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## A MEASURE FOR PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: IMPLICATION FOR CAMPUS LEADERS

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### ABSTRACT

Social support is an important aspect of university students' life. Individuals who enjoy their social relationships and feel strongly supported by others reported less anxiety, depression, and psychological stress. Social support may come from family members, friends, and significant others in life. The lack of social support may lead to stress and depression which may turn to more serious mental problems like suicidal ideation, personality disorder, or other symptoms of mental disorder. Therefore, the role of university management or leaders in providing social support for students is critical for building a healthy and inclusive learning environment. However, limited knowledge of the sources of social support among students can pose barriers to implementing comprehensive social support programs. To assess the perceived social support among university students, a Western scale, the Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale can be utilized. This study was intended to examine the validity and reliability of the Malay version of the Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale in a sample of 443 Malaysian university students. Results support for high reliability and validity of this scale. Confirmatory factor analysis reported the expected three-factor structure and a high correlation between factors and scales. In addition, internal consistency was good and correlation analysis with the Satisfaction with Life Scale proved the theoretical relations among the constructs. The findings suggest that MPSS-M is a reliable and valid tool to measure social support among students in higher education institutions. Campus leaders and student affairs professionals may use the scale to identify the source of support among students. Implication for university management is also discussed.

**Keywords:** Higher Education, Malay, Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, Social Support, University Student, Campus Leader



# MALAYSIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MOJEM)

## INTRODUCTION

Perceived social support is a person's belief in the assistance or support they receive through their interactions with others. This description encompasses their social contacts as well as the quality of the assistance they get (Dour et al., 2014), which may include friends, family members, and significant individuals in their life. Social support is defined as an individual's sense of general support from people in their social network, which improves their functioning and/or protects them from negative repercussions (Demaray & Malecki, 2003). In a few studies, perceived social supports were shown to impact the quality of life (e.g., Van Droogenbroeck, Spruyt, & Keppens, 2018; Oldfield, Humphrey, & Hebron, 2016; Beeri, & Lev-Wiesel, 2010; Slund, Starrin, & Nilsson 2010), reduce anxiety in adolescents (Raknes et al., 2017), aids university student adjustment (Solberg & Valdez 1994), moderates the link between positive psychological qualities and subjective well-being (Khan & Husain 2010), academic achievement (Baker, 2013), and retention (Baker & Robnett 2012).

Meanwhile, a lack of social support may have an impact on work quality and workplace adjustments (Rytsälä, Melartin, Leskelä, Lestelä-Mielonen, Sokero & Isometsä, 2006) and also affect the level of resiliency among university students (Khairina, Samsilah Roslan, Noorlila Ahmad, Zeinab Zaremohzabieh, & Nurazidawati Mohamad, 2020). The lack of social support may lead to stress and depression which may turn to more serious mental problems like suicidal ideation, personality disorder, or other symptoms of mental disorder. On the other hand, people who suffer from social anxiety may perceive less social support (Barnett et al. 2020). Individuals with a lack of social support always feel lonely and have fewer friends to listen to their problems because they always avoid communicating with other people. Less social support may result in a lower level of life satisfaction and a greater likelihood of developing psychiatric symptoms (Hansen, Fuentes, & Aranda 2018; Bosworth et al., 2008), requiring more time to recover from mental problems (Hybels et al., 2016), being more vulnerable to stress (Chao, 2012), and affecting the rate of relapse among individuals with depression (Backs-Dermott et al., 2010). People who receive greater social support have a deeper feeling of belonging, identity, and a more meaningful existence.

