

The Construction and Validation of the Arabic Scale of Intrinsic Religiosity (ASIR)



Ahmed M. Abdel – Khalek*

Department of Psychology, University of Alexandria, Egypt

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***Corresponding author:** Ahmed M. Abdel-Khalek, Department of Psychology, University of Alexandria, Egypt; Email: aabdel-khalek@hotmail.com

Abstract

The aim of this study was to develop and validate the Arabic Scale of Intrinsic Religiosity (ASIR). This scale assesses internal religiosity regardless of any given religion or denomination. The ASIR consisted of 15 statements, to be answered with a five point intensity scale, anchored by 1 (Strongly Disagree) and 5 (Strongly Agree). A principal component analysis identified one high loaded factor. Cronbach alpha and test – retest reliabilities reached 0.91 and 0.87 respectively, indicating high internal consistency and temporal stability. Criterion – related validity ranged between 0.53 and 0.74 indicating acceptable to high validity. Descriptive statistics were available for university students from Egypt, Kuwait, and Algeria. The Algerian college students obtained the highest mean score on religiosity, then the Kuwaitis and the Egyptians. Female Egyptians obtained a significantly higher mean score than did their male counterparts. The ASIR was significantly correlated with positive psychology variables. A high – loaded factor was extracted and labeled “well-being and religiosity”. The ASIR has Arabic and English equivalent forms. Based on the good psychometric properties of the ASIR, it was recommended to use it to assess intrinsic religiosity.

Keywords: Religiosity, Arabic Scale of Intrinsic Religiosity, reliability, validity, positive psychology

Introduction

Religion occupies a substantial role in people’s lives across different cultures and it has been found to be a strong predictor of important life domains. Tarakeshwar et al. [1] suggested that humans be thought of as *Homo religiosus* because religion has been present as long as there have been *Homo sapiens*. Durkheim [2] maintained that groups, institutions, and cultures may represent their ideals through religious beliefs and practices. For different reasons, researchers are becoming increasingly interested in the examination of the impact of faith on human behavior and psychological functioning Jones [3]. Various positive contributions to overall physical and mental health have been attributed to religious devotion Abdel-Khalek [4-7] Lester [8] Koenig [9], Hill [10], Seybold [11].

People who report a closer connection to God experience a number of health-related benefits: less depression, higher self-esteem, less loneliness, greater relational maturity, greater psychological competence Hill [12], Koenig [9] stated that religious beliefs and practices are associated with: lower suicide rates, less anxiety, less substance abuse, less depression and faster recovery from depression, greater well-being, hope, and optimism, more purpose and meaning in life, higher social

support, greater marital satisfaction and stability, better immune function, lower death rates from cancer, less heart disease or better cardiac outcomes, lower blood cholesterol, and better health behaviors (less cigarette smoking, more exercise, and better sleep). Religiosity reflects human characteristics or the amount of importance of religion in the life of a person Ellor [13]. Religiosity is a complex concept and has many definitions Holdcroft [14]. Different authors defined different dimensions of religiosity. To take some examples, Fukuyama [15] identified four dimensions of religiosity as cognitive, cultic, creedal, and devotional. Lenski [16] identified four different expressions of religiosity: associational, communal, doctrinal, and devotional. Glock [17] defined five dimensions of religiosity as follows: experiential, ritualistic, ideological, intellectual, and consequential. Allport [18] identified two basic dimensions of religiosity: intrinsic and extrinsic. The extrinsically motivated persons use religion for their own ends, such as status, sociability, and self-justification, and often shape a creed to fit their own ends, so they use religion as a «means». This is a utilitarian outlook to religion. On the other hand, the person with intrinsic religiosity lives his religion and sees religion predominantly as an «end». These persons internalize the total creed of their faith,

find their master motive for life in religion, and brought their needs into harmony with their religious beliefs. In the English language, there are available many scales of religiosity Abu-Raiya [19], Allport [20], Francis [21] Gorsuch [22], Hill and Hood [23] Koenig [24], Tiliouine [25].

The aim of the present study was to construct and validate the Arabic Scale of Intrinsic Religiosity (ASIR) on the basis of Allport [26] intrinsic dimension of religiosity. The ASIR assesses a generic internal religious experience. It could be used across religious traditions and not linked to specific religion. Why is this new scale needed? There are different reasons as follows: (a) some Arabic scales contain many items (e.g. 77) which is not suitable for the time of the respondent, (b) some scales merge items for the intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions of religiosity, (c) some scales are relevant to specific religions, e.g., Christianity or Islam in contrary to the ASIR; i. e., it is not linked to specific religious tradition, and (d) most of the available Arabic scales did not follow the four criteria for evaluating religiosity scales reported by Hill [12]: theoretical structure, representative sampling, measures of reliability, and measures of validity.

