



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN OPTIMISM, SOCIAL SUPPORT,
SELF-EFFICACY, PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AND
RESILIENCE AMONG POSTGRADUATE IRANIAN
STUDENTS IN A MALAYSIAN PUBLIC
UNIVERSITY***

FATEMEH SABOURIPOUR

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UNIVERSITY**

By

FATEMEH SABOURIPOUR

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science**

November 2015

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Science

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November 2015

Chairman : Norlizah Bte Che. Hassan, PhD
Faculty : Educational studies

International students who are studying as foreign students tend to experience greater stress during their studies. They need to adjust to the new environment and overcome the challenges faced during their studies. Resilience level of these students is an important factor to improve their capability to adjustment to the new environment. International Iranian graduate students studying in UPM is the population of this study. In fact, lack of research on resilience and its related factor among Iranian international students in Malaysia, specifically in UPM, motivated researcher to conduct this research.

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between optimism, social support, self-efficacy, psychological well-being, gender and marital status with resilience among Iranian graduate students. To achieve the aims of the study particular objectives were designed as follows: 1) To determine the overall level of resilience among Iranian graduate students in UPM, 2) To investigate significant differences in resilience level across selected demographic variables (gender and marital status) among Iranian graduate students in UPM, 3) To investigate the relationship between optimism, dimensions of social support, self-efficacy and dimensions of psychological well-being with resilience among Iranian graduate students in UPM and 4) To investigate the extent to which dimensions of social support, optimism, self-efficacy and dimensions of psychological well-being significantly predict the level of resilience among Iranian graduate students in UPM. This research is a descriptive correlational study. The 251 of Iranian graduate students of university Putra Malaysia participated in this research. Simple random sampling was employed to collect data.

Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were utilized to address the research objectives. Independent sample t-test was conducted to examine the difference in the resilience level between gender (male and female), marital status (single, married). The relationship between optimism, social support, self-efficacy, psychological well-being and resilience were analysis with Pearson correlation. Besides, a stepwise regression was used to identify significant predictors among optimism, social support, self-

efficacy, and psychological well-being towards resilience.

According to the findings, Iranian graduate students are found to experience high level of resilience. The result of independent t-test indicated that there is no difference in the level of resilience across gender (male and female) and marital status (single and married) among Iranian graduate students. Moreover, the findings of Pearson correlation indicated that there are positive relationships between optimism, three dimensions of social support (support from family, significant others and friends), self-efficacy, and four dimensions of psychological well-being (personal growth, purpose in life, positive relation with others and autonomy) and resilience. Also, the result of stepwise regression analysis revealed that self-efficacy, personal growth, optimism, and purpose in life are significant predictors of resilience.

In conclusion, the findings of the study provide practical contributions to the field of educational psychology. This study provides valuable information to lecturers about factors which contribute to resiliency among Iranian graduate students. The findings of this study provide useful implication for the involved parties, such as Ministry of Education Malaysia, educators, counsellors, psychologist, and researchers to improve students' resilience.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Master Sains

**HUBUNGAN ANTARA OPTIMISME, SOKONGAN SOSIAL, KECEKAPAN
KENDIRI, KESEJAHTERAAN PSIKOLOGI DAN DAYA-TAHAN
DALAM KALANGAN PARA PELAJAR SISWAZAH IRAN DI
SEBUAH UNIVERSITI KERAJAAN MALAYSIA**

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Pelajar antarabangsa yang belajar sebagai pelajar asing berkecenderungan mengalami tekanan yang lebih hebat dalam pengajian mereka. Mereka perlu menyesuaikan diri dengan persekitaran baharu dan mengatasi cabaran yang dihadapi semasa pengajian mereka. Tahap daya tahan pelajar merupakan satu faktor yang penting dalam dan memperbaiki keupayaan mereka untuk menyesuaikan diri dengan persekitaran yang baharu. Pelajar siswazah antarabangsa Iran yang sedang belajar di UPM merupakan populasi dalam kajian ini. Hakikatnya, kurangnya kajian berkaitan dengan daya tahan dan faktor-faktor berkaitan dengannya dalam kalangan pelajar Iran terutamanya di UPM, mendorong pengkaji untuk menjalankan kajian ini.

Kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara optimisme, sokongan sosial, efikasi sendiri, kesejahteraan psikologi, jantina dan status perkahwinan dengan daya tahan pelajar Iran. Untuk mencapai tujuan kajian, beberapa objektif telah di bentuk seperti berikut: 1) Untuk menentukan tahap keseluruhan daya tahan dalam kalangan pelajar siswazah Iran di UPM. 2) Untuk mengkaji perbezaan signifikan tahap daya tahan dalam kalangan pemboleh ubah demografi yang dipilih (jantina dan status perkahwinan) dalam kalangan pelajar siswazah Iran di UPM. 3) Untuk mengkaji hubungan antara optimisme, sokongan sosial, efikasi sendiri dan kesejahteraan psikologi dengan daya tahan dalam kalangan pelajar Siswazah Iran di UPM. 4) Untuk mengkaji sejauh mana sokongan sosial, optimisme, efikasi sendiri dan kesejahteraan psikologi menjadi peramal yang signifikan terhadap daya tahan pelajar Siswazah Iran di UPM. Kajian ini adalah kajian korelasi deskriptif. 251 orang pelajar Siswazah Iran di UPM telah mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Persampelan rawak mudah telah digunakan untuk mengumpul data.

Analisis statistik deskriptif dan inferensi telah digunakan untuk menjawab objektif kajian. Ujian t bebas telah dijalankan untuk mengkaji perbezaan tahap daya-tahan antara jantina (lelaki dan perempuan), dan status perkahwinan (bujang, berkahwin). Hubungan antara optimisme, sokongan sosial, efikasi sendiri, kesejahteraan psikologi dan daya tahan telah dianalisis menggunakan korelasi Pearson. Selain itu, analisis

regresi stepwise telah digunakan untuk mengenal pasti peramal yang signifikan antara sokongan sosial, optimisme, kecekapan sendiri dan kesejahteraan psikologi terhadap daya tahan.

Berdasarkan dapatan kajian, pelajar siswazah Iran didapati mengalami tahap daya tahan yang tinggi. Keputusan ujian t bebas ini menunjukkan bahawa tidak terdapat perbezaan tahap daya tahan antara jantina (lelaki dan perempuan) dan status perkahwinan (bujang dan berkahwin) dalam kalangan pelajar siswazah Iran. Tambahan pula, dapatan Korelasi Pearson menunjukkan bahawa adanya hubungan positif antara optimisme, tiga komponen sokongan sosial (sokongan keluarga, orang yang penting dan rakan-rakan), efikasi sendiri, dan empat dimensi kesejahteraan psikologi (perkembangan peribadi, tujuan hidup, hubungan positif dengan orang lain dan autonomi) dengan daya tahan. Keputusan regresi stepwise juga menunjukkan bahawa efikasi sendiri, perkembangan peribadi, optimisme dan tujuan hidup adalah peramal daya-tahan yang signifikan.

Sebagai kesimpulan, dapatan kajian ini memberi sumbangan secara praktikal dalam bidang Psikologi Pendidikan. Dapatan kajian ini telah memberi maklumat yang bernilai kepada para pensyarah tentang faktor yang menyumbang kepada daya tahan dalam kalangan pelajar siswazah Iran. Dapatan kajian ini memberi implikasi yang berguna kepada pihak-pihak yang terlibat, seperti Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, para pendidik, kaunselor, pakar psikologi dan para pengkaji untuk meningkatkan daya tahan pelajar.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 27 November 2015 to conduct the final examination of Fatemeh Sabouripour on her thesis entitled "Relationships between Optimism, Social Support, Self-Efficacy, Psychological Wellbeing and Resilience among Postgraduate Iranian Students in a Malaysian Public University" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Science.

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Declaration by Members of Supervisory Committee

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The internationalisation of higher education is gaining interest because of the numerous needs of the international communities. Education is the responsibility of the government, which is committed to providing a sound education for everyone. The continuing growth in the number of international students studying in Malaysian universities is a firm indication of the rising importance of the internalisation of education in Malaysia. Indeed, Malaysia has succeeded in establishing a positive image among the world's Islamic countries and this has been a significant factor in drawing many international students to its educational establishments.

The vision of the government is to build Malaysia as a hub of educational excellence. The mission is to train and set in place a higher educational environment that advances the development of premier knowledge centres. Based on the Education Blueprint 2013-2025, the education system of Malaysia is encouraged to understand and improve the dynamics of the pedagogical process, the goal being to enhance the education system in Malaysia in order to be in keeping with Vision 2020, which is the point when Malaysia aims to achieve developed nation status (MOHE, 2010).

