



THE STRUCTURE OF THE MALAY EMOTIONAL
CONCEPTS OF *MARAH* (ANGER),
SABAR (PATIENCE), AND *HORMAT* (RESPECT)
AMONG IIUM EMPLOYEES

BY

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the degree of Master of Human Sciences (Psychology)

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to explore the structure of three emotion concepts in the Malay culture, namely, *marah* ‘anger’, *sabar* ‘patience’, and *hormat* ‘respect’ using the prototype approach. Two studies (Study 1 and Study 2) were conducted. Study 1 aimed to examine the words that best portray the three concepts using prototypical ratings. In Study 2, 100 nonacademic employees at International Islamic University Malaysia were involved in card sorting procedure. A total of 82 words were sorted and categorized using hierarchical cluster analysis and yielded a comprehensive tree-like hierarchy of *marah*, *sabar*, and *hormat*. The three levels of inclusiveness in the hierarchy are; 1. Superordinate level (positive and negative emotion category); 2. Basic level (*sabar* ‘patience’, *hormat* ‘respect’, *tenang* ‘calmness’, and *marah* ‘anger’); and 3. Subordinate level. The superordinate level confirms previous findings indicating its universality, whereas the subordinate level depicts the indigenous nature of the three emotion concepts. The basic level may not be concluded as universal or culturally unique because this level needs further evidences from different studies with the same lexicons.

خلاصة البحث

تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف ثلاثة ابعاد من مفاهيم المشاعر في ثقافة الملايوية، والتي تتمثل في: الغضب، و الصبر، والاحترام، ويكون باستخدام منهج النموذج الأولي، حيث اجريت دراستان (الدراسة الأولى والدراسة الثانية)، الدراسة الأولى تهدف الى دراسة افضل الكلمات التي تصور تلك المفاهيم الثلاثة باستخدام التصنيفات نموذجية. اما الثانية، شارك مائة موظف غير أكاديمي في الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا لغرض اجراء فرز البطاقات، حيث تم فرز اثنين وثمانين كلمة، ثم تم تصنيفها باستخدام التحليل العنقودي الهرمي، وأسفرت عنها شجرة شاملة من الغضب، الصبر، والاحترام و التي تتكون من ثلاثة مستويات من الشمولية ، وهي: المستوى العالي (الإيجابية، والسلبية، وفئة العاطفة)، المستوى الأساسي (الصبر، الاحترام، الهدوء، و الغضب)، المستوى الثانوي. تؤكد النتائج السابقة على ان مستوى العالي متعلق بالعلمية، في حين المستوى الثانوي متعلق بتصوير الطبيعة الأصلية لمفاهيم المشاعر الثلاثة، اما المستوى الأساسي فلا يمكن اعتباره المستوى عالميا او عنصرا تقنيا وحيدا، بل يحتاج إلى المزيد من الأدلة للدراسات المتعددة و المختلفة على المعاجم نفسها.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (Psychology).

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Santika Sari

Signature.....

Date

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**THE STRUCTURE OF THE MALAY EMOTION5@CONCEPTS
MARAH (ANGER), *SABAR* (PATIENCE), AND *HORMAT*
(RESPECT) AMONG IIUM EMPLOYEES**

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I dedicated this thesis to:

My father, my family, and my supervisor

&

All those who help others to find the light even in the darkest of place

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First and foremost, *Alhamdulillah*, all praise belongs to Allah s.w.t, the One who grants me *rahman*, so I may remember that indeed His Mercy is greater than His Anger, and all the knowledge is with Allah only. He is the Most Gracious, in Him we believe, and in Him we put our trust.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Abstract in Arabic	iii
Approval Page.....	iv
Declaration	v
Copyright Page.....	vi
Dedication	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of Study	1
1.2 The Statement of the Problem	5
1.3 Significance of Study.....	6
1.3.1 Theoretical Importance	6
1.3.2 Practical Importance	7
1.4 Research Objectives.....	8
1.5 Conceptual and Operational Definitions	8
1.5.1 Conceptual Definitions: Anger, Patience, and Respect	8
1.5.1.1 Anger	8
1.5.1.2 Patience.....	8
1.5.1.3 Respect.....	9
1.5.1.4 Operational Definition: Anger, Patience, and Respect.....	9
1.5.1.5 Malays	10
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	11
2.1 Emotion and Universalism Versus Relativism.....	11
2.2 Emotion and Individualism Versus Collectivism.....	15
2.3 The Malay Culture.....	16
2.4 Anger	18
2.5 Patience.....	21
2.6 Respect.....	23
2.7 Overview.....	23
2.8 Theoretical Framework.....	26
2.9 Conceptual Framework.....	30
2.10 Hypotheses.....	30
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....	31
3.1 Introduction.....	31
3.2 Study 1	31
3.2.1 Selection of Terms Related to Anger, Patience and Respect.....	31
3.2.2 Participants.....	31
3.2.3 Materials.....	33
3.2.4 Procedures	33
3.2.5 Data Analysis	35

