

## VALIDATION OF *SEJAHTERA* LIVING INVENTORY

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### ABSTRACT

The first aim of the study was to construct-validate the *sejahtera* living inventory in terms of its convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability. The second purpose was to evaluate sample type-invariant of the *maqasid* shariah driven measurement model, and therefore its generality. An online self-reported *Sejahtera* Living inventory was created to collect the data. It is a questionnaire that contains 21 content-validated items measuring five facets of *sejahtera* living, namely the preservation of religion, life, intellect, dignity, and wealth and resources. A total of 1,057 students and employees at a public university in Malaysia participated in the study. The results of confirmatory factor analysis found that the five-factor *sejahtera* living model was consistent with the data; the statistics satisfied the requirements deemed necessary for a good fit measure. The results also supported the prevalence of the model's configural invariance and metric invariance. Thus, the study offers additional understanding about the adequacy of a measure of good life based on *maqasid shariah*.

### INTRODUCTION

From time immemorial philosophers and psychologists have been searching for what makes a good life. The term has been associated with expressions such as “quality living,” “happiness in life,” “life satisfaction,” “meaning in life,” “social-emotional wellbeing,” and of late, the “*sejahtera* living” (e.g., Genç, 2021; Sarifuddin, 2021; Schuur, van Weerdenburg, Hoogeveen, & Kroesbergen, 2020; Skrzypińska, 2021; Stammler & Toivanen, 2022). Quality life, for example, is described as one's feelings and awareness of living a good, successful, satisfying, and happy life that fulfills his or her needs and expectations (Brown & Brown, 2005; Liu, 1976). To many, however, what really matters is leading a life that meets its purpose—to worship the Creator and gain His pleasure by doing good to oneself and others in every aspect live.

This group of people constitutes at least 25% of the world population. The Muslims, particularly consider Islam is a way of good life. They believe that they are being divinely guided by the Qur'an and Hadith in their daily rituals, practices, beliefs, norms, and intra- and inter-personal personal interactions that would contribute to their wellbeing, as well as to the welfare of fellow human beings and other creatures. Everything that a Muslim says, thinks, intends, and does is supposed to be for the sake and pleasure of Allah. The degree to which a Muslim accomplishes the *sejahtera* living is contingent upon the fulfilment of goodness and righteousness and warding off or getting rid of destruction, which is a statement of *maqasid shariah*.

Despite its overarching position in the life of Muslims, there is a dearth of understanding about what and how they live *sejahtera* life. Studies that empirically examined the phenomenon are hardly available. It is only recently that an effort to validate a five-factor measurement model of “Maqasid Shariah Quality of Life” (MSPQoL) was documented (Mohamad, Ali, Awang, Omar, & Yusoff, 2016). The researchers tested the quality of the instrument using data from 248 drug abuse inmates. The results supported the reliability of the data and the construct validity of the MSPQoL measure in terms of its convergent and discriminant validity.

Still, it would be informative and practically useful if additional evidence about the construct is added to the corpus of knowledge. For instance, it is pertinent to prove the extent to which the five-factor construct prevails in other groups in the population. Equally important is its psychometric properties related to its efficacy in measuring the construct in the same way in different groups of people at various points in time. These are proofs of measurement equivalence or measurement invariance which are needed to justify the useability of the instrument and interpretability of the findings across space and time.

### **Objectives**

In this study, we examined the psychometric properties of an instrument which was developed to measure *sejahtera* living. The study aimed to construct-validate the measure in terms of its convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability. First, we searched for evidence that the 21-item instrument validly and systematically measures what it was supposed to measure, which is *sejahtera* living within the *maqasid shariah* structure.

Second, we tested the measurement invariance of the *sejahtera* living inventory. It aimed to address the concern that a quality instrument should be valid for the population and the sub-groups within the population (Wicherts, 2016). Measurement invariance allows the interpretations of the construct in a conceptually similar manner among different types of respondents. The instrument is functional across groups of people. The present study, therefore examined whether the *sejahtera* living inventory is equally applicable for undergraduate students, postgraduate students, lecturers, and administrative and support staff of a public university. To that end, the study evaluated two types of measurement invariance, the factorial invariance and metric invariance.

