

MENTAL HEALTH, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL SUPPORT  
AMONG MOTHERS OF CHILDREN WITH MILD INTELLECTUAL  
DISABILITY

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*To my beloved mother  
and  
father, rested in peace,  
He did not have the opportunity to finish high school,  
but he had many high hopes for his children.  
I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mom and the memory of my dear father*

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## ABSTRACT

This correlation research compared the levels of mental health among Iranian and Malaysian mothers of children with mild intellectual disability, and role of emotional intelligence and social support on their mental health. The research is based on the purposive sampling technique which involved 227 respondents from Tehran, Iran and 236 respondents from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Data analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 16.0) and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS version 16.0). T-test was used to compare the values of the means of the Iranian and Malaysian samples while Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to analyse the good fit of the model in studying the relationships among the variables. The findings showed that Malaysian mothers have better mental health but Iranian mothers have higher emotional intelligence. There was no significant difference in social support between Iranian and Malaysian mothers but emotional intelligence and social support were significant predictors of mental health for both groups of mothers. Examinations using modification index for measuring the structural fit of Iranian and Malaysian models respectively indicated that the values fulfilled the required minimum threshold values of  $cmin/df=2.268$ ,  $CFI=.96$ ,  $RMSEA=.068$  and  $cmin/df=2.761$ ,  $CFI=.92$  and  $RMSEA=.087$ . These results indicated that the model has factorial invariance across samples. Thus, they confirmed the validity (factorial validity) of the hypothesized models. It is recommended that health planners and practitioners pay more attention to developing programs and services that enhance the level of emotional intelligence and social support. To address this, schools should provide training programs as continuing education courses for all teachers, school counselors and administrators, particularly, in schools which provide special education for students with disabilities.

## ABSTRAK

Kajian korelasi ini membandingkan tahap kesihatan mental dalam kalangan ibu dari Iran dan Malaysia yang mempunyai anak dalam kategori ketidakupayaan intelektual tahap ringan (*mild intellectual disability*) dan peranan kecerdasan emosi dan sokongan sosial terhadap kesihatan mental. Kajian ini adalah berdasarkan teknik persampelan bertujuan yang melibatkan seramai 277 responden dari Tehran, Iran dan 236 responden dari Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Analisis data telah dijalankan dengan menggunakan perisian *Statistical Package for Social Science* (SPSS versi 16.0) dan *Analysis of Moment Structures* (AMOS versi 16.0). Ujian-t telah dilakukan untuk menganalisis perbezaan skor min antara responden dari Iran dan Malaysia while *Structural Equation Modeling* (SEM) telah digunakan untuk menganalisis *good fit* bagi model dalam mengkaji hubungan antara pembolehubah. Dapatan menunjukkan bahawa ibu dari Malaysia mempunyai kesihatan mental yang lebih baik manakala ibu dari Iran mempunyai kecerdasan emosi yang lebih tinggi. Tiada perbezaan yang signifikan didapati bagi sokongan sosial antara dua kumpulan ibu ini tetapi kecerdasan emosi dan sokongan sosial adalah peramal yang signifikan terhadap kesihatan mental kedua-dua kumpulan ibu. Penelitian menggunakan Indeks Modifikasi bagi mengukur *structural fit* model dari Iran dan Malaysia masing-masing menunjukkan nilai yang menepati nilai minimum *threshold* yang ditetapkan iaitu  $cmin / df = 2.268$ ,  $CFI = .96$ ,  $RMSEA = .068$  dan  $cmin / df = 2.761$ ,  $CFI = .92$ ,  $RMSEA = .087$ . Dapatan menunjukkan model mempunyai *factorial invariance* merentas sampel. Justeru, ini mengesahkan kesahan faktorial (*factorial validity*) bagi model yang dihipotesiskan. Adalah dicadangkan supaya perancang dan pengamal kesihatan memberi lebih tumpuan dalam pembinaan program dan perkhidmatan yang berupaya meningkatkan tahap kecerdasan emosi dan sokongan sosial. Pihak sekolah boleh menyediakan program latihan sebagai kursus pendidikan lanjutan terutamanya di sekolah-sekolah yang menyediakan pendidikan khas bagi pelajar-pelajar dalam kategori kurang upaya kepada semua guru, kaunselor sekolah dan pihak pengurusan.