

## **Measurement of Self-Esteem: Comparison between the Constructs of West and Islam**

**Khaidzir Ismail, Ph.D**

Associate professor

School of Psychology and Human Development Studies

Faculty of Social Science & Humanities

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

**Khairil Anwar, M.A**

Ph.D candidate

Faculty of Social Science & Humanities

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

**Hanina H. Hamsan, Ph.D**

Senior Lecturer

Department of Social & Development Science

Faculty of Human Ecology, Universiti Putra Malaysia

### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this paper is to discuss the results of a comparative study of constructs within the measurement of Western and Muslim construct. Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale has been used to analyze the sources of western civilization, and this construct is one of the tools most widely used in the local psychological studies in Malaysia. The study involved a sample of 490 youths, aged between 15 and 21 years, from rehabilitation centers of Peninsular Malaysia. By using content analysis and statistical approach, the measurement tool of self-esteem was compared with that of Islamic psychosocial where the construct derived from is based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. Through this content analysis, we found that the items contained in self-esteem are closer to the concept of 'ujub (pride), which is contrary to Islamic principles. With the statistical approach, although not significant, the measurement of self-esteem might have showed the presence of the negative index ( $r = -0.052$ ) when correlated with the measurement of Islam psychosocial. This indicates that higher Islam psychosocial has reduced the level of individual self-esteem. In terms of types and levels of misconduct, the higher levels of adolescent delinquency trends are found to indicate that the self-esteem is higher. Different from the psychosocial measurement tool of Islam, the higher level of misconduct is found to be a tendency toward the lower level of teenage psychosocial. The findings are expected to be a psychological study of the movement among Muslims Islam, which should use the approach of Islam.*

**Key Words:** Self-Esteem, Measurement

### **Introduction**

Historically, the term psychology was derived from the Greek thought in the fourth century AD (Wilcox 1995: 6; Absar 1992). The traditional thoughts of the Greek philosophers stressed that humans comprise body and mind, which are both very different from each other. These thoughts were similar to the dualism thoughts of the French philosopher, Rene Descartes (1564–1642), who is considered as the Father of Modern Philosophy. In addition, there is the dualism of Descartes' idealism, one of the branches of the flow of Monism, as popularized by George Berkeley (1685–1753), who stated that man is only his mind. In the flow of Monism, the priority of human body alone is known as materialism or Physicals. In this flow, the mind is understood as nothing more than the result or the after effect (*epi-phenomenon*) of human brain activity itself. When people “think,” the cerebral nerves in the human brain carry out the thinking process, and this is known as the “mind.” This stream rejects the flow that is different from the corporate mind of the natural elements, such as the idea put forward by the flow of dualism. In fact, in their opinion, only natural entities are more subtle things, artistic, and difficult to observe with the naked eye. In other words, what is mind is simply the process and results of activities of the human brain itself, which is a fine thing or conceptual in nature. This flow seems to completely reject any inner or spiritual element in man. Humans are only for their bodies and not more than that. Such views are better known as the theory of identity.

Among the writings that support this view is the one by Hugh Elliot (1881–1930), titled "Modern Science and Materialism" (Kessler 1992: 438-445). From the above-mentioned basic concepts of human ontological issues raised, there are modern psychological models that are more specific and detailed in the study of man and his behavior. These models flourished until the creation of "psychological Western", which specialized on the research and cognitive behavior by using the scientific method. As the method of study models is limited to quantitative studies, experiments in the laboratory, and is a posteriori based on the five senses, the purpose of their research on humans is to describe, predict, control, and monitor any human behavior that can be seen and measured quantitatively. Among the major models of modern psychology (Wilcox 1995; Alawi 1992), the mechanics model, based on the flow of Behaviorism or experimental psychology, was developed by Wilhelm Wundt (1833–1920), Wolfgang Kohler (1887–1967), and John B. Watson (1878–1958). In this model, humans are considered like other animals in the world, namely, an organism that can be created and modified after his/her behavior is understandable, predictable, and controlled through experimental studies (Ansari 1992:87-97; Wilcox, 1995).