Based on information from the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education, the past ten years have witnessed much growth in the number of international student registrations in Malaysia, which has developed into a popular regional centre of education with a reputation for excellence. With regard to the number of international students, official records show that Malaysia is currently ranked 11th in the world by UNESCO. Malaysia is accepting large number of international students at undergraduate level and postgraduate level (MOHE, 2010).

There are four public universities in Malaysia that have been officially designated as research universities, namely Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). They have been largely responsible for attracting thousands of international students from all over the world (Yan & Wai, 2009). Also, UPM has become the University of Choice for international students whose priority is to look for a university with an outstanding track record in research performance which will assist them in their own research ambitions (McLachlan & Justice, 2009).

Obviously, it is a crucial to consider the difficulties international students encounter. In addition, awareness of the adjustment process is an important issue among international students (Yusoff & Chelliah, 2010). Students attending university and staying away from the familiarity of their home can be stressful because they find themselves in a new and strange environment that is socially and educationally different. For students studying internationally in another country, the probability and level of stress is even greater (Mori, 2000). Students are different in their type of skills and varying levels of English knowledge and proficiency (Bektaş, 2008; Sovic, 2009). Such students, in addition to facing the culture shock of living and studying in a foreign land, are also challenged by the need to adapt to new and often different educational systems as well

as communication problems. All these difficulties are compounded by a loss of social support, financial, psychological health and recreation issues (Al-Zubaidi & Rechards, 2010; Andrade, 2006; Lin & Yi, 1997; Liu, 2009; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010; Sovic, 2009; Steele, 2008; Yeh & Inose, 2003).

In addition, the effects of migration indicate an increased experience of physiological illnesses such as sleep disturbances, gastrointestinal problems, and/or other physical ailments by all migrants and specifically international students (Takeuchi et al., 2007). The consequences of all these challenges lead to some difficulties, such as a high anxiety level, confusion and even depression, which adversely impact the psychological well-being of international students (Yeh & Inose, 2003). Students who are studying abroad need to deal with dissimilarities among their own ethnical values, traditions and behaviours (Ang & Liamputtong, 2008). Misra, Crist, and Burant (2003) explained the necessity for all international students to undergo a period of adjustment to the different educational and social situations.

The most important trait which is a predictor of psychological adjustment is resilience (Punamäki, Qouta, & El-Sarraj, 2001; Yi, Vitaliano, Smith, Yi, & Weinger, 2008). According to Liu et al. (2014) resilience has a tangible effect on successful adjustment. Resilience is defined as a human tendency to deal with a stressful situation (Garmezy & Masten, 1986). Those who are resilient show that they are able to adapt when encountering adversity such as tragedy, trauma, threats and stressors (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). According to Masten (2009) psychological resilience is characterised as the person's ability to adapt to a stretch of misfortune, which may realise the individual returning to a prior condition of normality with no signs of undesirable impacts (Masten, 2009). Ungar (2008) clarified resilience as the capability of people to discover psychological, cultural, social and physical assets that will maintain their welfare, and their prospect and capacity alone or with others, to profit by these assets in socially significant ways.

Resilience in students is a key variable connected with the adjustment to the college environment (Wang, 2009). Based on the research findings by Wang (2009), it appears that resilience characteristics (positive about life and about themselves, flexible in thoughts and in social relations, focused, organised, and proactive) are central to the adjustment of international students. He believed that resilience is the best predictor of adjustment among international students so that international students should try to enhance their resilience and universities should provide help for them to do so. Tusaie and Dyer (2004) expressed that resilient students are able to cope with the difficulties that they confront in the move to a university in a foreign country as well as being successful in academic issues. Moreover, Chan (2000) discovered that students, who are highly resilient, in comparison with students who have low resilience, suffer significantly less impact from negative events. Consequently, it appears that resilience is in fact an important factor that minimises the effect of stressors (Li, 2008; Yi-Frazier et al., 2010).

