The Development and Validation of Maternal Spiritual Characteristics

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to develop and validate a family counseling instrument that measures maternal spiritual characteristics. Particularly, the instrument aims to measure three domains of spirituality namely, Maternal Piety, Mercy and Accountability. These characteristics are considered as the characteristics for functional Muslim mothers. The study is designed into three phases. The first phase is a pilot study of a focus group from an Islamic Integrated Primary School (IIPS). In this phase, Cronbach’s alpha is employed to assess the reliability index. Accordingly, Principle Component Analysis is employed to explore the underlying dimensions of Maternal Piety, Mercy and Accountability. The second phase is an ex-post facto study that involved 12 IIPS in the Klang Valley of Malaysia. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is utilized to examine the construct validity of the instrument. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is used to investigate the relationship between maternal spiritual characteristics and mother-child attachment as supporting evidence for the criterion-related validity. The third phase was a cross-sectional study that involved 1000 students (age 13-17) from various secondary schools (inclusive of religious and non religious schools) of 4 states in Malaysia. In this phase, multistage cluster sampling technique is employed to select 200 students from each age group of Form 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. The results provide evidence that the instrument has sound psychometrics properties. This instrument has succeeded the standard Cronbach’s alpha > .70 for internal consistency and proportion variance explained > 50 % for the dimensions of Maternal Piety, Mercy and Accountability. The goodness-of-fit measures GFI, AGFI, IFI, TLI, and CFI > .90 and RMSEA < .08 are evidences for construct validity. Moreover, the criterion-related validity is supported with the findings of significant positive relationship between maternal spiritual characteristics and mother-child attachment. In short, Maternal Spiritual Characteristics Scales (MSCS) is a reliable and valid instrument. Hence, it may be used for the assessment in family counseling and other related studies.

Keywords: Spirituality, Maternal Piety, Mercy, Accountability, Family Counseling, Validity, CFA, SEM.

Background of the Study

The Dimension of spirituality in one’s life may not simply be ignored. Instead, it may be the focal point of an individual. Religion, in the past and present, has been recognized as a significant factor that influences attitudes and practices in almost all aspects of life, including childcare and recreational activities (Jung, 1933; Allport, 1950; Wilcox, 2002; Hassan, 2006). Recently, a growing body of empirical research has associated spirituality and religion with a wide array of salutary characteristics and personality (Saroglou, 2002; Noah et al., 2006). Specifically, in a Muslim population context, religiosity and spiritual dimension of an individual is of cardinal traits that shape a person’s personality (Hassan, Abdullah, Ishak & Langgulung, 2008; Abdel-Khalek, 2007; Kassim, 1985). In other words, a person’s spiritual connection to God is the determinant of his or her characteristics and deeds (Langgulung, 2001; Badri, 2000).

In the Islamic family studies, Schleifer (1986) suggested that there are two characteristics of a mother that aligned with responsibility, attributed as natural and God-given qualities. They are the physical exertion of childbirth and the expression of positive emotion. These two aspects are not mutually exclusive but rather supportive of each other. Among the most important qualities of a mother are affection and generosity (Schleifer, 1986; Mansor, Eunos & Sidek, 1998)

Concurrently, Winnicott (1987), a British psychoanalyst, coined the term “good-enough mother” to describe a mother, who is while far from perfect is able to consistently and appropriately give enough attention to her children’s needs. These children grow up with the feeling that the mother is there when she is needed, and view the world as a good place where the children can be their authentic self and where their needs can be met. She is not only setting appropriate limits, guiding and supporting, but also being able to let go—giving her child both roots and wings. Sensitive mothering has been described as the maternal characteristic that promotes a child’s emotional, social and cognitive growth (Clarke-Stewart, 1978;
Belsky, 1984). Based on Secunda’s description of parental characteristics, Carranza & Kilmann (2000) investigated links between perceived maternal characteristics and attachment variables from intact families. The study revealed positive correlations between secured attachment, self-concept and doting maternal characteristics.

Nevertheless, there are mothers who mainly disapprove their children and demand them to be different and better. There are also parents who largely ignore their children, pay attention to their children only when the children fulfil their needs. The children of these demanding, distant or self-involved parents often grow up with the feeling that they are not good enough to merit their parents’ love. These children have the tendency to constantly criticize themselves and hope to improve themselves in order to gain their parents’ attention and approbation (Hillman, 1992). Concomitantly, an insecure attachment pattern is associated with lower self worth and less interpersonal trust. They are children whose mothers are distant, absent and demanding (Carranza & Kilmann, 2000).