### ***Issue on Psychological Measurement***

The main principle in the science of psychology has the goal similar to that of other disciplines. In a real sense, all knowledge is principled and has a way to understand the true meaning of human beings, which ultimately aims to establish the ideal of a prosperous man. However, the stigma will appear on the psychology of this "forced" science, where it has universal values as the foundation to understand and provide a treatment for human attitudes and behavior. A society will behave and conduct according to their social and culture. For example, the issues of western psychological measurement to measure the phenomenon of the Muslim community reported only on the question of the concept of reliability and validity. In another sense, reliability and validity is more focused on modifying the items of measurement so that it is more understood by the respondent in the investigation. The most important fact to be studied is whether the extent of the suitability of the measurement is a cultural construct of the respondents in the research society. However, the fact of the construction of psychological measurement cannot be separated from the concepts used in psychology. As in Western psychology, the concept is rooted humanist-materialist and behaviorist-materialism contrast to the Muslim community, culturally based on al-Quran and Hadith, which are central to the concept of taqwa. Piety is a form of consciousness deity (God consciousness) or presenting God as omnipresent in human life to live according to the revelation of the Almighty.

Divine awareness in Islam is very contrary to the fundamental basis of western psychology, which is based on human thought, as the flow of psychoanalytic and humanistic **behaviorist**. This is due to the statement by al Attas (al Attas, 1995; Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud, 1991) that personal spiritual culture and modern western civilization driven by three main factors:

1. The concept of dualism that dominated their view of reality and truth. The concept of dualism is also coloring the various aspects of thought and life. For example, the dualism between mind and body, and the separation between the methods of rationalism and empiricism.
2. From the teachings of humanism, it can be noted that secularism is an ideology that transforms evaluation to everything focused on the human mind.
3. The concept of tragedy infiltrates in every arena of life in philosophy, religion, or art. This concept reflects that the soul does not believe in religion because of frustration. The concept of this tragedy makes them guided by the concerns, and in that process, philosophy has been recognized as a primary means to claim that no truth is reached.

According to Al Hashimi (1989), study on the Islamic view of human life is a scientific activity that is useful and should be endorsed as other sciences. There is no doubt that the Qur'an is not a psychological theory of science books, geography, or the cosmos. Qur'an is a book that guides and reveals secrets concerning the soul and the human nature so that people can understand and use this environment to worship Allah. Qur'an states potentials and the weaknesses of human life, and produce guidelines and other irregularities. Hence, the words *nafs*, self, and soul are repeated more than 300 times in the Qur'an in various contexts.

The purpose of this paper is to reveal a western construct and comparison of Islam, by using a western psychological measure, which is the measurement of recognition, developed by Rosenberg (1965). Later, this device was tested by statistical correlation with psychosocial measurement tool built on the concept of the Islamic Qur'an and Hadith.

### Definition of concept

According to the Coopersmith (1967), self-esteem in the context of psychology is a personal appraisal indicated by the attitude held by individuals about themselves. Rating held by a person normally would remain on him/her. It is a subjective experience that is expressed to others through speech and behavior. It shows the attitude of an individual if they feel that they are important, capable, successful, useful, or valuable. According to Fromm (1956), self-esteem refers to an individual's ability to care for himself/herself with the fact that they are actually receiving themselves.

Islam psychosocial is the meaning of inner strength of someone interacting in the social world, or the strength of the Islamic soul of an individual to relate to the surrounding community. Psychological strength gives perspective of more communal empathy in the community. However, the nature of empathy is merely the inducement of *rahmatan lil alamiin*. The low psychosocial is also due to the weakening of an Islamic mental-cognitive. The Islamic concept of psychosocial domains works as follows: 1) Intrinsic of Islam: to recognize the concept of the caliph, recognize the benefits of self-concept, and identify the mission, mission-building, creating vision, commitment, self-esteem, intelligence, ambition, fortune, creativity, obsession, and devotion. 2) Attitudes and Thinking: Prejudice, mutual trust, mutual support, cooperation, openness, best performance, defensive, closed, withhold information (consisting of non-cooperative and performance of the user), the principles of life (consisting of spiritual capital and material capital), experience (consisting of positive and negative), interest (long term and short term), perspective (wisdom) based on God Almighty and His Messenger, comparison (high-value standard, low-value standard, objective, and subjective), and literature (consisting of religion, philosophy, and science). 3) *Da'wah* and Personal Values: Faith and belief in the right, *istikhlas*, compassionate (*tawajuh*), *ihitab*, honest (pleased), *Nafsi* struggle, convinced of the sentence *thoyyibah*, humble prayer, knowledge *ma'a* remembrance, *ikromul Muslims*, and *tashihunniyat wat Tabligh* missionary. 4) The Social Life Opinion: Morality in Islam, the Islamic moral improvement, moral reform, rectification and improvement of social and moral ties, family relations, neighbors and friends, mutual help and assist, the relationship among Muslims, the improvement of individual and family improvement of the family, science, and the Muslims and the era of knowledge and intellectual community.

