



**EXPLORING MALAY PERSONALITY STRUCTURE  
USING A COMBINED EMIC-ETIC APPROACH**

**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

This lexical-based study explores the Malay adjectives personality factor structure. The structure of the Malay personality lexicon was investigated using self-ratings (N=589) on a total set of 261 personality-descriptors. Personality-related descriptors were extracted from a Malay dictionary via comprehensive sampling and subjected to frequency of use ratings. Descriptors were classified into Person Descriptive System and subjected to PCA analysis on three different variable selection templates - Disposition, Disposition and Temporary Condition, and Inclusive. The hierarchical emergence of factors from 1 to 8 was explored. Substantive mode of factor content comparison was adopted. The Malay adjective factor structure displayed robust factor formations only in the non-ipsatized rather than the ipsatized datasets at the three-, five-, and six-factor solutions. Three-factor solution displayed a robust but broad Big-Three factor formation in the non-ipsatized Disposition and Temporary Condition template. The robustness of the Big-Five factor structure was found in the Malay adjective lexicon at the five-factor solution, differing in its structure formation due to different templates. A replicable Big-Five factor structure was found in the non-ipsatized Disposition template while the non-ipsatized Disposition and Temporary Position as well as the Inclusive templates displayed a rotational variant of the Big-Five factor structure with clear emergence of two Agreeableness factors. A Big-Six factor structure was retrieved at the six-factor solution in the non-ipsatized inclusive template. The universality of the Big-Three, the classic as well as the rotational variant of Big-Five, and Big-Six was relatively confirmed in another non-Indo European language, the Malay language of the Austronesian language family.

## خلاصة البحث

بحثت هذه الدراسة المبنية على المنهج المعجمي البناء العائلي لصفات الشخصية الملايوية باستعمال التقييم الذاتي (ن = 589) على 261 واصفا للشخصية. تم استخراج المفردات ذات الصلة بالشخصية من القاموس الملايوي عن طريق العينة الشاملة وأخضعت للتقييم الخاص بنسبة تكرار الاستخدام. تم تصنيف الصفات إلى نظام وصفي شخصي، كما تم إخضاعها لطريقة تحليل المركبات الرئيسية (PCA) على ثلاثة قوالب لاختيار المتغير - الاستعداد المسبق، والاستعداد المسبق والحالة المؤقتة، والشامل. ثم فحص الظهور الهرمي للعوامل 1 إلى 8 واعتماد أسلوب المقارنة المكثفة لمحتوى الأبعاد. أظهر البناء العائلي للصفات الملايوية تماسك صياغة الأبعاد وقوتها لمجموعة البيانات ذات الدرجات الخام، ولكن لم يكن الحال كذلك لمجموعة البيانات المحولة إلى درجات معيارية على الحلول ذات الأبعاد 3 - 5، و 6. أظهرت نتائج هذا البحث تماسك وثبات بناء العوامل الخمسة الكبرى للشخصية على الصفات الملايوية عند اعتماد الحل ذي الأبعاد الخمسة، وقد اختلف بناء صياغة هذا الحل باختلاف القوالب المستعملة. تكرر بناء الأبعاد الخمسة الكبرى للشخصية للقالب ذي الدرجات الخام والمتعلقة بالاستعداد المسبق. أما القوالب ذات الدرجات الخام والخاصة بالاستعداد المسبق والحالة المؤقتة فضلا عن الشامل فإنها أظهرت تباينا مدورا لبناء العوامل الخمسة الكبرى وظهور واضح لبعدي الطيبة. تم استخلاص بناء ستة عوامل كبرى عند استعمال الحل ذي الأبعاد الستة على القالب الشامل ذي الدرجات الخام. استطاعت نتائج هذا البحث التأكيد النسبي على عالمية العوامل الخمسة الكبرى للشخصية بنوعيتها الكلاسيكي والتباين المدور، فضلا عن العوامل الستة الكبرى على اللغة الملايوية بوصفها جزءا من منظومة الأسرة الأسترونيزية بخلاف الدراسات السابقة المجرأة على اللغة الهندو-أوربية.