### **Sejahtera Living in Maqasid Shariah Framework**

*Maqasid shariah* is a concept that refers to the Islamic way in living one’s life. According to Ibn Ashur, the concept proliferates the preservation of order, attainment of benefit and inhibition of harm, establishment of equality among people, and enabling the law to be respected, obeyed and effective. In so doing, it empowers the believer to become powerful, respected, and confident. *Maqasid shariah* is to sustain and promote human life towards quality and wellness in this world and the hereafter (Saladin, Azmil, & Mariam, 2020). It covers five aspects of life, namely preservation of religion, life, mind, dignity and lineage, and wealth and resources. Figure 1 depicts the five-factor *sejahtera* living model which is rooted in *Maqasid shariah*.

**Preservation of Religion:** In this study, preservation of religion is defined as one’s awareness and commitment in Islamic Worldview. It includes one’s beliefs, knowledge, and practise of the absolute monotheism (*tawhid*) paradigm, which is powered by the Islamic creed (*‘aqidah*). In addition to the observance of the different kinds of *‘Ibadah*,” defending the Islamic faith can be done through various means such as in writings, speeches, and other practical means (Afridi, 2016). A contented Muslim is expected to, for example, endorse the idea that, “God

has a significant impact upon [his/her] and “realize that [his/her] daily activities are parts of ibadah.”

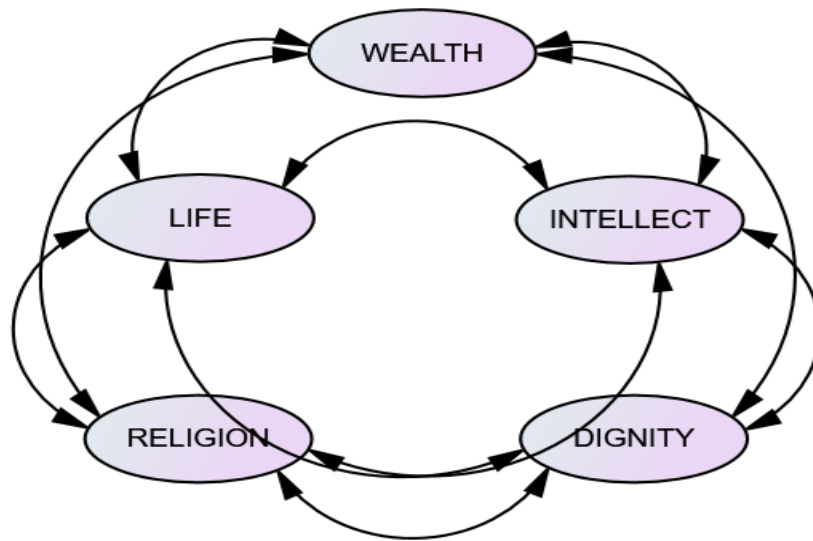


Figure 1: Framework of Sejahtera Living

**Preservation of Life:** Respondents who experience *sejahtera* living are cognizant of and engaged in protecting their physical and mental health, safety, and life. They take care of their surroundings and keep threats at bay. Such a respondent is likely to “[be] responsible to protect life,” “avoid harmful food or drink,” and “make sure that [his/her] surroundings are safe.” Precautionary behaviors would shield him or her against the uncalled life-threatening situations. Afridi (2016) points out that, “It is important to note that generally, saving of one’s life is required. However, it should not be done at the expense of the lives of others” (p. 281).

**Preservation of Intellect:** High levels of *Sejahtera* living abound among those who unswervingly choose, perform, and grow in their advancement and protection of the intellect (qalb). In this study, the term intellect touches the cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual domains, which are imbued with Islamic values. One’s reactions to the propositions, “made myself prepared in all my courses/work,” “happy with my personal relationships,” and “satisfied with the Islamic environment” manifest his or her levels of intellect in *sejahtera* living. In this respect, Afridi (2016) argues that,

Allah s.w.t. has ordered that everyone should protect this precious gift by utilising the mental for the benefit of all and not for any kind of evil or anything that might lead to destruction. To achieve this goal, Islam has given the freedom to its followers to express their views and tolerated the differences in views and opinions. However, the expression of views and differences of opinion must conform to the moral and ethical values provided by Qur’an and Sunnah. (p. 282)

**Preservation of Dignity and Lineage:** Protection of dignity includes honoring individual rights to privacy, avoiding disclosing weaknesses of others, being respectful and responsible men-women relationships, and making just decisions in matters pertinent related to family, marriage, and divorce (Afridi, 2016; Sidik, Saper, & Daud, 2019). These are in keeping with the Islamic principle that “all individuals [deserve] to be treated in a way of dignity, nobility,

and respect, and deserve to be taken decent care of for any issues” (Manan, Khalid, Saidon, Yahya, & Abdul Wahab, 2021, p. 44). Logically, *sejahtera* living is demonstrated in one’s endorsement that he or she always “comfortable talking to/working with people of opposite gender,” “good/prepared to be a good parent to my children,” and “have the positive attributes to lead my family.” These are instances of dignity-related *sejahtera* living which were measured in this study.