### Methodology

This study took two approaches: first, field studies were carried out because they involved two measurement tools, such as Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and Psychosocial of Islamic Scale (Khairil, 2011). Second, qualitative research in analytical content was reviewed in detail of the construct using two measuring devices. This study comprised a total of 490 respondents from different demographic backgrounds. The study was carried out in four states in Malaysia; Terengganu, Kelantan, Malacca, and Perak. The selection was based on the need for male and female respondents. Female respondents were recruited from a rehabilitation center from Terengganu and Kelantan, while male respondents were from a rehabilitation center of Perak and Malacca. Data were analyzed by the research regression tests, and the findings were discussed with the approach of content analysis.

### Findings

Table 1 shows that the Islamic psychosocial does not affect the level of self-esteem among the respondents. Although not significant, the beta value is negative, which shows the trend of discrepancy between the two above-mentioned measurements.

**Table 1: Psychosocial influence of Islam on self-esteem**

	Self-esteem		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	B	Beta		
Islamic psychosocial	-0.004	-0.052	-1.109	0.268

Although no difference in the inference tests between the levels of Islamic psychosocial and mean score of self-esteem by type of offense could be observed, in the descriptive table, a mean direction of the conflict between the two measurements could be noted. Table 2 indicated that if the level of an offense is higher, then the mean level of self-esteem will be higher, but the level of psychosocial will be lower.

**Table 2: Comparison between the mean of Islamic psychosocial and the mean of psychosocial of self-esteem by type of offense.**

Type of offenses	N	Mean of Islamic psychosocial	Mean of psychosocial of self-esteem
Drug	136	330.30	26.41
Stealing	115	320.14	26.43
Teen out of control	74	333.81	26.38
Gangsterism	42	318.88	26.82
Run away from home	40	340.52	25.96
Sexual	36	317.03	26.83

## Discussion

### *Public Opinion of Trends of Western Psychology*

In the view of psychoanalysis founded by Sigmund Freud, the behavior is caused by individual instincts. Life instinct (biofilus) and death (necrofilus) are driven by individual personalities, such as id, ego, and superego. Psychoanalysis is often referred to as psychosexual. Meaning of life is the impetus from the sexual libido of men. In the language of Freud, sex is the power base that acts as a driver in every human behavior. He translated the non-sexual in the narrow sense not as a form of sexual gratification, but rather as a form of self-gratification. This thinking seems to be based on the philosophy of ideantik epicurism-hedonistic-based material, which boils down to personal gratification. Although Freud did not mean the capability to enjoy everything as addressed by Epicurus, he believed that man is driven by a strong sexual instinct that makes people feel at ease to live. Freud's confidence has crossed the limits of human spiritualities. Faith in God is the gratification of human motivation. In view of Freud, everything is all that there is created (Khaidzir & Khairil Anwar, 2009).

According to Freud, God is actually not there. However, certain satisfactions have been created by virtue of the things that humans are very limited to understand. God is represented by a man in the understanding toward reality. Logically, the closer the people are to the center of positivistic, the less likely they need God. Positivistic of Freud is a little different from that of Comte. Comte stated that the real level of positivistic is God, while Freud remained confident that God is needed by humans as sexual beings, but the intensity is very small. Freud was a spiritual atheist, who played in the field of modern psychology. The question is whether humans have no human creations philanthropist and altruistic. Two aspects of this fact in many cases are inversely proportional to the gratification of self. In many cases, philanthropic and altruistic people have to restrain themselves from the gratification of satisfying the system. In the prophetic language, spiritualism has been sacrificed by the struggle of the human blood system. In the language of religion, human heroism leads to a struggle, leading precious life to death by a satisfying system (Khaidzir Ismail & Khairil Anwar, 2009).

Behaviorism strongly believes that the source of human behavior is determined by the process of getting accustomed and conditioned. In other words, people with complexity can be formed with a specific learning pattern, and behavior experiments provide further evidence of the success of a particular method of influencing human behavior. Skinner and Pavlov have made an important contribution in this field. They have demonstrated human behavior in animal experiments. Skinner's famous experiment where the rats could press a lever and a food box, along with the experiment of Pavlov in which the saliva of dogs are conditioned to respond to the sound of bells as a sign of food available, are path-breaking. These scientists were given the Nobel Prize for the greatest discovery in the understanding of human behavior. The above-mentioned behaviorist findings have been developed rapidly to become the basis of methodological improvements in the pedagogical methods of humans (read: the psychology of education). The question, as far as the role of experimentation on accustoming is concerned, describes that an illuminated consciousness is independent of human intelligence (Khaidzir & Khairil Anwar, 2009). However, humanism is trying to synthesize two streams on the human potential to the logic of elections in accordance with the potential of humanity. The thinking of humanism in psychology and the result of the paradigm of dialectical psychology, as well as the philosophical implications of the results of western humanism, are driven by the spirit of European renaissance.