In view of the aforementioned concern, there has been limited research on the relationships between maternal spiritual characteristics and the attachment patterns of mother-child. Maternal spirituality, as well as the importance of religion to the mother is associated with the improvement in mother-child relationship (Hassan, Abdullah, Langgulung & Ishak, 2005; Mc Donald, Beck, Allison & Norsworthy, 2005). Wilcox (2002) suggests that religious activities have been powerful sources of family-related social integration that provide social support for family oriented behaviour. Parents who include their children in the religious activities are more likely to have obedient children (Hassan et al., 2008). Church attendance has also been linked to a warm, expressive of parenting style (Wilcox, 2002).

Presently, there are a number of instruments available to measure individual spirituality and religiosity either from Christian or Islamic perspectives such as Religious Commitment Inventory, Salvation Questionnaire and Muslim Personality Inventory (Hill & Hood, 1999; Noah et al., 2006). However, to date, there are very limited instruments available to measure parental spirituality, even more scarce for instruments that focus specifically on maternal spiritual characteristics (Lippman, Michelsen & Roehlekepartain, 2008; Hassan & Ibrahim, 2008).

To the best of the authors’ knowledge, no efforts have been found to empirically substantiate the Islamic perspectives of maternal spiritual characteristics and role in mother-child attachment. Hence, there is a call for the development of Maternal Spiritual Characteristics Scales (MSCS) from Islamic perspective.

**Aims of the Study**

This study aims to develop and validate a psychometrically sound multi-dimensional measure of Maternal Spiritual Characteristics Scales (MSCS). Specifically, the objectives of the study are:

- To establish the content validity of the MSCS.
- To assess the reliability of the MSCS.
- To explore the underlying dimension of the MSCS.
- To examine the criterion-related validity of the MSCS.
- To test the construct validity of the MSCS.
- To investigate the external validity of the MSCS.

**Spirituality in Islam**

The Islamic belief system (‘aqi dah Islamiyyah) does not only influence the behaviour but also the character of the individual. Character is the state of soul that produces consistent and spontaneous actions. The character is said to be good, when there is a state of soul that produces virtuous action. On the contrary, when the state of soul is consistently and spontaneously produces evil actions, the character is termed evil or bad (Alhabshi & Ghazali, 1994).

According to Langgulung (2001), soul is the interaction of spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physiological dimension of an individual. The spirit is considered as the core of the human nature sphere (Al-Attas, 1979; Langgulung, 1991; Raba, 2001; Hassan, 2001). Figure 1, illustrates the position of spirit in human nature. This dimension is always pure and seeks the purity (Langgulung, 2001). The soul is moving upward angelic direction to divine peace (al-sakīnah); it achieves tranquillity through the remembrance of Allah and attains the knowledge (al-ma‘rifah) of His spirituality (Al-Attas, 1990; Badri, 2000).
Islamic psychology regards personality development as the development of psycho-spiritual stages. There are three stages of development that return human to a primordial nature (fitrah). The development at the highest stage leads human soul (nafs) to become purified from sin and guilt, and cherishes a good level of peace and harmony. This is the stage whereby the soul is free from fear, anxiety, frustration and all other psychological problems (Langgulung, 2001). Accordingly, those who arrive at the final stage of this psycho-spiritual stage will experience their spiritual ecstasy for they are pleased with Allah as their Lord and Cherisher. Al-Ghazzali (1982) in his monumental volumes, *ihya’ ‘ulumuddin* (The Revival of Religious Sciences) noted the Qur’anic term for this highest stage as *al-nafs al-mutma’innah* (the tranquil soul).

Nevertheless, when the soul is moving downward animalistic direction to the lowest foothills of the bestial nature, dehumanizing is taking place. Someone who is captivated in this stage appears as human only in shape and construction of physical dimension (Al-Attas, 1990). This is the stage whereby the soul is dominated by ego and recognizes no other entity apart from itself. Someone who falls in this stage loses sight of his spiritual nature and is confined within the narrow realm of individual consciousness of self-centeredness (Amjad, 1992). He or she is guided by sensuous, impulses, and extraneous pluralistic appearance of reality. Moreover, at this stage, the soul remains fully engrossed with the immediate gratification. This is the lowest stage known in The Holy Qur’ân as *al-nafs al-‘ammârah bi al-su’* (the egoistic soul that commands for evil).