3.3 Study 2	36
3.3.1 Participants.....	36
3.3.2 Materials.....	36
3.3.3 Procedures	37
3.3.4 Data Analyses	39
CHAPTER FOUR: STUDY 1: RESULTS AND DISSCUSSION	41
4.1 Results of Study 1: Prototypicality Ratings.....	41
4.2 Discussion of Study 1	46
4.2.1 Marah ‘Anger’ Prototypicality Rating	46
4.2.2 Sabar ‘Patience’ Prototypicality Rating.....	48
4.2.3 Hormat ‘Respect’ Prototypical Rating.....	49
CHAPTER FIVE: STUDY 2: RESULTS AND DISSCUSSION.....	50
5.1 Results of Study 2: Cards Sorting.....	50
5.2 Discussion of Study 2	60
5.2.1 Superordinate Levels: Positive and Negative Emotion.....	60
5.2.2 Basic Level and Its Subordinate Level Categories	61
5.2.2.1 Marah ‘Anger’ Category	61
5.2.2.2 Sabar ‘Patience’ Category	63
5.2.2.3 Hormat ‘Respect’ Category	64
5.2.2.4 Tenang ‘Calmness’ Category	66
5.2.3 The Subordinate Level.....	66
5.2.3.1 The Unscattered Prototypes of Anger, Patience, and Respect.....	66
5.2.3.2 The Metaphorical Prototype Terms at the Subordinate Level	67
CHAPTER SIX: GENERAL DISSCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS	69
6.1 General Discussion.....	69
6.2 Implications of the Study.....	73
6.2.1 Theoretical Implication	73
6.2.2 Practical Implication	74
6.2.2.1 Understanding Malays in Multicultural Organizations	74
6.3 Limitations and Recommendations	75
6.4 Conclusion	76
BIBLIOGRAPHY	78
APPENDIX A	83
APPENDIX B	86

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table No.</u>		<u>Page No.</u>
3.1	Study 1 Procedures	32
3.2	Total Number of Lexicons Used Throughout the Study	35
4.1	Rank and Mean Prototypicality Ratings (M) for <i>Marah</i> , <i>Sabar</i> and <i>Hormat</i>	42
5.1	Number of Categories and Participants	50
5.2	<i>Marah</i> , <i>Sabar</i> , and <i>Hormat</i> Hierarchy	53
5.3	The Words of ‘Body Parts’, ‘ <i>Naik</i> –Rising’, and ‘Heat’ in The Malay Prototypes of <i>Marah</i> , <i>Sabar</i> and <i>Hormat</i>	59

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure No.</u>		<u>Page No.</u>
2.1	A General Model of Emotion	12
2.2	A Sample of Hierarchical Prototype approach	29
3.1	Step-by-Step Procedures of Study 2	38
5.1	Dendogram of <i>Marah</i> 'Anger', <i>Sabar</i> 'Patience' and <i>Hormat</i> 'Respect'	52

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

“Theories come and theories go. The frog remains (Alfred North)”, and thus, human discovery of conceptual ideas is subjected to change with time and context (Kagan, 2007). Similarly, emotion concepts may be vulnerable to challenge and change. All human beings experience emotions and people across cultures recognize and acknowledge this concept of emotions. However, the concept of emotion is still ambiguous and complex. Emotions are complex as they consist of many other components such as physiological activation, subjective feeling, antecedents, action tendencies, body sensations, verbal and non-verbal expressions, self-control, and cognitive appraisal (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008).