For the past few years, the world faced the pandemic COVID-19. Due to the pandemic, many parties were affected including the economic, social, technology, and education sectors. This also affects university students who need to adapt to new circumstances and situations. Many non-essential services are ordered to be closed for safety reasons. Meanwhile, learning sessions either at school or university were completely diverted to online learning basis. Thus, students faced challenges in online learning. During that pandemic period, university students were reportedly anxious, depressed, bored, and restless during the learning sessions which may cause a lack of focus during online learning (Md. Muniruzzaman & Md. Roknuzzaman Siddiky, 2021). This situation will get worse if it is not controlled. Therefore, the university should play its role to offer continuous support to students whether online or physical environment. First-year students should be given exposure and support as well as a good learning environment to enable them to maintain their momentum in learning (Yenwan Chong & Hooi Sin Soo, 2021). One of the supports is in terms of the psychological aspect of students by identifying sources of social support that can provide a positive impact on their psychological condition. Students must provide them a conducive environment for them to grow and cope with the challenges in life. Besides, the identified sources of social support can act as a source of motivation and the catalyst for enthusiasm for students.

Therefore, the role of university management or leaders in providing social support for students is critical for building a healthy and inclusive learning environment. While colleges' primary purpose is to deliver great education, it is also critical for them to fulfil students' social and emotional needs. The role of university administration in establishing a feeling of community and belonging among students is critical. Universities may assist students to connect with their classmates, forming friendships, and establishing a support network through organizing orientation programs, social events, and extracurricular activities. Such programs help students' general well-being and social integration, minimizing feelings of isolation and loneliness. Additionally, university administration can build counselling services and mental health support networks. Significantly, the study finds that academic considerations, rather than



## MALAYSIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MOJEM)

personal or social ones, are essential to students' emotional experiences throughout the transition period (Young, Thompson, Sharp, & Bosmans, 2020). Hence, university management can help students manage stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health difficulties by offering access to skilled specialists who can provide counselling, therapy, and other support systems. These programs should be freely available, discreet, and stigma-free to encourage students to seek assistance when necessary. University administration should create policies and programs to increase students' perceptions of social support (Bukhari & Afzal, 2017). Furthermore, university administration may put in place policies and programs that encourage diversity, inclusion, and fairness. This involves the creation of safe spaces, the formation of support groups, and the organization of workshops or training sessions on issues such as cultural sensitivity, gender equality, and sexual orientation. By aggressively addressing these challenges, colleges may build an inclusive atmosphere in which all students, regardless of their origins or identities, feel appreciated, respected, and supported. University management may increase its function as a critical source of social support for students by enhancing the synergistic interaction between pro-social and pro-environmental views among university students (Bhattacharya, 2019).

In addition, university administration can work with student organizations and student-led initiatives to solve specific social concerns or advocate for student welfare. This cooperation might include creating effective communication channels, fostering student engagement in decision-making processes, and giving resources or money for student-led initiatives. Management can empower students and ensure their opinions are heard by including them in crafting their own university experience. Despite the significance of social support, university administration may confront obstacles and limits in performing this duty. Limited knowledge of the sources of social support among students can pose barriers to implementing comprehensive social support programs.

Given the significance of social support in the lives of university students, a few measures may assist higher education counsellors, educators, university leaders, and management teams in determining the sources of social support among higher education students. The most often used scales are the Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ) developed by Sarason et al. (1987;1983) and the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL: Cohen & Hoberman, 1983), which counsellors can use to better understand their clients' support systems. In 1988, Zimet, Zimet, and Farley developed Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale (MPSS) to examine an individual's impression of social support. MPSS was developed to examine people's views of social support from three sources: friends, family, and significant others. MPSS shines out when compared to other measurements.