**Preservation of Wealth and Resources:** This dimension of *maqasid shariah* refers to one’s activities to accumulate, use, protect, distribute, and purify his or her natural self-resources including natural potentials, wealth, and time in a just and productive manner (Nasr, 2015). It is very likely that a Muslim who preserves wealth and resources will always avoid wastage in any form, contributes *sadaqah*, pays *zakat*, and values time. This wealth dimension is in keeping with the notion that in Islam wealth and resources are meant for one to meet his or her needs, which in turn should prosper the *sejahtera* living of the society via community engagement (Abdullah, Has-Yun Hashim, & Yusri, 2020).

One commonality shared by these five dimensions of *maqasid shariah* is that it is a set of divine principles of *sejahtera* living. Taken together, the principles help one to approach his or her *raison d'être*—to worship Allah, the Creator. It is the all-encompassing objective and ultimate justification of his or her existence. The *maqasid shariah* provides guidance on what it means by worshipping Allah, and how to accomplish it. Obviously the five factors are distinct, albeit interrelated facets of worshipping Allah. Collectively, the *maqasid shariah* framework prompts a Muslim to strive to gain His pleasure by promoting good and repelling evil and harm to reach quality, happy, and meaningful living. On this premise, it is plausible to hypothesize that:

- H<sub>1</sub>: A correlated five-factor measurement model of *sejahtera* living is psychometrically sound with respect to construct validity.
- H<sub>2</sub>: The *sejahtera* living questionnaire is measurement invariance across groups of Muslims.

## METHOD

### Source of Data

A total of 1057 students and employees at a public university in Malaysia participated in the study. The sample size was deemed sufficient for the use of confirmatory factor analysis to examine the psychometric properties of the *sejahtera* living instrument. The sample comprised undergraduate students (45.9%), postgraduate students (10.5%), administrative and support staff (14.8%), and faculty members (28.9%). While most undergraduate students’ age ranged between 20 and 25 years old (86.2%), about 65% of the employees were in the 31-50 years old age group.

The Office of Institutional Strategy and Change (OSIC), IIUM appointed a group of 20 trained researchers to develop the *sejahtera* living inventory. To account for the variability of perspectives regarding living and learning experiences, the team conducted a series of focus group discussions. The analysis on the qualitative data yielded results which were then calibrated against the university’s vision to humanize education, in which *maqasid as shariah* is the founding component (*Sejahtera Academic Framework*, 2021).

Based on the concept *maqasid shariah*, the research team initially identified more than 150 indicators of *sejahtera* living. To establish content-related validity of these indicators, the team applied content validation procedure (Colin & Andrew, 2013; Lawshe, 1975; Lewis, Templeton, & Byrd, 2005). First, we operationalized the construct and sub-constructs of *maqasid shariah*, using the conventionally recognized content-validation protocol. We used a form that contains the definition of each facet of *maqasid shariah* relevant to individual's living and learning experiences, items that represent the indicators of *sejahtera* living, scale of measurement for students and employees to respond, and a response list to each of which an expert can check the adequacy of the items.

Second, the study solicited experts' judgment about the relevance and importance of the items. A panel of nine experts was formed to examine and evaluate the operationalized variables. Each expert, working independently reviewed and rated the adequacy of definition of the dimensions of *sejahtera* living *vis-a-vis maqasid as shariah*, item-definition alignment, and the sampling of items. The panel registered their response to each item on a 3-point scale, which are "Essential," "Important but Not Essential," or "Neither Important nor Essential." In addition, the panel was prompted to provide written feedback on item clarity and to comment on scale instructions, item format, response options, and use of language.

Third, the study estimated content validity ratio (CVR) of each item (e.g., Allahyari, Rangi, Khosravi, & Zayeri, 2011; Baheiraei et al., 2013; Lawshe, 1975; Norashady, Shah, Eftah, Haniza, 2016). CVR values range between -1 (perfect disagreement among experts) and +1 (perfect agreement among expert) with CVR values above zero indicating that over half of panel experts endorsed that an item is essential (Lawshe, 1975). Using a simplified content validity procedure, the threshold of critical level of agreement for a panel of nine experts is .778 (Ayre & Scally, 2014). The study retained only those items with CVRs exceeding the threshold.

