.95, 2.04, 1.39, 1.10). The first four unrotated factors together accounted for 57.36 % of the total item variance. Principal component analysis with Varimax rotation resulted in four-factor solution indicating that the SWB scale is multidimensional (factor loadings were:  $F1 = 0.44$  to  $0.79$ ,  $F2 = 0.51$  to  $0.79$ ,  $F3 = 0.46$  to  $0.78$ ,  $F4 = 0.50$  to  $0.71$ (see Table 4). A factor loading of .40 or greater was considered significant ( $p < .01$ , two-tailed) (Gorsuch, 1997; Stevens, 1992 as cited in Field, 2000). Religious items 3, and 5 loaded on factor 1; items 1 and 7 loaded on factors 4 and 3 respectively. Whereas religious items 9, 11, 15, and 17 loaded on their own factor as well as on other factors. Religious items 13 and 19 loaded on factors 3 and 4. Existential items 8, 10, 14, 16 loaded on factor 2 whereas items 4, 6, 18, and 20 loaded on factor 1. Existential item 12 loaded on factors 2 and 4; item 2 did not load significantly on any of the four factors.

Percentiles norms for SWB, RWB, and EWB scales appear in Table 5. These norms reflect a difference of five points. The results in Table 5 show that, for a particular percentile rank, EWB raw score is lower than RWB raw score.

### Discussion

The aim of the present study was to develop an adapted Malay version of English SWB scale (Ellison, 1983; Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982) and evaluate its reliability, validity, and dimensionality and prepare percentile norms. From the current data four points deserve considerations.

First, the present findings show that the Malay SWB scale is a reliable and valid measure of spiritual well-being. Alpha coefficients for the full SWB scale and the RWB and EWB subscales are in congruence with previous results (e.g., Ellison & Smith, 1991; Hammermeister, et al., 2005; Imam, 2008).

Second, the SWB scale exhibited construct validity in terms of high subscale-full scale correlations. Further evidence of construct validity came from corrected item-total





correlations. Relatively higher correlations between subscale items and their corresponding subscale and lower correlations with the other subscale exhibited evidence of convergent and divergent validities. These results are consistent with the findings of a recent Malaysian study (Imam, 2008). However, the current findings regarding convergent validity cannot be compared with past western research results because we did not examine convergent validity of SWB scale by correlating scale scores with external criterion scores.

Third, the current findings indicate that the Malay SWB scale is multidimensional. The present findings get support from past research results, which show that the SWB scale is multidimensional (e.g., Ledbetter et al., 1991; Imam, 2008). The principal component analysis with varimax rotation resulted in a complex four factor-structure. Although the factor loadings are moderate to high, only a few items loaded on their corresponding factors. Some items showed cross loading and a few items loaded on factors other than religious and existential factors. One of the existential items did not load significantly on any of the four factors. The present upsetting factor loadings may be explained in terms of inadequate translation skill of the translators. In the present case, occurrence of some translation problems is likely. Although the translators are native Malay, they may not be adequately skillful in translating the scale from English to Malay language. Furthermore, some researchers have identified spiritual well-being as having three major dimensions, such as affiliation, alienation, and dissatisfaction (Scott, Agresti, & Fitchett, 1998). Lee et al (2003) viewed spiritual well-being as satisfaction with one's spiritual life domain, which is composed of various subdomains (e.g., Emmons, Cheung, & Tehrani, 1998). The problem of multidimensionality of Malay SWB scale may be resolved by checking the Malay version carefully using back translation technique combined with committee approach.

Fourth, the unique feature of the present study is presentation of percentile norms. However, these norms should be considered provisional because of the relatively smaller size and homogeneous nature of the normative sample. A large standardization sample representing adequately a more diverse population may provide practically useful norms.

### **Implications**

Given the currently growing research interest in the field of spirituality and its practical usefulness in almost all the walks of life, a psychometrically sound measure of the construct of spiritual well-being can help predict motivational reactions and behaviours across variety of life domains. The present Malay SWB scale, being a reliable and valid measure of spiritual well-being, may be provisionally used in research and practice in organizational, educational and clinical settings in Malaysia.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

A number of methodological issues may have affected the genuineness of the current findings. As with any study using volunteer participants, an important limitation relates to the sampling frame. A more carefully controlled sampling procedure may have provided



somewhat different insight into the psychometric features of the scale. The use of homogeneous sample of undergraduate students from only one university may have affected the magnitude of correlation coefficients obtained in this study. Future research should involve more diverse heterogeneous sample to rule out the effect of sample homogeneity on correlation measures.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the present findings, among a sample of undergraduate university students, demonstrate that, overall, the Malay SWB scale is a reliable and valid multidimensional measure of spiritual well-being and that the present percentile norms are tentative.

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