

Evaluation and Validation International Students' Psychological Wellbeing Scale (ISPWS): Application of Rasch Measurement Model

Shima Mashayekhi ^{a,*}, Mohd Tajudin Md. Ningal ^a, Adibah Abdul Latif ^{a,b}, Newsha Mashayekhi ^b

^a Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Faculty of Education, Skudai, Johor Bahru, Malaysia, 81300

^b Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Skudai, Johor Bahru, Malaysia, 81300

* Corresponding author email address: mshima4@live.utm.my

Abstract

Today, the scenario in which people spend their whole lives in one place is no longer true for many. Thus, individuals around the world experience major changes in their lives when relocating and these variations require them to adapt to new situations. There is a lack of assessment instrument related psychological constructs for its occurrence, resulting in a substantial gap in researchers' understanding of the phenomena. The aim of this study is to prepare a set of useful and valid instrument based on the four important construct to assess psychological wellbeing among international students. This study conducted in five public research universities in Malaysia. The sample consisted of 442 male and female international students. The sampling technique in this research was purposive and quota sampling. The design of this study was conducted as survey research using a set of questionnaire. The result of this study showed the final format of the questionnaire was validated and the instrument is qualified to be used in related future studies to evaluate the overall psychological wellbeing of international students over the worlds based on four main factors which included in this survey (homesickness, mental health, attachment, and spiritual wellbeing). Advances in research on this topic may aid in the development of instrument, helping counselors to scale students' psychological wellbeing and try to help them to have more successful academical and social life.

Keywords: Mental health, Homesickness, Attachment style, Spiritual wellbeing, International students

1. Introduction

People today spend less time in environments familiar to them compared to people in the past because of issues such as migration, international tourism, dispatchments and international exchange programs. One of the important reasons for moving is relocating to pursue higher education (Stroebe et al., 2015; Vingerhoets, 2005).

In general, relocating to a new place induces strain. Moving from one familiar environment to a new and strange environment for whatever reason is usually considered as a stressful process (Jibeen, 2011; Mirsky, 2009; Tartakovsky, 2007). One of the numerous exciting experiences encountered by many young people is related to the transition linked to studying abroad. Many international students face various psychological problems (Furnham, 2010; Sandhu, 1994).

1.1 Homesickness

Homesickness is a depression-like reaction. It is also a normative pathology and can be defined as distress caused by separation from home and close relationships that can lead to intense preoccupation and ruminations about the

previous environment as well as having a strong longing to return to the old environment (Eurelings-Bontekoe, Vingerhoets & Fontijn, 1994; Soltani et al., 2011). Homesickness can occur in mild or severe forms. Severe Homesickness can result in unsustainable movement and create demanding situations for individuals (Thurber & Walton, 2012). Lindner (1940) reported that about 60 to 70% of students who settle at a university develop feelings of distress and homesickness (Soltani et al., 2011; Van Thurber et al., 2012; Tilburg et al., 1999). Of these, seven to ten percent suffered from a severe form of homesickness (Eurelings-Bontekoe, et al., 1998; Soltani et al., 2011).

Therefore, homesickness is a common experience among students and this study chose to focus on homesickness as an independent variable and mental health as a dependent variable. Along with other daily problems related to the migration, these individuals also face negative impacts on their mental health. Moreover, it is likely that other factors apart from homesickness have influence on students' mental health. Therefore, this study sought to identify the effectiveness of other theoretical factors (attachment and spiritual wellbeing) towards mental health as well.