An online self-reported *Sejahtera* Living questionnaire was then created. It contains a total of 50 items measuring the content-validated indicators of the five facets of *sejahtera* living. Each facet is represented by 10 items, to each of which a respondent would check his/her agreement on five-point frequency scale responses ranging from "Never" to "Always." A series of exploratory analysis (PAF) used the data collected from 596 students. The PAFs consistently extracted five underlying factors of students' *sejahtera* variables, each explained more than 60% of variance. However, only 21 of the appropriately behaving items were included the confirmatory analysis. The present study sought to confirm the findings using data collected from the 1057 university students and employees.

### **Analytical Procedure**

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to test the adequacy of the *sejahtera* living inventory. We applied the maximum-likelihood (ML) estimation method, with Promax rotation, using the AMOS 23 data fitting program. The five-factor reflective model was specified in which two factors were loaded with five items each (Life; Intellect), two factors were loaded with four items (Religion; Dignity), while the last three items loaded on the factor Wealth. The specification of the measurement model was informed by the *maqasid shariah* framework and the findings from the PAFs.

The adequacy of measurement model was verified using the following good-fit statistics: (i) consistency of the measurement model with the data, and (ii) reasonableness of the parameter estimates, and (iii) fit indices, which include the comparative fit index (CFI) and root mean

square error of approximation (RMSEA) (Byrne, 2010; Kline, 2016). We applied the widely used cut scores to determine adequacy of the *sejahtera* living inventory. Basically, a CFI value exceeding .90 is considered benchmarks for a measure to be of good fit; RMSEA value of  $< .08$  is considered critical for an adequate measure.

To gather evidence of configural invariance and metric invariance, the study evaluated the extent to which the factor structure was comparable across sample types, namely student samples and employee samples. This means that the use of the inventory to measure different samples is reasonable. The prevalence of factorial invariance is useful since it would provide meaningful comparisons across sub-groups of a population. Configural validity on the other hand is supported if the same unconstrained factor structure simultaneously fit the different groups. Metric invariance was tested to examine if each item provides similar degree of contribution to the factors. It tested the equivalence of the item loadings on the factors (Jovanović, et al. 2021; Paulo, Moreira, Inman, Hanel, Faria, Araújo, Pedras, & Cunha, 2022).

## RESULTS

### Adequacy of the Five-Factor *Sejahtera* Living

The study used confirmatory factor analysis to test the validity of the *sejahtera* living model. The model contains the construct with five correlated latent variables or factors (Figure 1). The five factors were loaded with at least three manifest variables, which are the questionnaire items. Exactly three items loaded on the factor preservation of Wealth, and preservation of Life (5 items), Intellect (5 items), Dignity (4 items), and Religion (4 items) respectively. While the five subconstructs were expected to be correlated, each item was assumed to load only on its respective factor with uncorrelated error terms.