Looking at the importance of social support in university student's life, a few scales may help higher education counsellors, educators, and management teams identify the level of social support received by higher education students. The most popular scales include SSQ (Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason., 1983; Sarason, Sarason, Shearin, & Pierce, 1987) and ISEL (Cohen & Hoberman, 1983; Cohen et al., 1985) where the counsellor and campus leader may administer to their clients to understand clients' support system. In 1988, Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, and Farley (1988) developed MPSS to measure an individual's perception of social support. MPSS was developed to measure perceived social support from three distinct sources: family, friends, and significant others. When compared to other measures, MPSS stands out. First, MPSS was reported to be one of the instruments with psychometric consistency, and it has been widely utilized in both clinical and nonclinical settings, across a wide range of demographic backgrounds and nationalities (Bagherian-Sararoudi et al., 2013). Second, most of the other scales did not incorporate three unique types of social supports (Bruwer et al., 2008; Zimet et al., 1988). Data on different types of social support may be highly beneficial for higher education counsellors when developing wellness programs for students. Third, MPSS is a quick, user-friendly, and time-effective self-report instrument (Rizwan & Aftab, 2009 & Bruwer, Emsley, Kidd, Lochner, & Seedat., 2008), which reduces test taker bias. Fourth, the MPSS is one of the most recent scales for measuring social support, having been established in the late 1980s.

MPSS has been validated on a variety of populations including adults, adolescents, students, and psychiatric patients around the world, including the youth population in South Africa (Bruwer et al., 2008), the adolescent population in Mexican America (Edwards, 2004), Turkish higher education students (Duru, 2007; Basol, 2008), medical students



# MALAYSIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MOJEM)

population in Thailand (Wongpakaran & Wongpakaran, 2012), adolescents population in Arab American (Ramaswamy, Aroian, & Tejmplin, 2009), higher education students population in Pakistan (Rizwan & Aftab, 2009), and women in the postpartum phase population in France (Dennis & Dowswell, 2013). Three of these validation studies validated the two-factor structure of social support (eg. Tonsing, Zimet, & Tse, 2012; Chou, 2000, Stanley, Beck, & Zebb, 1998). Meanwhile, Pakistani population research has supported a one-dimensional model of social support (eg. Akhtar et al., 2010). We also looked at a few validation studies that had been completed in Malaysia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Theory of Stress and Coping*

Social support may buffer people from the negative impacts of stresses by causing them to view stressful events less adversely. In the theory of stress and coping, Lazarus (1966) stated that the way people understand events is particularly crucial in determining the stressfulness of an event (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Lazarus explained on the appraisal's concepts, where there are two kinds of appraisals, namely, main and secondary appraisal. The primary appraisal entail determining if the incident poses a threat while secondary appraisals include assessments of personal and societal resources available to deal with the occurrence. The feel that support is available may reduces the impact of stress by resulting in fewer negative appraisals (Cohen and Hoberman, 1983; Wethington & Kessler, 1986). These updated appraisals, according to Lazarus' theory, should result in less extreme emotional reactions to the incident. The perception that support is available, like received assistance, can be potential in changing evaluations if they contradict the specific demands triggered by the stressful experience (Cohen & Hoberman, 1983; Cohen & McKay, 1984).

### *Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale Malay Version (MPSS-M)*

A review of past studies conducted in Malaysia indicated that three studies tested the validity of MPSS in the Malay version in Malaysia. Firstly, the study conducted by Lee, Moy, and Hairi (2017) on a sample of secondary school teachers in Peninsular Malaysia. Findings showed good internal consistency of MPSS-M and support for its divergent and convergent validity. However, the result was in contrast compared to most past research, especially when compared to the original study (Zimet et al., 1988). In addition, Lee et al. (2017) have revised the original factor structure of MPSS as they yielded a two-factor structure with a total of 8 items. However, they did not compare their findings with three validation studies conducted in China and South Asians which reported a two-dimensional model (Tonsing, Zimet, & Tse, 2012, Chou, 2000; Stanley, Beck, & Zebb, 1998;). This explanation is important to convince readers of their findings.

Secondly, a study by Ng, Nurasikin, Loh, Anne, and Zainal (2012) on the samples of a psychiatric outpatient clinic in Malaysia has been reviewed. Findings showed good internal consistency and support for construct and predictive validity. However, they did not report the factorial validity of MPSS-M as this is very important to support a good psychometric instrument. Thirdly, a study conducted by Razali and Yusof (2014) on medication adherence in schizophrenia reported a good internal consistency of MPSS-M. Nevertheless, there is no factor structure validity has been reported.