One of the heated debates on emotions is whether they are universal or relatively shaped by culture. The claim that emotions are universal is based on various evidences that human facial expressions of basic emotions can be identified across different cultures (Darwin, 1998; Ekman & Friesen, 1971) in a process called emotion recognition (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008). Apart from that, emotional antecedents, emotional appraisal, and action tendencies are argued as pancultural.

However, Russell (1991a) argues that emotions are culturally specific as some emotion concepts in one culture may not have the same equivalent meaning in others. For example, the Javanese culture only has one concept (*isin*) to denote all concepts of shame, embarrassment, guilt, and shyness (Geertz, as cited in Russell, 1991a). Furthermore, culture may play a major role in displaying certain emotions (e.g., anger

and sadness) (Ekman & Friesen, 1971). Therefore, emotions may be universal, but may also be culturally specific.

Furthermore, emotion lexicons also vary across cultures (Church, Katigbak, Reyes & Jensen, 1998). Emotion lexicon may be defined as a large number of emotion words. For example, the Taiwanese Chinese language has 750 emotion lexicons, the Malay language has about 230 (Boucher, 1979), and the English language has about 2000 emotion lexicons. Since there are hundreds or even thousands of emotion lexicons, people tend to organize them categories (Rosch, 1978). This categorization signifies two principles of human cognitive processes: firstly, it minimizes cognitive effort from being overwhelmed, and secondly, it helps to perceive the world as an ordered entity. People are also able to give the best example of a certain category, and this is called a prototype.

The prototype approach investigates a large number of emotion lexicon and identifies the overall structure of emotion concept by mapping a hierarchical tree. Based on the belief that human beings classify the world into categories, a hierarchical tree is created as a result of their judgment on the similarity and differences between emotion concepts (Russell, 1991a). In addition, a hierarchical tree also means that some concepts are included within another, the concept of positive emotion contains, among others, happiness, and happiness, in turn, may contain the prototypes of joy, elation, and bliss.

Furthermore, it is believed that there are focal emotions in certain cultures (Mesquita & Leu, 2007) that are either encouraged or discouraged to occur. An emotion is encouraged to be experienced when it is desirable and consistent with the norms of that culture, whereas a discouraged emotion is avoided as much as possible because it may violate its traditions. Goddard (1997; 2001; 2005) found that the Malay

culture is strongly influenced by traditions (*adat*) and Islam as a religion. Both the Malay tradition and Islam co-exist in promoting good and moral behavior of the Malays (Haneef, Yusof, Amin, & Noon, 2001).

In the Malay culture, *sabar* 'patience' and *hormat* 'respect' are central and highly praised (Goddard, 2001; 2005). Patience and respect are not only common, but also important social emotions that help in upholding moral values in the Malay culture. The virtues of dignity (*maruah*), consideration for others' feelings (*jaga hati*) and gentleness (*berbudi bahasa*) are crucial for Malays. *Sabar* 'patience' facilitates a virtue of strong self-control and prevents a Malay from hurting others and threatening in-group harmony. This is because Malays are taught to be aware of others' feeling (*jaga hati*) in every action and to be mindful in guarding one's dignity (*maruah*) and not appear as an inconsiderate person before others. Likewise, showing respect may reflect the act of gentleness (*berbudi bahasa*) as one of the Malays' central values is to be polite to the elderly and people of higher social status. (Goddard, 1997). Those who are disrespectful to others, especially to the elderly, are considered as being rude (*kasar*) and insensitive.

A discouraged emotion among the Malays is *marah* 'anger'. The experience of *marah* 'anger' is avoided as much as possible because it violates the social norms of the Malay culture that is based on politeness and sensitivity to others (Goddard, 1997). The Malays regard *marah* 'anger' as a negative emotion that must be masked, controlled and managed (Goddard, 2005; Salleh, 2005). This suggests that, to some extent, *marah* 'anger' is partially a taboo emotion, and cannot be shown overtly in social situations. To be *marah* 'angry' means to be rough (*kasar*) and this transgresses the Malay virtue of gentleness (*berbudi bahasa*). However, interestingly, *marah* 'anger' in the Malay culture is a hypercognized concept because it has a large number

of anger-related terms (i.e. more than 50 anger-related terms) compared to other emotion concepts in the Malay lexicon.