Concisely, this Islamic perspective of human nature and spirituality is the humble suggestion that we propose to be integrated in counselling practices and related theoretical framework. Therefore, based on the aforementioned premise, an inventory for maternal spiritual characteristics is designed and constructed.

**Methodology**

**Phase I**

This phase was conducted to establish the content validity, test reliability and to explore the underlying dimensions of MSCS. Content validity is established by evaluating three factors: how appropriate the items are, how complete the items are, and the way in which the item assesses the content. Therefore, preparing a blueprint or a table of specification for a test is necessary to establish the content validity (Thorndike, 1997; Nordin, 2002). In addition, several steps have to be taken to help improve the validity of the instruments in general (Ishak, 2002; DeVellis, 1991). The steps are: (1) defining the objective of the scales; (2) itemizing the scales; (3) trying out the scales; (4) statistically analyzing the items, and (5) revising the scales. Hence, MSCS is undergoing this process in order to ensure the validity of the instrument is at the utmost level. In addition to these steps, this instrument had been reviewed by four independent experts. Two of them were content experts and another two were methodology experts. Additionally, parts of the instrument have been presented at a local and international seminars and a workshop; and two domains of the scales have been published (Hassan et al., 2008; Hassan et al., 2005).

For the assessment of reliability and dimensionality, a longitudinal study of the focus group from an
Islamic Integrated Primary School (IIPS) is conducted. The duration of this phase was two years. Due to the mortality rate, which is a common problem in a longitudinal study, such as changes of schools and absence during the data collected time between 2002 and 2004; there were only 90 valid respondents, 40 girls and 50 boys of age 11-12 years involved in this phase. Respondents completed a 36-item instrument, 12 items for each domain namely Maternal Piety, Accountability and Mercy. They indicated how each statement was true for them on 7-points Likert type scale. Response categories were 7 for always true, 6 for almost always true, 5 for often true, 4 for sometimes true, 3 for seldom true, 2 for almost never true and 1 for never true.

Phase II

Phase II was conducted to test the construct validity and criterion-related validy of MSCS by employing structural equation modelling with AMOS 4.0. The respondents of this phase consisted of students from Islamic Integrated Primary Schools in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Initially, a total of 200 students were systematically selected from 12 participating schools. Upon checking the outliers via Mahalanobis distance test, 4 respondents were eventually dropped from the respondent’s list. More than half of the respondents (55.6 %) were female and the rest were male. A majority of the respondents (62.8 %) had 4-6 siblings. More than half (63.7 %) of them were ranged from being the first or the third child in the family. In terms of maternal employment, the percentages of respondents who have mothers who are professional workers and homemakers were almost the same, 30.1% and 29.6% respectively. Accordingly, respondents’ mothers were non-professional workers. Finally, 14.8 % were business owners and directors of companies.

Instruments

There were two sets of questionnaires involved in Phase II. The data were collected using the following measures:

1. Maternal Spiritual Characteristic Scales (MSCS: Hassan, 2006). The details of this instrument were discussed earlier in Phase I.
2. Maternal Quality Relationship. An adapted maternal version of Inventory of Parents and Peer Attachment (IPPA; Amrden & Greenberg, 1987) which comprises of 11- items. The items were grouped into three subscales. The first subscale, named as Communication, consists of 4 items as well and finally, the last subscale named as Alienation consists of 3 items. Similar to Maternal Piety Scales , M-IPPA response categories were 7 for always true, 6 for almost always true, 5 for often true, 4 for sometimes true, 3 for seldom true, 2 for almost never true and 1 for never true. The items were reverse scored when the statements were negatively worded. In this study, the score for each subscale was cumulated scores of the items. These cumulated scores were represented as observed variables in Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) for criterion-related validity investigation.