Even though there were three studies have been conducted to validate MPSS-M, it is found that there were some issues in the particular studies, especially in providing strong evidence on the factor structure of MPSS-M. We also noted the critiques by Dambi et al. (2018) on the poor methodology of cross-cultural validation done for MPSS-M in their review. With this inconsistent result, it might be not convincing for counsellors and the management team to use this scale due to the reliability and validity issues. Hence, this validation study is conducted to support the psychometric properties of MPSS-M as it widely used instrument by counsellors, researchers, educators, and other significant professionals across the world.



# MALAYSIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MOJEM)

## ***Aim and Hypothesis***

The primary goal of the current research is to examine the psychometric properties of the Malay version of Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scales in campus settings. Specifically, there are two hypotheses to be tested. First, will the factor structure of the original MPSS be replicated in the Malay version of MPSS? It is hypothesized that even in the Malay version, there is a correlated three-factor structure of MPSS-M. Second, could the MPSS-M possess good reliability and validity? It is hypothesized that MPSS-M will possess high reliability and validity.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Participants***

The study included 443 university students (77.7% female, n=344; 22.3% male, n=99, Mage=22.58, age range 19-52 years). The bulk of participants (n=342) were Malays, followed by Chinese (n=42), Indians (n=22), and others (n=37). The sample's educational attainment includes 6.8% with a diploma, 82.6% bachelor's degree, 9.5% master's degree, and 1.1% Ph.D. 95.3% (n=422) of the participants were single, 4.3% (n=19) were married, and 0.4% did not indicate their relationship status. The majority of participants (n=356) were Muslims, followed by Christians (n=32), Buddhists (n=30), Hindus (n=16), and others (n=3). 40.6% were from the education department, 36.1% from the human and development fields, 18.0% from the arts and social sciences, 5.0% from Islamic studies, and 0.3% from other fields. Table 1 shows the demographic background of the respondents.

Table 1: *Demographic Background of The Respondents*

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Number (n=)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Gender		
Male	344	77.7
Female	99	22.3
Races		
Malays	342	77.2
Chinese	42	9.5
Indians	22	5.0
Others	37	8.3
Academic background		
Diploma	30	6.8
Bachelor	366	82.6
Degree		
Master	42	9.5
Phd	5	1.1
Marital status		
Single	422	95.3
Married	19	4.3
Not mentioned	2	0.4
Religion		
Muslim	356	80.3
Christian	32	7.2
Buddhist	30	6.8



# MALAYSIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MOJEM)

Characteristics	Number (n=)	Percentage (%)
Hindus	16	3.6
Others	9	2.0
Field		
Education	180	40.6
Human and development	160	36.1
Arts and social sciences	80	18.0
Islamic Studies	22	5.0
Others	1	0.3

### **Measurement of Constructs**

*MPSS-M.* The initial 12 MPSS questions (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988) were developed to measure perceived social support. MPSS-M is made up of three components: family support, friend support, and significant other support. Each question had seven replies ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The MPSS can have a score ranging from 12 to 84. Higher scores show a higher amount of perceived social support. The coefficient alpha values were reported to be 0.87 (family), 0.91 (significant others), 0.85 (friends), and 0.88 for overall scale score dependability (Zimet et al., 1990).

*M-SWLS.* We altered the Satisfaction with Life Scale to assess life satisfaction (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985). SWLS was created to evaluate global cognitive assessments of life satisfaction. Using a seven-point Likert scale, participants expressed their agreement with five propositions. SWLS was translated into Malay using back-to-back translation processes (Brislin, 1970). M-SWLS has strong internal consistency, with a coefficient alpha value of 0.81.

### **Data Collection**

The questionnaires were distributed to participants who voluntarily participated during a university lecture. By answering the questionnaire, respondents mark their consent to participate in this research. The researcher was present in the lecture hall to administer the questionnaire.