## **APPROVAL PAGE**

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## DECLARATION

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

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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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## LISTS OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

A	Agreeableness
C	Conscientiousness
D	Disposition
DTC	Disposition and Temporary Condition
E	Extraversion (Big-Five)
Em	Emotionality
ES	Emotional Stability
F1	Factor One
F2	Factor Two
F3	Factor Three
F4	Factor Four
F5	Factor Five
F6	Factor Six
F7	Factor Seven
F8	Factor Eight
H	Honesty-Humility
I	Intellect
INC	Inclusive
IP	Ipsatized
ML7	Multi-Language 7
NIP	Non-Ipsatized
NCL6	Narrow-Band Cross Language 6
O	Openness
PDS	Person Descriptive System
WCL6	Wide-Band Cross Language 6
X	Extraversion (HEXACO)
1FS	One Factor Solution
2FS	Two Factor Solution
3FS	Three Factor Solution
4FS	Four Factor Solution
5FS	Five Factor Solution
6FS	Six Factor Solution
7FS	Seven Factor Solution
8FS	Eight Factor Solution

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents a broad research orientation of the extant work. It lays out the conceptual underpinnings of the study, initially outlining the broad field of study relevant to the study, and later narrowing the leads into the focus of research problem. The chapter then addresses the research objectives as the final outcomes of issues raised in the statement of the research problem. The chapter concludes with discussions on the scope, the importance, and limitations of the study, and the operational definitions of terms.

### **1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

Research involving the examination of personality factor structure has an inherited tradition in the psycholexical approach (interchangeably referred to as lexical or taxonomic study) and has a specific goal of determining the nature and number of personality categories comprehensive enough to describe individual differences (Church, Katigbak, & Reyes, 1998). The end product of such research is the personality taxonomy, i.e., a “systematic framework for distinguishing, ordering, and naming types and groups within a subject field” (John, Angleitner, & Ostendorf, 1988, p. 172). The availability of personality taxonomies for example, will allow for the study of various personality instances in their probable connection and the empirical findings and/or tangible outcomes from the studies can be organized under a standard nomenclature (Church, Katigbak, & Reyes, 1996; John et al., 1988). Commonly, taxonomic studies are emically carried out on comprehensive lexicon source of a specific language but its inherited psycholexical tradition assumes that in its finalities,

a common, universal set of constructs can be identified to comprehensively summarize the prevailing establishment of diverse personality structural compositions (deRaad, Perugini, Hrebícková, & Szarota, 1998). Identification of universalism of constructs originated from the lexical tradition is possible when there are arrays of diverse lexical studies in different languages, enabling conceivable comparisons among them. Thus, psycholexical approach appears to uphold the combined emic-etic paradigm, a combined research approach that enables the empirical coverage of both emic and etic approaches in a particular research. The importance of such combined approach is stressed by many researchers in the field of personality such as Cheung, van de Vijver, and Leong, (2010) and Marsella, Dubanoski, Hamada, and Morse (2000). Such combined approach is able to sequentially embrace both the universalism and culture specificity elements important to understand personality constructs' universal value, an integrated perspective of which individual emic and imposed-etic approach is incapable of providing. For a lexically identified personality factor structure to be able to contribute to the conceptual as well as theoretical advances of the field of personality, it has to assume the rigor of both emic as well as the etic approaches. Emic approach creates a picture of true indigenous structure which will then be subjected to comparison with existing imposed etic structure, thus delineating the universalism and specificity natures of the identified constructs.

The purpose of this study is to examine the universalism of two established personality factor structures, the Big-Five and the Big-Six, by testing their replicability on another emic structure of a non-Indo-European language, the Malay language. To meet this purpose, the study employs a lexically based research design. Inherent in this design is the combined emic-etic approach that comprehensively addresses both the personality constructs' universalism versus particularism issues.

Initial step of such inquiry requires an emic investigation of a particular language. The Malay language, from the Austronesian language family is the focal language for the present investigation considering that the only other language from similar family that has ever been subjected to similar investigation is the Philippine Tagalog language. Apart from examining a non-Indo-European language, this study also simultaneously aims to investigate the probable personality factor structure variant by analyzing different personality variable selection procedures.