Phase III

The final phase of the study was conducted to examine the external validity of MSCS. Confirmatory factor analysis with AMOS 16 was employed to test the construct validity of MSCS for different and larger population as compared to the earlier phase. The third phase was a cross-sectional study that involved 1000 students (age 13-17) from various secondary schools (inclusive of religious and non religious schools) of 4 states in Malaysia. In this phase, multistage cluster sampling technique is employed to select 200 students from each age group of Form 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Results

Content Validity (Phase I)

In order to achieve content validity, we thoroughly reviewed the related literature and discussed with the two experts content. As a result, the blueprint for Maternal Spiritual Characteristics Scales was designed. Table 1 shows the general definition, contextual definition and operational definition of the each domain of MSCS, the total item and item label for each construct of the domains.

Reliability (Phase 1, II and III)

The Cronbach alpha reliability analyses were conducted in three phases to ensure the internal consistency was at least maintained if not improved after item revisions across phases. In Phase I, the result indicated overall Cronbach’s α =.828 for the 36 items. In Phase II, when 6 items were dropped, the result indicated overall Cronbach’s α = .695. In phase III, with a larger sample size but same 30 items, the result indicated overall Cronbach’s α = .809.
**Table 1: The Blueprint for Maternal Spiritual Characteristics Scales**

### Domain A: Piety (Taqwá):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Definition</th>
<th>Piety means conscious of, wary of, fearful of and obedient to Allah.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contextual Definition</td>
<td>A mother who is committed and consistently reminds her children about Allah, the Omnipotent and Omnipresent, enjoins them to worship Him and forbids His transgression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational Definition</td>
<td>How often does a mother show the following behaviours:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construct</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total Item</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Faith in Allah and the hereafter</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Enjoining virtue</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Forbid Vices</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Domain B: Accountability (‘AmÉnah):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Definition</th>
<th>It means to be istiqÉmah (reliable and committed) in words and actions to fulfil the rights of Allah, oneself and others.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contextual Definition</td>
<td>A mother who is always reliable, responsible and honest in fulfilling her children rights and potentialities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational Definition</td>
<td>How often does a mother display the following behaviours:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construct</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total Item</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Reliable in fulfilling her children’s needs</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Responsible in disciplining her children</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Honest in giving explanation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Domain C: Mercy (Rahmah):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Definition</th>
<th>It means generous, affectionate and considerate.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contextual Definition</td>
<td>A mother who is always helpful and willing to sacrifice for the sake of children for being generous, rarely angry towards her children’s mistakes for being considerate and affectionate to her children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational Definition</td>
<td>How often do the mothers show the following elements: -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construct</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total Item</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Generous -willing to sacrifice and be helpful to the children.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Affectionate- caressing, smiling, playing with the children</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Considerate- forgiving and not being angry to the children.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dimensionality (Phase 1 and II)**

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with oblimin rotation was used to determine the underlying structure, Maternal Piety items. The dimensions of Maternal Piety are conceptually hypothesized to be highly related. On the other hand, varimax rotation is adopted for Maternal Accountability and Mercy. The dimensions of these two domains of MSCS are conceptually hypothesized to be low in correlation or uncorrelated. A visual inspection of the correlation matrix and Bartlett Sphericity Tests were conducted. The results indicated that Maternal Spiritual Characteristics was statistically significant, $x^2(630) = 1304.82$, $p=.001$ for its multicollinearity. Besides that, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.707. Thus, the overall Measurement Sampling Adequacy (MSA) fulfilled the requirement of at least 0.50. Certain criteria have to be set $a priori$ by the researcher in order to resolve for the factor solution. Items were retained when the loading was greater than 0.40, the difference of cross loading was greater than 0.1, and at least three items were loaded in each component.
Initially, each domain contained 12 items. After several Varimax rotations were conducted, three factors emerged for each domain with 11, 10 and 9 items for Maternal Piety, Mercy and Accountability, respectively. The total variance explained accounted for the three factors of Maternal Piety, Accountability and Mercy were 59.15%, 54.15% and 53.42%, respectively.

In Phase II, a pool of 30 items was selected from the instrument developed in Phase 1. The results yielded for three factors solution, accounting for 59.80% of the total variance explained. The factors loading ranged from .476 to .824 for Maternal Piety. Similarly, three factor solutions emerged for Maternal Mercy and Accountability. The total variance explained accounted for the three-factors are 58.01 % and 56.56 % for Maternal Mercy and Accountability respectively. For these two domains of MSCS, the loadings range was from .472 to .849.