### **Translation Process**

The recommendations from the transcultural adaptation of the assessment instrument were followed (Brislin, 1970). First, MPSS was translated into Malay by one independent expert translator from the counseling field. Then, the other expert from the English language field did the back translation from Malay to English. Then the researcher and two expert translators discuss both translated versions. Both translated versions of the questionnaire were then checked to identify possible problems in item comprehensibility. After some discussion, the authors agreed that all of the translated items were well comprehended and so were retained.

### **Procedures of Data Analysis**

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS26) and AMOS 24.0 were used to analyze the data. Before beginning data analysis, a few statistical assumptions were tested, as well as the sample size's appropriateness. A minimum of 100 to 200 samples is required to perform structural equational modeling (Kline, 2005). In this study, the conceptual model incorporates a total of 17 observed variables, therefore, at least 170 samples are required to run CFA. 400 respondents were involved in this study, which confirms the sample size's sufficiency. Skewness and kurtosis values varied from -2.00 to +2.00, indicating that no assumptions of normality were violated in the current study as suggested by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). The non-normal distribution is indicated by a cut-off value of 5. (Bentler, 2005). In this study, the multivariate kurtosis coefficient and critical ratio were somewhat higher than the stipulated



# MALAYSIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MOJEM)

value, but this is acceptable because normality breaches are common in larger sample sets (Pallant, 2013). Taking this point, data analyses can proceed. The data were screened, and 12 cases were removed due to uncompleted responses on more than one part of the questionnaire, reducing the initial sample to  $n=443$ . The AMOS version 24 was used to perform confirmatory factorial analysis as a means to test the construct validity. The chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2$ ) and p values, Tucker Lewis index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) were used to analyze the data. An RMSEA score of less than 0.05 is regarded as good, a value of less than 0.08 is considered decent, and a value of less than 0.10 is deemed average (Kline, 2005). Cronbach's alpha, a reliability analysis, was also done to investigate the MPSS-M internal consistency. Values greater than 0.7 are regarded as good (Field, 2013). Pearson's correlation analysis (p-value .05) was used to assess concurrent validity.

## RESULTS

### *Structural Validity*

The initial three latent variables model consists of 12 items (family, friends, significant others). The  $\chi^2$  was found to be significant for the hypothesized model,  $\chi^2(51) = 155.88$ ,  $p < .001$ . This fit indices reported a good fit of data, GFI = 0.90, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.94, and RMSEA = 0.109 with good factor loadings, which is above 0.7 ( $p < .001$ ) (see Figure 1). **Fig. 1** reveals the acceptable model of the three-factor structure of MPSS-M. However, a better model is sought as the RMSEA value is average (Kline, 2005). Therefore, the lowest loaded factor has been identified and re-specified in this model by omitting the lowest loaded factor, item SO3 (0.72). **Fig. 2** depicts the output for the re-specified measurement model. In addition, the model fit indices for the re-specified model showed a significant value for  $\chi^2$ ,  $\chi^2(41) = 4.24$ ,  $p < .001$  (see figure 2). GFI = 0.93, CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.94, and RMSEA = 0.08 were strong fit indices. All loaded factors were above 0.7. After removing one item SO3, the RMSEA value has improved to 0.08. Then, item SO3 was re-examined, in which the statement was "I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me". SO3 might not apply to certain people because sometimes people do have a special person in their life, but not necessary that person is the only source to comfort people in a stressful situation. Therefore, the re-specified three-factor model was accepted as it was a strong fit for the data and may retain the original factor structure. Thus, further discussion will be based on the estimation from this model (Fig.2). The correlation between sub-constructs ranged between 0.55 to 0.66. Discriminant validity is supported when the correlation between constructs were less than 0.9 (Hair, et al., 2010).