For a certain personality factor structure identified through the lexical based research, specific issues are commonly addressed in determining its stand and place among the many other structures within the personality factor structure body of knowledge. The issues are number of factors considered as universal, specificity of emic structure, as well as the coverage of different personality domain in the structure. The theoretical and procedural paradigm of lexical based studies will assist the understanding of these issues. Subsequent sections discuss the theoretical and procedural aspects, which are predominantly inherent in the deliberation of lexical approach and personality factor structure as well as in its standardized methodology. Successively, discussions on the state of local Malay emic and imposed-etic based research are presented as justifications to the choice of the Malay language as the focal source of language in this study. These discussions are required to set the stage for the formulation of the statement of research problems and research objectives of this study.

### **1.1.1 Lexical Approach**

This section presents an overview of lexical-based study. Major focus of the discussion is on the lexical hypothesis as the nucleus to the approach, as well as

deliberation of lexical studies in different language family. Personality variable selection template as an important variable that may contribute to the variant of personality factor structure across differing languages is deliberated throughout the discussion.

Lexical approach is a common method used in the discovery of personality factor structure (Angleitner, Ostendorf, & John, 1990; Saucier & Goldberg, 2001; Ashton, Lee, & Goldberg, 2004). Lexical approach heavily utilizes natural language of a particular culture as the common repository from which personality factor structure is derived. The customary use of natural language is postulated on a specific lexical hypothesis that argues on the significant premise of frequency-importance association of a word in a lexicon. The frequency-importance association can be summarized as, the more important an individual difference is, the more it will be noticed and discussed by the masses, hence the higher the probability of inventing a word to represent it (Ashton & Lee, 2005; Saucier, 1997). From the lexical approach perspective, a complete search on the personality-descriptive terms from a comprehensive lexicon source in a particular language can lead to the formation of representative personality categorization or taxonomy.

The lexical approach to the development of personality taxonomy is initially pioneered and championed in the Indo-European language caucus: The Germanic sub division (English: Goldberg, 1990, German: Angleitner et al., 1990, and Dutch: deRaad, 1992), the Italic sub division (Italian: Caprara & Perugini, 1994, diBlas & Forzi, 1998, Spanish: Benet & Waller, 1995, and French: Boies, Lee, Ashton, Pascal, & Nicol, 2001), the Slavic sub division (Czech: Hřebícková, 2007, Polish: Szarota, Ashton, & Lee, 2007, Gorbaniuk, Budzinska, Owczarek, Bozek, & Juros, 2013, and Russian: Shmelyov & Pokhil'ko, 1993), and the Hellenic sub division (Greek:

Saucier, Georgiades, Tsaousis, & Goldberg, 2005). The major personality structure identified by these lexical studies is the Big-Five personality factor structure. The replication of the Big Five pioneering structure found in the English lexical studies was presented either in its exact replication of the English structure (Goldberg, 1990; Saucier & Goldberg, 1996) or in its partial compositional replication found in other languages of similar caucus (de Raad, Hendriks, & Hofstee, 1992; Caprara & Perugini, 1994; Szirmák & de Raad, 1994).

Big-Five is seemingly reproduced in a relatively near-perfection pattern in language family mainly originated in northern Europe e.g., Germanic and Slavic sub-division of the Indo-European language caucus (Hofstee, Kiers, de Raad, Goldberg, & Ostendorf, 1997; Hrebícková, 2007). When the same factor structure is tested on a far-off region than the Europe, e.g., the Philippine's Tagalog language, the structure registered a composition dissimilar to the structure found in English and its corresponding language sub-divisions (Church, Reyes, Katigbak, & Grimm, 1997). Church and Katigbak (2000) advocated the different factorial structure as the result of cultural interaction by making a comment that traits predict behavior well in individualistic but not collectivistic culture. As such, distinctive cultural build up as represented by the individualism versus collectivism cultural characteristics, a major cultural distinction acknowledged as important by many researchers studying culture differences, may well be the appropriate justification for pursuing lexical studies in culture/languages off the Indo-European caucus (Triandis, 1996; Triandis & Suh, 2002). Effort to lexically investigate non-Indo-European language serves as an important platform to account for the language sampling biasness that may result in cross-cultural over generalizability of a particular personality factor structure.