**Criterion-related Validity**

Criterion-related validity is an empirical relationship between test scores and another valid criterion measure (Thorndike, 1997). Findings in Hassan et al. (2005) indicated that 74% of the variances of Mother-Child Attachment were due to the Maternal Piety and Mercy. The regression coefficient ($\beta = .86$, $p = .001$) indicated for high statistical significant relationship between MSCS (Piety and Mercy) and Mother-Child Attachment. The results of the fit indices of the model were very encouraging. The data revealed that the fit statistics for the structural equation model met the conventional standard ($>.90$). Specifically, GFI=.966, AGFI=.931, IFI=.933, CFI=923. Additionally, the “root mean square of error of approximation” (RMSEA=.041), which was well below .08 for the standard requirement of the fit statistic.

Another structural equation model analysis was conducted to examine the criterion-related validity for Maternal Accountability. However, the results were not so encouraging. Some of the fit statistics were above the recommended value (GFI=.933, IFI=.914, CFI=.910, RMSEA =.062) but some of the fit statistics fall short of the standard (AGFI=.893, TLI=.879). There were only two components of Maternal Accountability found to be significant to influence Mother-Child Attachment. Responsible and Reliable were statistically significant ($\beta _{12} = .49$ and $\beta _{13} = .24$, $p = .015$). Honest, a component of Maternal Accountability, however was not significant to influence Mother-Child Attachment ($\beta _{14} = .01$, $p = .885$).

**Construct Validity and External Validity (Phase II and III)**

Maternal Piety was hypothesized to be a second order 3-factor measurement model. On the other hand, Maternal Accountability and Mercy were hypothesized as single order 3-factor measurement models. Accordingly, in Phase II, CFA was conducted to test the hypothesis. Since external validity refers to the generalizability of the findings, Phase III was conducted to replicate and extent the findings as an evidence for external validity. Table 2 provides evidence for the construct validities of Maternal Piety, Accountability and Mercy. The findings of the goodness-of-fit measures GFI, AGFI, IFI, TLI, and CFI are above the suggested threshold $>.90$ and RMSEA <.08 were evidences for construct validity. The findings of the third phase found to be similar to that of the second phase.

Figure 2 presents evidence for the estimated parameter of Maternal Piety. Piety accounted for 90 % of the total variance in Faith ($\gamma _{21} = .95$, $R^2 = .90$). The second most explained variance by the second order construct of Maternal Piety is Forbid Vices ($\gamma _{31} = 75$, $R^2 = .56$, $p = .001$). Maternal Piety explained 56% of the variances in Forbid Vices dimension. Finally, the third indicator was named as Virtue ($\gamma _{12} = .70$, $R^2 = .48$, $p = .001$), which found to be statistically significant as well. Maternal Piety explained 48% of the variances for Virtue dimension.
Table 2: Results of the Goodness of Fit –Indices of the 3 Measurement Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>IFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>Succeeded All Thresholds Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd Phase Maternal Mercy</td>
<td>.957</td>
<td>.922</td>
<td>.943</td>
<td>.914</td>
<td>.940</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Phase Maternal Mercy</td>
<td>.984</td>
<td>.969</td>
<td>.972</td>
<td>.958</td>
<td>.972</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Phase Accountability</td>
<td>.966</td>
<td>.940</td>
<td>.978</td>
<td>.977</td>
<td>.984</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Phase Accountability</td>
<td>.989</td>
<td>.980</td>
<td>.984</td>
<td>.976</td>
<td>.984</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Phase Maternal Piety</td>
<td>.964</td>
<td>.935</td>
<td>.980</td>
<td>.969</td>
<td>.979</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Phase Maternal Piety</td>
<td>.974</td>
<td>.955</td>
<td>.967</td>
<td>.954</td>
<td>.967</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended Values</td>
<td>&gt;.90</td>
<td>&gt;.90</td>
<td>&gt;.90</td>
<td>&gt;.90</td>
<td>&gt;.90</td>
<td>&lt;.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3 shows the results of three-factor measurement model for Maternal Accountability. The inter-factor correlations were r = -.03, .19 and .35, substantiated the expectations that the three factors were distinct. The negative factor correlations were due to the negatively worded items for constructs named as Honest and Responsible. The loadings ranged from .49 to .82. Accordingly, Figure 4 presents the results of three-factor measurement model for Maternal Mercy. The inter-factor correlations were -.24, -.28 and .77. The negative factor correlations were due to the negatively worded item for construct named as Considerate. The loadings range were from .50 to .77.
Figure 2: Measurement Model for Maternal Piety
Figure 3: Measurement Model for Maternal Accountability
Discussion