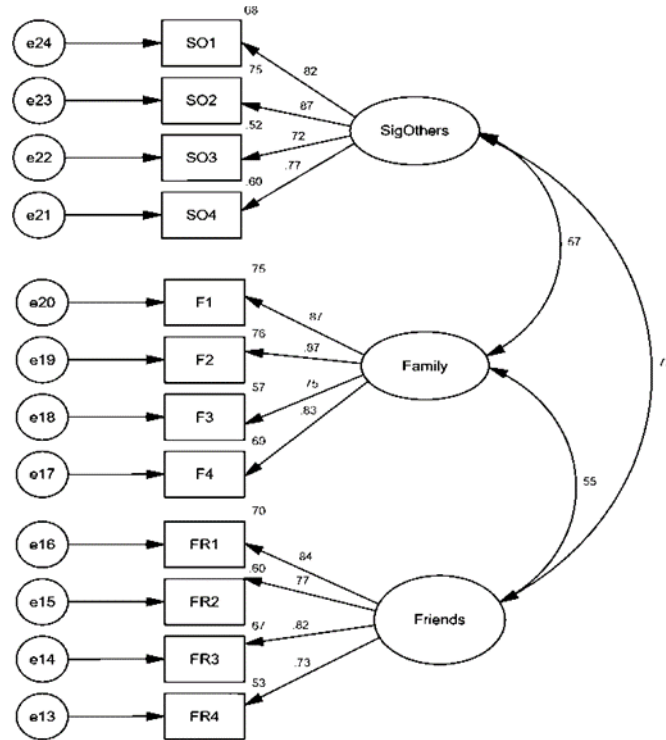


Figure 1. The output of hypothesized measurement model with a three-factor structure

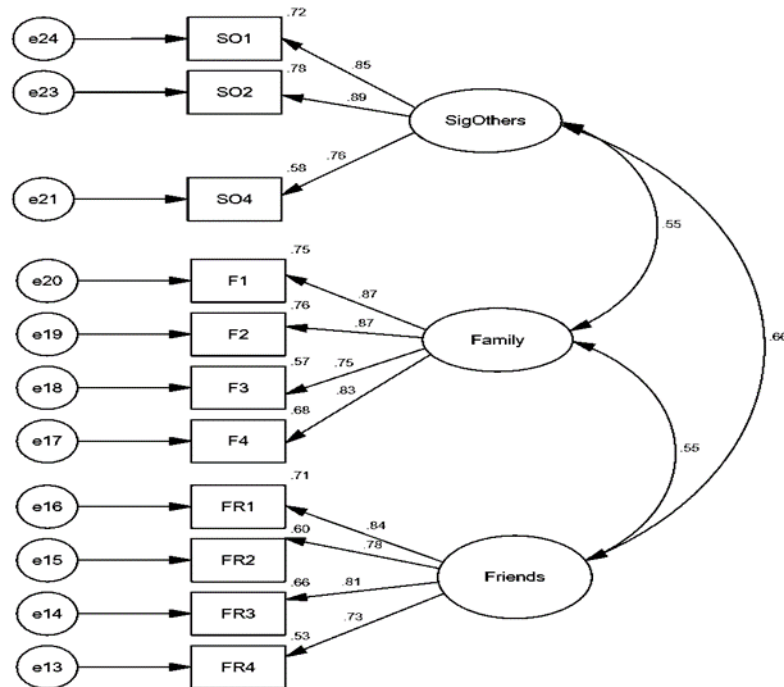


Figure 2. The output for a re-specified model for measurement model with a three-factor structure





Table 2: Output for structural validity

Item label	Factor loadings	Cronbach alpha	Average Variance Extracted	Composite Reliability
So1	0.85			
So2	0.89	0.91	>0.52	>0.71
So4	0.76			
F1	0.87			
F2	0.87			
F3	0.75	0.91	>0.58	>0.78
F4	0.83			
FR1	0.84			
FR2	0.78	0.90	>0.54	>0.73
FR3	0.81			
FR4	0.73			

#### **Concurrent Validity**

The perceived social support construct and life satisfaction have been connected and had a significant positive link ( $r=0.10$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The finding confirms MPSS-concurrent M's validity. Perceived social support has also been linked to higher levels of good psychological outcomes such as life satisfaction and well-being (Wilson, Weiss, & Shook, 2020).