It could be said that the concepts of *marah*, *sabar*, and *hormat* among Malays are interrelated. Goddard (2001) maintained that when a Malay experiences *marah* ‘anger’, other people will urge him or her to be *sabar* ‘patient’. Salleh (2005) supported this by arguing that in a conflictual situation, Malays deal with their emotions by being *sabar* ‘patient’ and stifling their *marah* ‘anger’. Conversely, in an English context, patience is not a preferred solution to deal with anger. It may seem strange to English people if they are urged to be patient while angry (Goddard, 2001). Thus, these emotions are unique to their Malay contexts.

In this study, the prototype approach by Rosch (1978) is used as a theoretical and conceptual framework. This approach is used to map the overall structure of three emotion concepts, namely *marah*, *sabar*, and *hormat*, in hierarchical tree-like taxonomies. It categorizes emotions into three categories, namely superordinate, basic, and subordinate. The hierarchical tree is organized from abstract to concrete concepts. In other words, these concepts are categorized from a very general concept of emotion into a very specific one. For example, on the concept of “furniture”, its hierarchical tree is the superordinate of “furniture”, the basic level is “table”, and the subordinate level is “kitchen table”. “Furniture” is an abstract concept of which people do not have a clear image in their mind, whereas “table” as a basic level represents a more vivid image representation for the superordinate concept of “furniture”. People may have an easier access to imagine the concept of “table” than “furniture”. In addition, the subordinate concept of “kitchen table” shows a more concrete representation of the basic level concept of “table”. Thus, the lexicon of these three emotions of *marah*,

sabar, and *hormat* (anger, respect, and patience respectively) in this study was categorized in this manner.

1.2 THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Over the years, many studies on emotions have been conducted on Western cultures, a few studies on Eastern cultures (e.g., Japanese and Chinese cultures) (Matsumoto, 2001), and even fewer were conducted on the Malay culture (e.g., Goddard, 1997; 2001). Studies on the emotions of the Americans, and even Japanese or Chinese, may not shed light on the Malay culture because specific cultures may have different emotions (Boellstorff & Lindquist, 2004). The Malays have distinct traditions and social life; thus, there is a need to study these emotions in the Malay context.

Furthermore, the American mainstream psychology of emotions may not offer an adequate equivalent of emotion lexicons for other cultures (Russell, 1991a). For example, the English concept of anger does not exist in the Ifaluk culture (Lutz, as cited in Wierbicka, 1992a). However, the absence of an emotion concept does not mean that the specific emotion does not exist. Perhaps, that emotion concept is not salient enough in that culture (Wierzbicka, 1992b). Thus, this study might shed light on the Malay emotion lexicon, particularly on *marah*, *sabar*, and *hormat*.

Many studies have examined the whole emotion lexicon such as Church, Katigbak, Reyes, and Jensen (1998) in the Filipino language, and Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, and O'Connor (1987) in the American language, or only investigated a single emotion concept such as anger (Rubin, 1986) in the American culture. To the knowledge of the researcher, no study has been conducted on the three concepts of *marah*, *sabar*, and *hormat* in other cultures generally and in the Malay context specifically. Consequently, the present study aimed to examine the structural

organization of the three emotion concepts in an attempt to shed light on such key terms in the Malay context.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

1.3.1 Theoretical Importance

There are only a few studies that have been conducted on the Malay culture. Prototypical examples include studies conducted by Goddard (1997; 2001). Goddard (1997) investigated some Malay concepts using ‘natural semantic metalanguage’ which analyzes the concept through semantic explanation from various resources such as magazines, novels, and personal observations. Goddard (2001) examined the concepts of patience, sincerity, and loyalty by comparing them in two different contexts, namely the Malay and the English.

This study is different from Goddard (1997; 2001), in three aspects. Firstly, it indigenously explored these concepts within the Malay context without drawing any comparison with other cultures. These concepts are culturally constructed in the Malay mind and they were examined according to how its people experience it. Some emotion concepts are more salient in certain cultures than others and thus, they may have distinct meanings across cultures (Kagan, 2007) that may not be tapped unless the emotion concept is understood through the culture’s unique lenses.