In summary, a psychometrically sound instrument is the one that provides evidence of high reliability and validity. Therefore, a rigorous effort has been invested in developing Maternal Spiritual Characteristics Scales. According to Hair et al. (2006) and Thorndike (1997), the generally agreed upon lower limit for Cronbach’s alpha is .70. In this study, at two phases the overall Cronbach’s alpha for the instrument succeeded the standard. The results indicated that Maternal Spiritual Characteristics Scales is a reliable instrument.

In addition, the principle component analysis results indicated that there were three dimensions emerged for Maternal Piety Scales, namely Faith, Virtue and Vice. There were three dimensions emerged for Maternal Accountability namely, Honest, Reliable and Responsible. There were also three dimensions emerged for Maternal Mercy, namely Considerate, Affectionate and Generous.

In order to confirm which items belong to what constructs, i.e., to test the construct validity of Maternal Piety Scales, Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted in Phase II. Findings indicated the hypothesis that Maternal Piety is a second order measurement model was supported. Maternal Accountability and Maternal Mercy were hypothesized as the first order measurement models were also supported by the data. According to Hair et al. (2006) and Arbuckle & Wothke (1999), the goodness-of-fit...
fit measures GFI, AGFI, IFI, TLI, and CFI > .90 and RMSEA < .08 provided evidence for the construct validity of Maternal Piety Scales. A similar finding of construct validity has been replicated in Phase III. Thus, external validity has been established due to the ability of the instrument to be replicated in the different and bigger population. Besides that, content and criterion-related validities have also been established. Although there was not enough evidence to support for criterion-related validity of the component Honest of Maternal Accountability, all other 8 components of MSCS were highly supported with strong evidences. Hence, further investigation of criterion-related validity for Maternal Accountability is needed.

**Practical Implications**

Maternal Spiritual Characteristics Scales (MSCS) is useful in conducting an assessment for family counselling. The instrument gauges maternal spiritual characteristics, particularly, piety, accountability and mercy of a functional Muslim mother. A mother who is fully functioning according to the Islamic perspective of spirituality will have a high score in the measurement of MSCS.

Results of the assessment would enable the family counsellor to plan and conduct for family counselling intervention. To illustrate, Maternal Piety is observed in the daily interactions of mother-child. Specifically, a mother is always to remind her children about life in the hereafter. As a result of seeking the pleasure of Allah through the calling for good, forbidding evils and believing in life of the hereafter, a mother may strengthen her relationships with her children as well. Additionally, it is pertinent for parents to enjoin their children to go to the mosque as a family since they were young, instead of the parents alone going to the mosques (Noriah, 1999). The proximity during congregational prayers between a mother and her children may lead to the feeling of closeness. As the saying goes “family that prays together stays together”. Therefore, open communication is made possible and mutual trust is established between the mother and child.

Though it is not possible to be a perfect mother as suggested by Winnicot (1957), being a “good enough” mother is crucial. A “good enough” mother is consistently available to meet her children’s needs. She is always there to guide and to set limits to her children to live their lives. Concomitantly, Bowlby (1973) postulates consistent maternal care leads to secure attachment between a mother and child. On the other hand, maternal deprivation leads to insecure pattern of attachment. Accordingly, this study implies that Maternal Piety is the cardinal characteristic for a “good enough” Muslim mother. This characteristic will positively influence quality relationship between a mother and child.

A mother who is merciful towards her children gains the children’s trust; encouraged open communication and discouraged the feeling of alienation. This merciful mother acts as the secure base for the children. When the children find any threatening experience they may refer to the mother whom they regard as the secure base. Thus, a mother needs to be aware that the children need for a warm and secured base. The secured base is necessary for the children to explore the world and to form future relationships (Bowlby, 1988). Accordingly, the mother is encouraged to express her loves by caressing her children daily. This will enhance the feeling of intimacy of mother-child.

**References**


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