In the context of psychology, humanism believes in self-center. Individuals define the system. The main requirement to define a person to be a good system is the self-fulfillment of certain requirements. Reflection humanism psychologist, Abraham Maslow, theorized that humans have levels that need to be met in line. The level of the most basic of human needs that must be met is the need of clothes and food (*basic need*). Although the highest level of human need is self-actualization, it will never be achieved if the basic needs are not met. In the field of organizational management, many professed that Maslow's theory is the basis for improving employee performance to achieve a specific product. Maslow believed that any human intelligence has the potential to get to the point of self-actualization, but if the basic level is not met, then it is a fatal failure to address human potential. However, the question is could an intelligent man struggle to beat the system with the lack of *basic need*? In many cases, what are the things that cannot be provided by the basic need of intelligence? (Khaidzir Ismail & Khairil Anwar, 2009)

### ***Analysis of construct of the measurement of Self-esteem***

The discrepancy in the finding between the measurements of self-esteem of Islam is the description of the psychosocial conflict caused by the availability of a fundamental difference from the construct of the formation of two such measurements. One example of self-esteem item is, "*I feel that I have a number of good qualities...*" This item seems to be showing confidence in a person who makes his/her own self-esteem, but when viewed with the construct of approach to Islam, then the item is contrary to the Islamic principles. Although Islam is very encouraging and it is almost compulsory for a person to achieve good qualities, a person is prohibited to feel arrogant in Islam. In other words, Islam requires to reach the truth, but on the other side, it prohibits a person from feeling right. In the Islamic concept, feeling is best known by the terminology "ujub," known as the sin of an internal look. In Islam, the concept of self-esteem is not to feel better, and Islam is a self-esteem for someone who is impressed by the wealth and poverty but did not break from the grace of Allah, which Allah has entrusted to him. Analytical measurement tool of self-esteem used is in line with Maslow's theory is the link between the material-physical performances and an individual award.

Besides, self-esteem is also highly correlated with socioeconomic status (SES), such as educational level, income, and employment of a person. It means getting a good level of SES, resulting in a higher level of self-esteem of a person. In the Islamic construct, SES is not a key factor for a person to have self-esteem. A person may have a better self-esteem when they have a high level of SES, but this is the lowest of appreciation in Islam, because he/she is measuring himself/herself with the physical objects and materials, such as a beautiful house and a luxury car. In Islam the concept of self-esteem is not to feel better, but signifies that someone has the social rights between the surrounding of people. According to Islam, a poor man should not be afraid to deliver the truth to a person who is richer and of higher rank, because speaking truth is delivering God's commandments, and thus, he has self-esteem to perform the tasks that God has commanded. He thus may feel sure that God loves those who dare to speak the truth. Islam stands for self-esteem that will not be impressed by the poverty and riches and will not be despaired of the Mercy of Allah SWT. It has a self-esteem that a person is chosen to implement the trust that comes from Allah SWT. Thus, Maslow's statement of achieving self-actualization by the fulfillment of physical needs and achievements of individual or social needs contradicts the reality of a true believer of Islam. True believers, such as the companions of the Prophet, are described in the history as those eating soaked leaves and dry twigs, and not making themselves retroactive to perform their social roles, and are considered as martyrs for the highest truth.

### ***Level of crime and self-esteem***

Many studies have shown that if the level of crime by a person is higher, then the level of their self-esteem would often be higher, similar to the notion that women who prostitute themselves have a high self-esteem (Sarlitto Wirawan Sarwono, 2006). This is not independent of the basic constructs of self-esteem, but is more directed to the physical context; a prostitute may feel that she has a physical advantage, which has a positive incentive to do such prohibited acts.

### ***Conclusion and recommendations***

Thus, this measurement tool of self-esteem cannot be used as an instrument to establish a benchmark of self-esteem in Islamic society, especially among the youth of Islam. In western culture, a person achieves greatness to a certain dignity, but in Islam, it is solely to serve and seek the Redha of Allah. In the western concept, poverty is regarded as an enemy to degrading someone, but in Islam, poverty is a balanced system of life.

The most dangerous in the Islam are the people who feel rich or poor, because this is the actual trigger of the disease of society. The use of measurement tools or various forms of module based on self-esteem can be reconsidered for the excellent programs and psychological well-being of Muslim communities, especially for the Muslim youths who are the catalysts for the future of the country.

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