1.1 Factors Related to Resilience

The undeniable importance of resilience and its related factors among Iranian students to cope with stressful situations during their study is the focus of this research. Students show different degrees of resilience within their capacity to sustain positive effects in the face of transition. Zimmerman and Arunkumar (1994) believed that resilience is a complex interactive procedure which is not a quality that an adolescent is born with or naturally keeps once it is achieved. Numerous researchers accept that resilience can be reinforced because it is not a “hard-wired” personality trait controlled by just a few people, and it is the consequence of the advancement of protective factors (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). Empirical studies by numbers of researchers (Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker, & Al-Timimi, 2004; Rosenthal, Russell, & Thomson, 2007; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Yusoff & Chelliah, 2010), revealed that resilience varies from one individual to another and therefore is deemed as a variable depending on many other psychological factors. Therefore, strengthening the protective factors related to resilience will reinforce resilience.

Related literature supports the relationship between resilience and other variables. For example, optimistic individuals are more resilient when facing challenges as compared to less optimistic individuals (Snyder, Lopez, Shorey, Rand, & Feldman, 2003). According to Rutter (2006) resilience is a reflection of optimistic view when faced with difficulties. Carver and Connor-Smith (2010) stated that under conditions of pressure, optimism is complementary to resilience. Moreover, Soenens et al. (2007) stated that being optimistic will help students to cope with challenges in college.

Another factor which relates to resilience is social support. According to Ozbay et al. (2007) with a specific end goal to remain physically and rationally sound, there must be solid social support. Such support is also able to reinforce resilience in the face of tension. Bonanno (2004), Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000), and Tugade and Fredrickson (2007), found relationship between social support and resilience among students. Perceived social support such as support from an extended family, siblings, teachers in schools, mentors and peers has been found to be beneficial in helping individuals positively adapt to the transition to university (Urquhart & Pooley, 2007). As discussed by Burcusa and Iacono (2007), social support can ensure a person’s ability to fight against sadness. Social support originates from three main areas, friends, family and social groups (Taylor & Friedman, 2007).

Furthermore, Van Breda (2001) revealed that self-efficacy is a trait which is associated with resilience. As reported by Lightsey (2006), students’ self-efficacy is an essential trait to determine the resilience of students. Speight (2009) revealed that self-efficacy is a significant predictors of resilience among students. Moreover, some studies have shown relationship between resilience and psychological well-being. Ryff and Singer (2003) believed that resilient persons have the ability to protect their physical and psychological well-being and have the ability to bounce back from tense events. As stated by Fredrickson (2001) the level of resilience and psychological well-being are related to each other. Also, Sagone and De Caroli (2014b) found a significant positive relationship between the dimensions of psychological well-being (self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and personal growth) and resilience.

With reference to demographic variables, researchers have recommended the contributory influence of gender and marital status on resilience (Harris, 2004). In a study associated with stress and resilience among college students, Clauss-Ehlers, Yang, and Chen (2006) found that the level of resilience in women is higher than in men. Madrigal (2008) revealed a positive connection between resilience and marital status. According to Wells (2012) the level of resilience in married respondents is significantly higher than single respondents.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

University Putra Malaysia has been attracting students from countries around the world. A study conducted by Talebloo and Baki (2013) among Iran, Yemen and Saudi students of University Putra Malaysia, revealed that the target students were exposed to a variety of challenges during their studies. The challenges included lack of sufficient facilities (accommodation, transportation, food and campus restaurants), social environment (cultural difficulties, English difficulties and communication problems), academic problems (academic system, teaching methodology and faculty supervisor, lack of time, and unclear feedback), and international service programme (lack of entertaining activities and the visa application process). Moreover, the Iranian Students' Association in UPM (ISAM) has reported that Iranian students encounter many problems and challenges in UPM. The main concerns of the students stem from financial issues, communication problems and academic difficulties (ISAM, 2015).

McLachlan and Justice (2009) discovered that most of the international students experience problems in host countries such as differences in culture and social environment. Yan and Berliner (2009) indicated that common problems faced by foreign students included academic stress and language differences, which hindered interaction between these students and the faculty members and others in a host country. International students tend to experience greater anxiety, tension, and psychological distress due to challenges they face in a new environment (Bayram & Bilgel, 2008). As a result, the effects of these challenges increase psychological and physiological problems such as stress, anxiety, tension, depression, loneliness, homesickness, low self-esteem, sleep disturbances, gastrointestinal among international students (Hojat & Herman, 1985; Takeuchi et al., 2007). Obviously, students need to be aware of what can help them to reduce the negative effects of migration on their mental health and what actions to take for better adjustment. The key concept for Iranian students to deal with all pressure is resilience trait. Resilience is a personality trait that controls the harmful impacts of stressors and increases adaptability (Pidgeon, Rowe, Stapleton, Magyar, & Lo, 2014). Prior literature by Bonanno (2004), Dawson and Pooley (2013), Rutter (2006), Snyder, Lopez, Shorey, Rand, and Feldman (2003), Soenens et al. (2007), Tugade & Fredrickson (2007), and Urquhart and Pooley (2007) have discovered that optimism, social support, self-efficacy and psychological well-being are predominant elements impacting the level of resilience.