Latest development along the lexically-based study effort registered an active pursuit of similar taxonomic studies external to the Indo-European language caucuses; in the Uralic-Altaic, Afro-Asiatic, Sino-Tibetan, as well as the Austronesian caucuses. Hungarian taxonomic study (Szirmai & deRaad, 1994) represents the Uralic language caucuses while the Turkish taxonomic study (Goldberg & Somer, 2000; Somer & Goldberg, 1999), Korean study (Hahn, Lee, & Ashton, 1999), and the lexical study of everyday Japanese language (Isaka, 1990) represents the Altaic caucuses. Hebrew taxonomic study (Almagor, Tellegen, & Waller, 1995) represents the Afro-Asiatic while the Chinese study (Zhou, Saucier, Gao, & Liu, 2009) represents the Sino-Tibetan caucuses. Further away in its geographical sphere are the Filipino studies (Church, Katigbak, & Reyes, 1998; Church et al., 1997), exclusively representing the Austronesian language caucuses.

These non-Indo-European lexical studies reflected mixed findings with regards to the replication of Big-Five factor structure. Hebrew lexical study (Almagor, Tellegen, & Waller, 1995) for instance, utilized the inclusive approach in sampling descriptors and thus, resulted in the identification of seven instead of five personality factor structure. The Hebrew seven factor model includes a set of five dimensions, similar, but not interchangeable with, the Big-Five. For example, four of the seven factors, though they corresponded well with four of the Big-Five factors, were not literal replicas. Turkish lexical study (Somer & Goldberg, 1999) on the other hand, replicated clear Big-Five structure with a slight deviation in the content of the Intellect factor. It is possible that cultural particularities of Turkish society, which are influenced by the blend of Islamic cultural heritage and strong influence of westernization, play some roles in the elements of traditionalism and modernism represented in the Turkish Intellect factor (Saucier, Hampson, & Goldberg, 2000).

Similarly, Goldberg and Somer (2000) discovered a variant of Big-Five in another Turkish lexical study, strictly emulating a standardized lexical procedure and analyzing terms that were less derogatory and clearly related to personality traits.

Korean lexical study was another non Indo-European language that successfully recovered a fairly exact one-to-one compatibility to the Big-Five structure with a very clear replication of the Intellect factor even if compared to other lexical studies of the Indo-European languages (Hahn, Lee, & Ashton, 1999). Such result is attributed to a standardized procedural effort made by the researchers. They strictly followed the German lexical template, which includes ability or talent-based characteristics in the personality descriptive classifications.

Meanwhile, off the Austronesian language caucus, the Filipino language of Tagalog was the first language of the tropical region to be subjected to lexical examination. Analyses on a comprehensive taxonomy of personality trait adjectives, following the German template which includes talent and ability terms in the composition of personality, necessitate the extraction of seven factors to recover factors resembling all of the Big-Five structure (Church, Katigbak, Reyes, 1998). An evaluation by John and Srivastava (1999) showed that, based on a loose replication criterion, the Filipino structure is only supportive of the Big-Five. On the other hand, on a more stringent criterion, they concluded that the Filipino studies do not replicate the Big-Five model. Since the Filipino Tagalog is the sole language off the Austronesian language family to be subjected to the lexically-based investigation, an additional investigation on the Malay language, of similar language family can significantly be considered as additional contribution to the personality factor universalism body of knowledge.

An examination on the local Malaysian research on personality factor structure found an abundance of imposed-etic based research, adopting the Western construct prototype (Koh, Baba, Abdullah, & Zumbo, 2004). The adaptation of NEO PI-R by Mastor, Jin, and Cooper (2000), which tested the replicability of Big-Five model on the Malay sample, is an example of imposed etic based research in Malaysia. Theoretically, though the universalism of the Big-Five is widely accepted, its replicability in the Malay context is still questionable (Mastor et al., 2000). The justification for an imperfect replicability of an etic construct can only be provided by standardized empirical emic work, which to date, has never been introduced in the Malaysian context. Nevertheless, Malaysia is never short of emic based research. The work of Suhana Sulaiman (1981 cf. Wan Rafaei, 2006), a content analysis on the book 'Sejarah Melayu' by Shellabear and the novel 'Sandera' by Arenawati, and analysis of Malay proverb by Wan Rafaei (1994; 2001 cf. Wan Rafaei, 2006) are some examples of initial emic effort, registering some lexicon sources and methodology common in psycholexical tradition. Nevertheless, more rigorous methodological effort and integrative research approach than what evidenced in the recent works are necessary to validate their findings.

