

# THE EXPRESSIONS OF SPIRITUALITY INVENTORY: EVIDENCE FOR THE CROSS CULTURAL VALIDITY IN A MALAYSIAN CONTEXT

Haslina Muhamad, Ph.D.  
*Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

John Roodenburg, Ph.D.  
*Victoria, Australia*

Dennis W. Moore, Ph.D.  
*Victoria, Australia*

*ABSTRACT:* This study sought to assess the validity of the Expressions of Spirituality Inventory (ESI) for use in the Malaysian context. The ESI was developed and validated in English to measure five overarching dimensions of spirituality that capture constructs commonly found across spirituality literature. No study focusing on the validation of a Malay version of the ESI has been reported to date. The English version of the ESI was translated into Malay in a rigorous process that included back-translation and then administered to a calibration sample of 236 Malaysian young adults, with the final model of the ESI cross-validated using a replication sample of 201 Malaysian young adults. Structural equation modelling indicated satisfactory construct validity. The  $\chi^2$  difference tests supported the five factor structure of spirituality in the Malaysian context.

*KEYWORDS:* Spirituality, Expressions of Spirituality Inventory, Malaysia, Reliability, Validity, Young Adults.

Spirituality is a worldwide concept, made up of constructs that have been positively associated with valued wellbeing outcomes such as life satisfaction and happiness, and negatively related to social problems such as depression and substance abuse (Moreira-Almeida, Neto, & Koenig, 2006). However, despite considerable research on the topic researchers continue to differ in their definitions of spirituality or its component dimensions, this often attributed to spirituality being a subjective, personal and individualistic construct (Coyle, 2002, p. 589). The lack of agreement has led to the development of a plethora of disparate assessment techniques in the field, with over a hundred instruments, many psychometrically weak, now available (MacDonald, 2000b; MacDonald & Holland, 2003; Paloutzian & Park, 2005).

We were interested in understanding spirituality in a Malaysian context, and more specifically among Malaysian young people because of the potential for facilitating wellbeing. On reviewing existing measures of spirituality, we concluded that the Expressions of Spirituality Inventory (ESI) (MacDonald, 1997, 2000a) was the preferred instrumentalized model for a number of reasons.

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Email: [haslina\\_m@um.edu.my](mailto:haslina_m@um.edu.my)

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