Despite the significant contribution of the resilience among international students and its important role to cope with difficulties in a host country, little investigation has been undertaken to examine resilience and its related factors among international students in Malaysia. Several studies have been conducted separately on the relationship between optimism, social support, self-efficacy, psychological well-being and resilience in Malaysia (Abdullah, 2008; Azlina & Jamaluddin, 2010; Dzulkifli & Yasin, 2009;

Faleel, Tam, Lee, Har, & Foo, 2012; Holzmann, 2013; Lee, 2011; Mahyuddin et al., 2006; Naeemi, Tamam, Hassan, & Bolong, 2014; Nikmat, Mohamad, Omar, & Razali, 2010; Tam & Lim, 2009; Yusoff, 2012; Yusoff & Chelliah, 2010). There are also some models of resiliency, however none of these models combine all these factors in a single study. Kumpfer's (1999) model of resiliency also very general in nature. Besides, this model mostly deals with western countries, so it is not known how best this model is supported by data in Asian countries.

As suggested in previous studies, there is a need to study the concept of resilience in a greater depth and its probable related factors in order to gain a better understanding of these relationships (Leary & DeRosier, 2012; Pidgeon et al., 2014; Sagone & De Caroli, 2013, 2014b; Souril & Hasanirad, 2011). Therefore, the gaps this research addresses are related to the lack of quantitative description of the factors linked to resilience, above all optimism, dimensions of social support, self-efficacy, and dimensions of psychological well-being in Malaysia. This study examines the relationship between resilience as a dependent variable with dimensions of social support, optimism, self-efficacy and dimensions of psychological well-being among Iranian students of UPM. Student's lack of knowledge about resilience and its related factors could be one of the main reasons to the difficulties they encounter. The fact that both university and the students struggle to overcome these important issues, there is an absolute need for a study of resilience, social support, optimism, self-efficacy and psychological well-being among Iranian graduate students.

1.3 Research Objectives

This research aims to investigate the levels of resilience among Iranian students. In particular, this study intends to investigate the relationship between optimism, social support, self-efficacy and psychological well-being with resilience among Iranian graduate students in UPM. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To determine the overall level of resilience among Iranian graduate students in UPM.
2. To investigate significant differences in resilience level across selected demographic variables (gender and marital status) among Iranian graduate students in UPM.
3. To investigate the relationship between optimism, dimensions of social support, self-efficacy and dimensions of psychological well-being with resilience among Iranian graduate students in UPM.
4. To investigate the extent to which optimism, dimensions of social support, self-efficacy and dimensions of psychological well-being significantly predict the level of resilience among Iranian graduate students in UPM.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions formulated to achieve objectives 1 and 2 are as below:

1. What is the overall level of resilience among Iranian graduate students in UPM?
2. Are there significant differences in the resilience level across gender and marital status among Iranian graduate students in UPM?

1.5 Hypotheses

To achieve objectives 2, 3 and 4 of the study, 4 hypotheses are developed as below:

- H01. There is no significant difference in the resilience level across gender among Iranian graduate students in UPM.
- H02. There is no significant difference in the resilience level across marital status among Iranian graduate students in UPM.
- H03. There is no significant relationship between optimism, dimensions of social support, self-efficacy, and dimensions of psychological well-being resilience among Iranian graduate students.
- H04. Optimism, dimensions of social support, self-efficacy, six dimensions of psychological well-being do not significantly predict the level of resilience among Iranian graduate students in UPM.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The importance of this study is its contribution to the literature concerning resilience by examining resilience among Iranian university students in UPM. This study demonstrates the phenomenon of the resilience pattern to help alleviating some of students' challenges. It also aims to provide suggestions to deal with students' challenges. The study will provide information about relationships between optimism, social support, self-efficacy, psychological well-being and demographic factors with resilience among Iranian graduate students of a Malaysian public university.