#### **The Analysis of Reliability**

Cronbach's Alpha was used to analyze the internal consistency reliability coefficients of MPSS-M. MPSS-M overall Cronbach's alpha was 0.91, including 0.91 for the family subscale, 0.90 for the friend's subscale, and 0.91 for significant other subscales. The result validates the dependability of MPSS-M and its subscales based on the usual rule of thumb of 0.70 (Field, 2013).

#### **DISCUSSION**

Based on these findings, a few important things were concluded. First, the findings strongly support the psychometric properties of MPSS-M as its original version. Interestingly, there were two possible solutions for the construct validity of MPSS-M either to retain 12 items or to revise the original 12 items to 11 items as the RMSEA value in the hypothesized model is average. Therefore, after reviewing all items in the original and MPSS-M, the re-specified model has been accepted and retained the three-factor structure as its original. As for these, the original factor structure of Multidimensionality Perceived Social Support was retained (Zimet et al., 1988) and most past studies (eg. Laksmi et al., 2020). Moreover, a new interesting finding on MPSS by excluding SO3 was added to the literature. These findings were also highlighted in the previous work by Cheng and Chan (2004) and Chou (2000) where there was some vagueness on this item as it reported a strong correlation between the significance of others and family subscales. These findings support our proposition on the potential problematic item in significant other subscales. Indeed, Zimet et al. (1990) also acknowledged the potential vagueness of the significant other items. Researchers should explore precisely what subject can be considered a significant other to a person.

Some cultural implications were drawn from this study. "I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me," was the statement for item SO3. In this sense, cultural variations between individualist and collectivist cultures may contribute to Malaysian society's differing conclusions when compared to the findings of most Western research. Malays, who are associated with a collectivist society, made up the bulk of Malaysia's population.



## MALAYSIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MOJEM)

Collectivist societies encourage solidarity, mutual support, respect, politeness, and peaceful coexistence. It depicts a way of living that stresses the interconnected self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The idea of belonging or unity is more important than how I feel. As a result, the capacity of individuals to distinguish themselves from their family of origin may not be necessary.

In this case, it is possible that individuals still received social support from significant others, but the source person is not the “one and only” support for them because emotional dependency on family members is much stronger. This finding explains the uniqueness of family culture in Malaysia. The finding revealed that these study samples perceived that they received the highest social support from their family, followed by friends, and the last, significant others. Furthermore, perceived social support was found to be positively correlated with the satisfaction of life, indicating that life satisfaction will be higher when a person received higher social support. Here, the findings again support this point as the lowest social support comes from a significant of others.

In conclusion, instrument validation research is critical to the development and refining of instruments used in a variety of disciplines of study. Our novelty is by establishing the reliability and validity of the MPSS-M. Although various studies have used the MSPSS in their research, there have been no empirical data analyzing the psychometric features of this scale. As a result, our research contributes to the psychometric features of this scale, particularly in Malaysian culture. The adaptation and validation across communities help us to evaluate if the instrument is acceptable and dependable for usage in certain populations, ensuring that it appropriately reflects their experiences or features.

### ***Implications for Campus Leaders***

Campus leaders, such as university administrators, deans, and department heads, play an important role in providing social support to students. Campus leaders and university management involvement are needed in providing social assistance for students. Universities may establish a feeling of community, provide counseling services, promote diversity and inclusion, and collaborate with students to create an atmosphere that promotes students' overall well-being. However, it is critical to recognize the hurdles and limitations in executing these projects. Continuous efforts, proper resources, and a student-centered strategy are required to guarantee that social assistance remains a priority in university administration initiatives.