Secondly, the present study’s method used is different from Goddard’s (1997; 2001) natural semantic metalanguage method. This study used the prototype approach and analyzed the data through hierarchical cluster analysis. Through the hierarchical cluster analysis, the Malay emotion concepts of *marah*, *sabar*, and *hormat* were classified systematically as a tree-like hierarchy and categorized from abstract to

concrete concepts (i.e. superordinate, basic, and subordinate). They were classified from a very general concept to more specific ones.

1.3.2 Practical Importance

This study may have implications for the field of applied cross-cultural psychology, particularly to multicultural organizations. According to Abdullah and Pedersen (2009), people who come from other cultures may find the Malays as being difficult to bond with, and one of the reasons might be because the latter are indirect and not so expressive of their own feelings. This study may contribute through the hierarchical tree of the three emotion concepts and their concomitant words to add some input to these organizations. Likewise, the lexicon may be beneficial in intercultural communication trainings for foreign employees in order to understand how Malays express their *marah* ‘anger’ as a negative emotion which may be overlapped with the positive emotions of *hormat* ‘respect’ and *sabar* ‘patience’ in workplace settings. Thus, proper training will help foreign employees to work more efficiently as they become more involved in the Malay’s culture and reciprocally, it may also help Malay employees and employers have a better understanding of themselves and their culture.

This study might also help people understand how the Malays react and interact in various with social realities. This is because these emotion concepts consist of several components of emotion, such as what may trigger the emotion of *marah* ‘anger’, how the Malays appraise the concept of *marah* ‘anger’, and how they react to it. Discovering the organizational concepts of such emotion will lead to understanding the emotion knowledge and its function in the everyday social interactions of the Malays.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To determine the superordinate category of *marah* ‘anger’, *sabar* ‘patience’, and *hormat* ‘respect’.
2. To identify the basic level category of *marah* ‘anger’, *sabar* ‘patience’, and *hormat* ‘respect’.
3. To specify the prototypical terms of *marah* ‘anger’, *sabar* ‘patience’, and *hormat* ‘respect’ at the subordinate level.
4. To explore the possibility of intermingling among the prototype terms of *marah* ‘anger’, *sabar* ‘patience’, and *hormat* ‘respect’.

1.5 CONCEPTUAL AND OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

1.5.1 Conceptual Definitions: Anger, Patience, and Respect

1.5.1.1 Anger

Anger is closely related to feelings of tension, distress, discomfort, and bitterness (Stearns, as cited in Russell & Fehr, 1994), and it may indicate low self-control which may lead to violent behavior and irrational thinking (Rubin, 1986). However, the Malay meaning of *marah* ‘anger’ is distinct. It is characterized by withdrawal, a state called *merajuk* ‘the sullen brooding’, and abstaining from acting violently to conform to *adat* or the code of behavior (Goddard, 1997). Thus, *marah* ‘anger’, in this study, is defined as a distasteful emotion that may threaten social cohesion and requires one to stifle its expression.

1.5.1.2 Patience

Patience is an intentional cognitive effort to gain something to happen in the future (Goddard, 2001). It is related to having self-control and delaying an action in order to

wait for a better situation. For the Malays, *sabar* ‘patience’ is more than just having self-control, as it also leads to saving one’s *face* from appearing in a bad light before others because others’ perception of oneself is important (Goddard, 1997). Thus, patience may be defined as a self-conscious emotion where one is undergoing self-awareness, and, consequently, attempting to avoid negative judgment from others by tolerating perceived injustices, and restraining the self from reacting to and expressing anger.

1.5.1.3 Respect

Respect is appraised by perceiving other qualities as good or bad (Frei & Shaver, 2002). For the Malays, *hormat* ‘respect’ is an emotion that is socialized (Heider, 1991), and which reflects correct behavior to relate with others. Thus, respect is defined as a social emotion in which one compares and evaluates the self against others’ qualities. *Hormat* ‘respect’ is prized among the Malays and regarded as reflecting high moral development as it contributes to the upholding of societal values and preserving harmony.

1.5.1.4 Operational Definition: Anger, Patience, and Respect

The concepts of anger, patience, and respect will be operationally defined by the participants’ decision on how good a concept belongs to a certain category through the sorting card procedure. The more frequent the concept occurred in the same category, the closer the relationship between the concepts. Additional details about the concepts and the procedures are discussed in Chapter Three.