Significantly, the extent to which students are capable of increasing their level of resilience to deal with stressors through their study has significant implications for the social-emotional adjustment of the students, their academic achievement and also, persistence in postsecondary education (Andrews & Wilding, 2004; Pritchard & Wilson, 2003; Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005). Clearly this information can be used by professionals working in the fields of counselling, psychology, education and also lecturers to design intervention to enhance students' resiliency.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

In this section, limitations of the study are declared. The research was limited to population. Also, this research was limited to the geographic area within a public university. This study could be generalized in the population of International students in Malaysia to gain more information about other nationalities. Moreover, the current study was limited to a number of factors (optimism and social support, self-efficacy and psychological well-being). Future researchers are encouraged to conduct further researches which contribute to better understanding of related factors with resilience.

1.8 Operational Definition

Operational definitions define concepts by the way they are measured. Operationally, variables of this study are discussed as follows:

1.8.1 Resilience

Resilience as a dependent variable refers to an individual's ability to deal with stressful situations and to bounce back from misfortune (Connor & Davidson, 2003). In this study, resilience is operationally defined as an ability to "bounce back" and to exhibit adaptability to stressful situation. In fact, when international students go abroad to study, they would experience significant trauma, adversity, tragedy or threats and show positive behavioural adaptation as a dynamic process which is called resilience. The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale with 25 items (CD-RISC-25) was developed as a measure of "bounce-back" and adaptability which will be employed to assess the level of students' resiliency (Connor & Davidson, 2003).

1.8.2 Optimism

Optimism has been defined as the belief or attitude that there can be good things in one's life as it is the tendency of people to expect positive results in the future (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Operationally, optimism includes positive, relatively stable, and desirable future expectations. It is identified with the creation of optimistic assessments of situations, and taking the time to effectively connect with adapting systems in managing stressors, and doing what is best when facing difficulties. Scheier and Carver (1985) stated that persons continue to involve in attempts to deal with adversity as long as the odds are favourable. In this study the level of optimism will be assessed using the Life Orientation Test Revised (LOT-R) as employed by Scheier and Carver (1985).

1.8.3 Social Support

Hale, Hannum, and Espelage (2005) define social support in some areas, including passionate support, closeness, physical sympathy and comfort. Perceived social support is characterised as having some person to recommend help, when such help is required (Hale et al., 2005). Operationally, social support in this research is described as a trust of being cared for, and there is somebody to help in difficult situations. These supports

can be real (financial support), informational (advice), companionship (belongings) and intangible (personal advice) (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988). In this study social support will be measured by the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and it includes: 1) Family support, 2) friends' support, and 3) support from significant others (Zimet et al., 1988).

1.8.4 Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is specified as one's belief in his/ her capacity to perform activities needed to create specific performance achievements (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). Furthermore, confidence in the ability to use control over an individual's behaviour, social environment, and motivation can be reflected by self-efficacy. Operationally, self-efficacy, or students' belief in their own abilities to manage numerous conditions, can play a role in not only how students feel about themselves, but whether or not they successfully achieve their goals in life (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). In this study, the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) will be applied to assess the level of students' self-efficacy (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995).

1.8.5 Psychological Well-Being

Based on Coward and Reed (1996), the definition of psychological well-being is when a person has a sensation of feeling healthy resulting in a comprehensive consciousness of personal integrity that consists of spiritual components of life as well. Operationally, in this study psychological well-being comprises a set of psychological features involved in positive student's functioning. The level of student's psychological well-being is presented with six dimensions include the proficiency to administer the surroundings and external activities (Environmental Mastery), independence and self-regulation (Autonomy), a positive viewpoint to the self and one's past life (Self-Acceptance), open, trusting and close relations with other people (Positive Relations with Others), a sense of development or improvement over time (Personal Growth), and finally, a faith in the concept of one's past and present life (Purpose in Life). In this study psychological well-being in six dimensions will be assessed using the Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scales (RPWB) (Abbott et al., 2010).

1.9 Chapter Summary

Chapter one introduced and explained the background of the education system in Malaysia and the challenges faced by international students during their period of study. This was followed by an explanation of the problems of Iranian students and the gaps of study. Research objectives, research questions and research hypothesis, significance and limitations of the study were discussed. In the final part of this chapter the operational definitions of the variables were justified. This study aims to understand the relationship between optimism, social support self-efficacy, and psychological wellbeing with resilience among Iranian students of UPM. In the following chapter, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks will be discussed base on the review of relevant literature.

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