In all of the lexical studies cited in the preceding paragraphs, a few major issues are prevalent. Firstly, all of the studies are emically arranged in the natural language of a particular culture. Conclusions on the uniqueness of the identified emic structure can only be made by comparison with original factor structure found in pioneering studies e.g., the Big-Five (Goldberg, 1990) and the Big-Six (Ashton, Lee, & Goldberg, 2004; Boies, Lee, Ashton, Pascal, & Nicol, 2001) pioneer studies. Conclusions of the universalism of the factor structure on the other hand, require the

convergent of findings across lexical studies of various cultures. As such, convergent of lexical findings necessitates the standardization of the lexical methodology.

Secondly, initial lexical-based efforts tend to oversample a specific language family and draw conclusions on the universalism of the resulting personality factor structure across the said grouping. The Big-Five personality factor structure, for instance, was claimed as cross-culturally generalizable. Indeed it is cross-culturally generalizable, but across similar language family. In actual fact, even within similar language family, variances in terms of its composition are fairly apparent. In summary, over sampling of the Indo-European leaving untouched many non-Indo-European languages raised a concern of the representativeness of the languages/culture sampled, thus, throwing a great concern over the universality of personality structure models resulted from this grouping of lexical efforts (Saucier, Hampson, & Goldberg, 2000). Hence, there is a need to conduct similar lexical efforts in distinct language family than the Indo-European.

Thirdly, the pioneering Big-Five factor structure was the result of analyses on sole dispositional category (Saucier & Goldberg, 1996; Saucier, 1997) neglecting other apparently relevant personality domains such as the temporary states, social and reputational aspects, as well as physical characteristics. When lexical efforts broaden the horizon of analyses on other personality domains, differing factor structure emerged (Almagor, Tellegen, & Waller, 1995; Church, Katigbak, & Reyes, 1998). Hence, future lexical studies should introduce enough flexibility in its structure to include not only a specific personality domain, but a combination of diverse personality domain.

All of these issues are predominantly significant in establishing the cross-cultural generalizability of any lexically based personality factor structure. In specific,

any lexical study should make available personality variable sets that fit two properties; indigenous to a specific culture and neutral in terms of the representation of diverse personality variation domain i.e., not strictly adhering to a particular personality proposed model in analyzing the lexical variable sets (Ashton & Lee, 2005; Saucier, 1997). Subsequent section discusses the second criterion of representation of diverse personality variation domain. This criterion is embedded in the discussion of the lexically-based personality structure models. The purpose of deliberating the models is to set the stage on another major factor that may contribute to the variant found in personality factor compositions in various lexical studies.

### **1.1.2 Lexically-Based Personality Structure Models**

Taxonomic studies have contributed to the formation of some widely researched sets of personality structure; the group of one, two, and three factor structure and its extended counterpart of the five, six, and seven factor structure (Benet & Waller, 1995; Saucier & Goldberg, 1996; Ashton et al., 2004; Church & Katigbak, 2005). Of a main issue concerning the many lexically based personality factor structure is which structure can be viewed as universal.

The findings of taxonomic studies can be assumedly divided into two mainstream division: the division whereby researchers are inclined to the directions of *fewer* factor structure i.e., the one, two, and three factor structure as more universal, (see deRaad, Barelds, Levert, et al., 2010; deRaad, Barelds, Ostendorf, et al., 2010; deRaad & Peabody, 2005) as opposed to the opposite direction of *more* factor structure i.e., the five, six, and seven factor structure (see Costa & McCrae, 1992a; Almagor et al., 1995; Ashton et al., 2004).