1.5.1.5 Malays

“According to Article 160 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, ‘Malay’ refers to a person who is Muslim, ‘habitually speaks the Malay language’, and ‘conforms to Malay customs’ (Lim, 2012, p.17). In this study, “Malay” is defined as a person who has a Malaysian identity card, is a Muslim, whose native language is the Malay language, and is working at the International Islamic University of Malaysia as a non-academic staff.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 EMOTION AND UNIVERSALISM VERSUS RELATIVISM

An emotion may be defined as “a transient, neurophysiological response to a stimulus that excites a coordinated system of components” (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008, p. 198). Figure 2.1 illustrates the components of an emotion. An emotion occurs with the appraisal of certain antecedent stimulus that functionally triggers the body and mind to respond, and also to convey social meaning to deal with it. An antecedent stimulus is also closely related to an individual and a situational’s goal (Mesquita & Leu, 2007). Different individual goals may result in different actions and responses to certain stimulus. An emotion comprises of many components that may vary for researchers, and these components may not necessarily occur together in order for people to experience an emotion.

As mentioned earlier in Chapter One, an emotion comprises of many components that vary across cultures (Alonso-Arbiol, Vijver, Fernandez, Paez, Campos & Carrera, 2011). The most often-cited components of emotion are: (a) antecedents (Alonso-Arbiol et al., 2011; Matsumoto, Koopmann, & Nezlek, 2007; Mesquita & Leu, 2007); (b) physiological arousal (Alonso-Arbiol et al., 2011; Cornelius, 1996; Matsumoto et al., 2007; Matsumoto & Juang, 2008; Mequita & Leu, 2007; Niedenthal, Krauth-Gruber, & Ric, 2006); (c) action tendencies (Cornelius, 1996; Elster, 2001; Matsumoto et al., 2007; Matsumoto & Juang, 2008; Mesquita & Leu, 2007; Niedenthal et al., 2006); (d) Cognitive reaction (Alonso-Arbiol et al., 2011; Cornelius, 1996; Elster, 2001; Masumoto & Juang, 2008; Niedenthal et al.,

2006); and (e) its subjective experience (Cornelius, 1996; Matsumoto et al., 2007; Masumoto & Juang, 2008; Niedenthal et al., 2006).

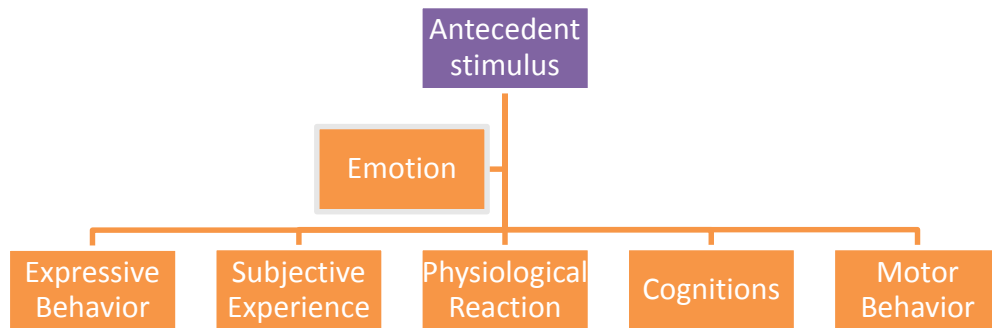


Figure 2.1 A General Model of Emotion
Source: (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008, p.199)

Mesquita and Leu (2007) believe that each of the emotional components may reflect cultural differences, and, thus, the emotion can be analyzed in its context with regard to its cultural norms, ideals, and the experience of its people. Furthermore, the differences and similarities emotion components across cultures may explain the universalist and relativist views on emotion.

One of the components of emotion that lends credence to a universalist stand is emotion antecedents. An emotion antecedent is a stimulus that triggers emotions to happen. Matsumoto and Juang (2008) regard happiness antecedents as shared across cultures as people, regardless of their respective culture, will be happy when meeting their best friends or after achieving something positive. In addition, expressive behavior is also considered as one of the emotional components that support the universality of emotions. People across cultures tend to smile when experiencing a happy state. On the other hand, emotion antecedents may also support the relativist