


Chapter 10

The Efficacy of Spiritual Transcendence Scales Among Muslim Students in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the efficacy of spiritual transcendence scales developed by Ralph L. Piedmont in his ASPIRES Manual. This study employs a quantitative approach to assess the spiritual transcendence scales among students in Malaysia. Over 250 questionnaires were distributed and filled online. Data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed to understand the dimension of spirituality. The findings reveal the scale remains reliable and structurally valid across gender, cultures, and religious contexts. The psychometric qualities of the spiritual transcendence scales were examined among Muslim students in Malaysia. The result demonstrated the structural validity and applicability of the scale within the group. It further provided further support for the cross-cultural applicability of the instrument and for the assumption of spirituality as a universal aspect of human experience.

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INTRODUCTION

With the rapid decline of traditional religion in the West, there has been an upsurge in the ‘consumption’ of spirituality (York, 2001). In this regard, quite a number of works have been published in this area (de Souza, Francis, O’Higgins-Norman, & Scott, 2009; Paloutzian & Park, 2013; Wilkins, Piedmont, & Magyar-Russell, 2012). For instance, Principe (1983) recalls twenty-two years before his article when Italian historian Gustavo Vinay and his colleagues expressed their discomfort with the term ‘spirituality’. Vinay attempts to address the issue by giving his own understanding of the term and encourage others to discuss the idea (Vinay, 1961). Some scholars such as Louis Bouyer, Jean Danielou, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Francois Vandenbroucke, and Josef Sudbrack, took up the challenge (Principe, 1983).

Even though this may give the impression that the term ‘spirituality’ was not well known or understood at the time, Principe, in addition, showed that there appear to be others who have no difficulty with the word. Moreover, from around 1950s spirituality seem to be the preferred word compared to “terms such as ‘spiritual teaching,’ ‘spiritual life,’ ‘devout life,’ ‘interior life,’ or ‘piety’ that had been used earlier” (Principe, 1983, p. 128). In addition, spirituality it has been argued enhances human performance through the idea of flow, transcendence, discovery of meaning and value which are considered central to spirituality (Parry, 2007).

It is important to note here that spirituality in religions varies, that is why it is difficult to find a common definition that will be easily accepted. However, many religious traditions can relate to the idea that spirituality involving ‘inner dimension’, ‘the spirit’, ‘spiritual core’, ‘deepest center’, ‘transcendent’, and ‘ultimate reality’ of a person’s experience and practices. In our contemporary times, spirituality is seen as a conscious effort on the self which may involve borrowing from religious traditions, but can still be regarded as independent of religious traditions and sometimes as opposed to religion. According to Mason (2010), this may be the result of the waning influence of once-dominant Christianity in Western culture. He highlights the mix and match components of contemporary spirituality starting with influence from major Western or Eastern world-religion to a non-religious life-vision. This led him to describe spirituality as “whatever *inspires* [emphasis not ours] someone – the vision of reality from which they derive their zest for life, their sense of meaning and purpose, their basic worldview and fundamental values. It can also be stretched beyond its religious origins

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