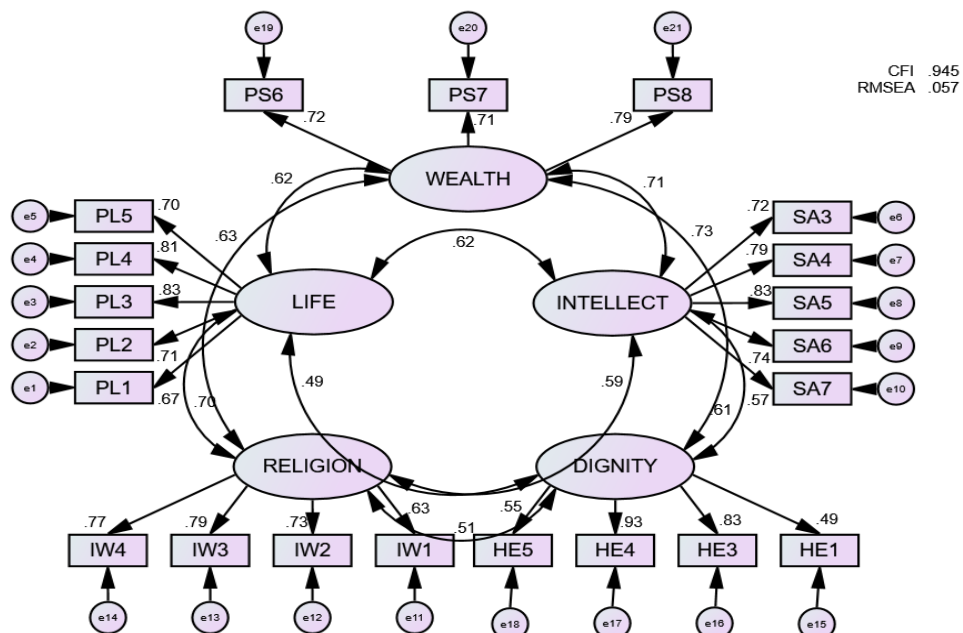


Figure 2: Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

As shown in Figure 2, the measure satisfied the requirements deemed necessary for a good fit model;  $\chi^2(179) = 784$ ; CFI = .95; RMSEA = .057, CI: .053, .061. These statistics suggested that the five-factor *sejahtera* living inventory was consistent with the data. All loadings were statistically significant ( $p = .001$ ), with the exception the Dignity-->HE1 loading ( $\lambda \geq .49$ ), were of practical value ( $\lambda \geq .5$ ). As expected, the specific factors of *sejahtera* living, namely the preservation of religion, life, wealth, intellect, and dignity were positively correlated. Also, the composite reliability indexes (CR) exceeded .70, indicating acceptable degree of internal consistency of the subscales.

The average variance extracted (AVE) of the five sub-constructs ranged from .53 (Dignity) to .56 (Life). These values suggest that *sejahtera* living instrument can be characterized as possessing sufficient convergent validity since all AVE surpassed the threshold value of .5. The correlations among the five *sejahtera* living factors ranged between .51 and .73; the value of the maximum shared variance was .53. Thus, the results supported the property of discriminant validity. In summary, the multidimensional measure of *sejahtera* living demonstrated sufficient properties of reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Table 1 summarizes the distributions of descriptive statistics, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics, Composite Reliability & Average Variance Extracted

Factor	Code	Item	Mean	SD	CR	AVE
Religion	IW1	God has a significant impact upon my life	3.91	.38	.82	.538
	IW2	I strive to be bearer of enjoining the right & forbidding the wrong	3.6	.68		
	IW3	I realize that my daily activities are parts of ibadah	3.71	.57		
	IW4	I strive to make Prophet Muhammad as the role model in my life	3.73	.58		
Life	PL1	I am responsible to protect life	3.82	.49	.86	.556
	PL2	I avoid harmful food or drink	3.69	.58		
	PL3	I adhere to safety procedures	3.72	.53		
	PL4	I make sure that my surroundings are safe	3.77	.51		
	PL5	I am clear of my objectives in this life	3.48	.76		
Wealth	PS6	I avoid wastage in any form	3.37	.73	.79	.553
	PS7	I contribute to the community through obligatory zakat, sadaqah	3.38	.80		
	PS8	I value time	3.4	.74		
Intellect	SA3	I am satisfied with my achievement in my studies/work	3.12	.83	.85	.541
	SA4	I made myself prepared in all my courses/work	3.47	.69		
	SA5	Every morning I look forward to another day in class/at work	3.35	.79		
	SA6	I am happy with my personal relationships	3.4	.80		
	SA7	I am satisfied with the Islamic environment	3.49	.74		
Dignity	HE1	I am comfortable talking to/working with people of opposite gender	2.97	.94	.81	.528
	HE3	I am a good/prepared to be a good parent to my children	3.23	.98		
	HE4	I have the positive attributes to lead my family	3.22	.87		
	HE5	I can explain LGBTQ issues from Islamic point of view	3.04	.95		

### Evidence of Configural Invariance and Metric Invariance

Another objective of this study was to examine the measurement invariance of the *sejahtera* living inventory across four subsamples of the study. As mentioned earlier, the sample of 1,056 respondents consisted of about 46% undergraduate students, 10% postgraduate students, 15% administrative and support staff, and 29% lecturers. The study tested the equivalence of the five-factor measure in terms of its configural invariance (or factorial validity) and metric invariance across the four groups of respondents.

The first step in the invariance analysis examined the configural invariance. This step tested if the five subconstructs exhibit comparable pattern of free and fixed loadings across groups. In other words, a configural invariance measure would demonstrate similar organization of the constructs—a stable 5-factor structure—of *sejahtera* living in the four groups of respondents. To test the sample-invariant, a simultaneous CFA on the four groups was conducted, without constraining the loadings.