To fully understand the social support system of students, campus leaders may consult with counselors in campus settings where these counselors may use MPSS-M to understand their clients' perceived support social. This may help the counselor to understand the sources of social support needed by their clients and disseminate the information to campus leaders. The use of psychological tests may help the counselor to explore their clients' issues well. On top of that, MPSS-M also can be used as screening and aid tools in their guidance and psycho-education programs. These may help the counselor identify the significant roles of social support in students' life. For educators, it is important to understand the social environment of their students. Social support information may help educators to plan their lessons, activities, and programs by considering their social support as a motivational source. This hopefully might help in reducing the number of dropout students, as it can be utilized in the early phase of dropout decision-making by the students (Bäulke, Grunschel, Dresel 2022). Finally, the campus leader may consider the well-being of students in designing and proposing campus activities. Activities that may play as social support should be encouraged. Suitable activities that consider their psychological well-being will promote the development of a healthy personality which in turn helps students to perform academically.

Social support is an important aspect in enhancing higher education students' life satisfaction, specifically for the program to increase life satisfaction. This fact is also supported by Shelton, Wang, and Zhu (2017) who found that social support might have a positive impact on an individual with low independent self-construal. Campus leaders in higher education settings should be aware that even if students are surrounded by peer friends, they still need support from their family of origin. In this case, campus leaders may play an important role to highlight this in any of their programs with involve parents such as interaction day and registration day for first-year students. The university



# MALAYSIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MOJEM)

plays an important role in promoting the engagement of students with other parties, especially with friends, the family of origin, and the community. Students' engagement might influence student academic performance (Lardy, Bressoux, DeClercq 2022).

In addition, campus leaders also need to look deeper into students' cultural backgrounds. Cultural differences may give some impact on students. In this study, family support is the most important source for students. This value can be a source of strength in the community of collectivists. Family support may help individuals to function better. This support system can also be a good source for clients in the therapy or counseling process. Counselors should explore clients' family backgrounds even in the individual counseling process. Likened the role of perceived social support as a significant mediator in the connection between parental attachment and life happiness in Cheng, Zhang, Pa, Hu, Liu, and Luo (2017), attachment to a parent may influence one's mental health. When adolescents face difficulties in life, they tend to seek support from others including family, friends, and significant others to cope with problems. In addition, support from family help to decrease stress level and increase psychological well-being (Wang & Castañeda-Sound 2008). This also highlighted the possibility of family counseling being practiced in the higher education setting. Emotional support from the family is very important to a person as it was the main predictor of happiness (Dominguez-Fuentez & Hombrados-Mendieta 2012).

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Despite this, a few things are to be highlighted which may guide future researchers to take this into their consideration when conducting research in this area. The cross-sectional study design makes it impossible to determine the causal association between perceived social support and life happiness. Therefore, it is suggested for future researchers validate MPSS-M by examining the validity of this scale using other types of validity such as testing its relationship with alternate established scales that measure social support with consideration of a longitudinal study. In addition, the future researcher also may want to explore family roles as a motivation source for higher education students to maintain their well-being. A qualitative study may provide deeper insight to the campus leader and other researchers in this area.

### **CONCLUSION**

Psychological tests do not only help individuals explore themselves better, but it also helps campus leader to further understand their students. The use of psychological tests in exploring the perceived social support by students helps the campus leader and university management in planning and developing appropriate interventions for students. Therefore, the translation and validation process must be carefully considered the cultural differences especially when the tests originated from the Western. Researchers should be aware of the cultural differences between the test's developer and the context of its application. By doing so, the researcher can translate their research findings to be more practical. From this study, it is encouraging for campus leaders, university management, and counsellors to use MPSS-M in exploring further their students' social support. In conclusion, these findings prove that the MPSS-M is a psychometrically sound instrument and applicable for campus leaders in assessing perceived social support.

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