

# **A Cross-cultural Comparison on Mental Toughness and Self-defeating Behaviours in North American and Malaysian Samples**

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## **Abstract**

The self-defeating interpersonal style scale (SELF-DISS) assesses the extent to which individuals participate in unhealthy relationships. Mental toughness, measured through the MTQ48, assesses individual resilience and self-regulation. Although there is considerable research on mental toughness in the West, cross cultural comparisons are needed in relation to measuring the two constructs. 319 adults in the North American study were recruited through Mechanical Turk and compensated \$1.00. 240 undergraduate students at HELP University, Malaysia were recruited in classes and online. Participants completed the SELF-DISS, assessing 3 factors: Insecure Attachment, Undeserving Self-image, and Self-sacrificing Nature. The MT48 was completed, measuring 4 factors: control, commitment, challenge, and confidence. We computed Pearson correlations to examine the relations between the MTQ48 and SELF-DISS. High scores on the MTQ48 were significantly associated with high scores on the SELF-DISS in the North American study while high MTQ48 scores were significantly

associated with lower scores on the SELF-DISS. Findings suggest that compared to North American samples, Malaysian students with higher mental toughness were less likely to exhibit self-defeating behaviours, like enduring abusive relationships. Especially, commitment and confidence buffered the likelihood of self-defeating behaviours. Findings also provide evidence for the utility of the MTQ48 and the SELF-DISS in collectivist, non-Western samples. The SELF-DISS has proven to be an effective assessor of self-defeating behaviours, which can also predict dimensions of mental toughness. This has found to be true of both our North American and Malaysian samples. It provides further insight on the maintenance of unhealthy relationships in these cultures.

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