The unconstrained multiple groups CFA yielded evidence that the measurement model that fitted the data. The results of the invariance analysis (Table 2) showed that the pattern of loadings of items on the five subconstructs are similar in the four subsamples;  $\chi^2(761) = 1591$ ; CFI = .92; RMSEA = .032, CI: .030, .034). These statistics supported the configural validity of the *sejahtera* living measure.

Table 2: Configural Invariance and Metric Invariance of *Sejahtera* Living Questionnaire

Invariance Level	$\chi^2$	df	p	Normed $\chi^2$	CFI	RMSEA	$\Delta$ CFI
Configural	1591	761	.001	2.090	.924	.032	
Metric	1592	764	.001	2.084	.924	.032	.000

Since the configural invariance was plausible, we moved to the next level of the multiple group analysis. In this phase, the study tested the metric invariance of *sejahtera* living measure. Precisely, we examined whether factor loadings for the items on their respective factor are equal across the four subsamples. It was tested by fixing factor loadings to be of identical values in the four groups.

The CFA of the constrained model produced another CFI value (.924), which was then compared against the CFI of the configural invariance (.924). Clearly there is no-difference between the two CFIs ( $\Delta$ CFI = .0001), meaning that the fixing of factor loadings did not produce a poorer fit model. Additionally, the path coefficients did not vary significantly across subsamples. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that sample types (undergraduate students; postgraduate students; administrative and support staff; lecturers) did not interact with the unobserved variables to influence their responses to the *sejahtera* living items; hence, sample type was not a moderating variable. More importantly, the results supported the prevalence of metric invariance.



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One purpose of the study was to validate the *sejahtera* living structure as derived from the *maqasid shariah* framework. The study offered evidence that the five-factor measurement model did generate the data collected from students and employees. The study also found that there are five distinct, and yet related facets of *sejahtera* living. Thus, these findings are in keeping with the findings of the earlier validation of *maqasid shariah* quality of life (MSQoL) instrument (Mohamad et al., 2016).

The results did not establish doubts to claim that the measurement model is incorrect, even across student-employee samples. This study did not find evidence for differential effects of sample types on *sejahtera* living structure. Rather, the *sejahtera* living measure of students matches the *maqasid shariah* structure well, as it does for the university employees. This is a noteworthy finding as it contributes understanding about the efficacy of the measurement. In conclusion, the study has instilled further understanding about the meaning and nature of *sejahtera* living. Currently, not much has been documented about the availability of a *maqasid shariah* instrument of this nature.

Premised within the *maqasid shariah* structure, the instrument measures what matters to the Muslims. That the multidimension measure is psychometrically sound, the resulting estimates systematically represent levels of *sejahtera* living among the Muslims. Precisely, the instrument allows us to identify one's self-reported attainment of quality living *vis-a-vis* his or her beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and practices of Islam as a way of life. To recap, it is an adequate tool to assess the Muslims' awareness and feelings of living a good, successful, satisfying, and happy life (Saladin et al., 2020).

Additionally, the instrument diagnoses and evaluates distinct, albeit related dimensions of *sejahtera* living. Individual students and employees' level of awareness and commitment may differ across the 5-dimensions—the Islamic worldview, protecting physical and their mental health, expanding their cognitive, socioemotional, and spiritual capabilities, preserving dignity and family lineage, and in collecting, using, protecting, distributing, and purifying wealth and resources in a just and productive manner. A Muslim may score high on matters related to health, but he or she may need help to improve in his or her intellectual attainment. The brief 21-item questionnaire is promising in identifying such variability of *sejahtera* living attainment within and between groups across dimensions. In a nutshell, the instrument allows for the profiling of *sejahtera* living, which in turn is in terms of informing future research, and in helping educators and teachers to design prevention and treatment programs.

The results notwithstanding, the study is limited in several important matters. First, the sample of the study was a group of students and employees of a public university in Malaysia. The results may differ with Muslim samples from different populations and cultures. Future studies involving varied samples across geographical settings may offer useful insights on the comparability of the instrument across age space and time. Second, the study did not address the plausibility of the inventory in terms of concurrent validity and predictive validity, which could link *sejahtera* living and other measures of good life, such as quality of life, happiness in life, and meaning in life. This concerns warrants further systematic examinations.

## ACKNOWLEDEMENT

The authors would like to express their appreciation to the Office for Strategy and IIUM for the opportunity and support in this study.

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