Material and Method

Participants: Through the different stages of the construction and validation of the ASIR, convenience volunteer samples were recruited (total N = 2,401). They were college students from Egypt, Kuwait, and Algeria. Their ages ranged between 18 and 33 year.

The construction of the scale

The item pool: It was constructed on the basis of the experience of the present researcher and reviewing previous religiosity scales, e.g., Hill [12], Hoge [27], Plante [28], among other scales. A preliminary 41 positively worded statements were drafted in simple standard, and modern Arabic.

Item – remainder correlation: In computing the item-rest-of-test correlation, a sample of 165 college students of both sexes was tested using the 41 item scale. All the items with statistically significant correlations ($p \leq .001$) over .30 and under .80 were retained. Fifteen items fulfilled that criterion. This version represents the final form of the ASIR (see the Appendix I).

Factor analysis: The final form of the ASIR was administered to 247 college students. The correlations between the 15 items were computed. Then, a principal component analysis was applied. Table 1 sets out the first factor. Inspection of table 1 indicates that the percentage of variance was 47% and the loadings onto the first component ranged between .54 and .79.

Results

Internal consistency: Alpha Cronbach reliability of the 15 items (N = 155) reached .91, indicating high internal consistency.

Test – retest reliability: The one-week test-retest of the ASIR was .87 (N = 51), indicating good temporal stability.

Table 1: The first principal component of the ASIR.

	Items	Factor 1
1	I try hard to apply religion on the various aspects of my life.	.680
2	My worship to God Almighty is the most important thing of my life.	.682
3	My religious beliefs are behind my actions and approach to life.	.724
4	Religion is the most important thing in my life.	.739
5	God helps me in my entire life.	.617
6	My Religious beliefs are considered to be necessary for me.	.735
7	My faith gives me the meaning and the goal of my life.	.787
8	I consider myself committed to religion.	.688
9	My faith is an integral part of my personality.	.695
10	I see my faith as a source of comfort for me.	.774
11	My faith affects many of my decisions.	.694
12	I think that religion is an appropriate approach to life.	.538
13	I believe that God is close to me.	.616
14	I depend on Almighty God in all things.	.617
15	Religiosity gives me the strength to face the difficulties of life.	.676
16	Eigen value	7.08
17	% of variance	47.20

Criterion-related validity: The ASIR was administered along with the Muslim Attitude towards religiosity Scale MARS; Wilde [29] as well as the single item self - rating scale of religiosity (N1 = 140; N2 = 45, respectively). The correlations between the ASIR and the MARS were .74 and .72, and between the ASIR and the single item were .63 and .53 among men and women, respectively. All the correlations were statistically significant ($p < .001$), indicating acceptable to high criterion-related validity.

Table 2: Pearson product moment correlation between the scales and the first component among men and women (N = 293).

Scales	r with ASIR*	Factor I
Internal Religiosity (ASIR)	-	.532
Mental Health	.389	.925
Self – Efficacy	.318	.794
Satisfaction with Life	.306	.740
Optimism	.428	.876
Love of life	.391	.821
Well – Being	.240	.645
Eigen value		4.170
% of variance		59.630
* All the correlations $p < .01$.		

The association of the scale with positive psychology variables: The ASIR was administered along with the Arabic versions of the following scales: the Arabic Scale of Mental Health, the Arabic Scale of Optimism and the Love of Life Scale Abdel Khalek [30-32] the Arabic Scale of Self -Efficacy Alansari [33] the Satisfaction with Life Scale Diener [34], and the WHO (five) Well - being Index Psychiatric Research Unit [35]. A convenience sample of 293 college students (162 men; 131 women) was recruited. The Pearson correlation coefficients and the principal components analysis were computed. Table 2 presents the results. Inspection of Table 2 indicates that the correlations between the ASIR and the positive psychology scales ranged from .240 to .428 ($p < .01$). The loadings onto the first component ranged between .532 (the ASIR) and .925 (mental health). This component was labeled “Well – being and religiosity”.

Table 3: Mean (M), standard deviation (SD) of the ASIR, and t value in three Arab samples.

Country	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	t
Egypt	305	57.95	11.89	403	61.63	9.69	4.15*
Kuwait	159	65.67	7.08	131	64.57	7.32	1.30
Algeria	300	68.59	5.00	300	68.63	4.53	0.10
* $p < .01$							

Normative data: The ASIR was administered to convenience samples of college students from three Arab countries (N =1,598): Egypt, Kuwait, and Algeria. Sofghalim [36] collected

the data from Algeria. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics and the t values. Inspection of this table reveals that the only sex – related statistically significant difference was in the Egyptian sample in favor of women. Further, the sample from Algeria obtained the highest mean score, whereas the Egyptian sample obtained the lowest mean ASIR score. These results were relevant for both sexes.

Discussion

The great investment in matters of religion and spirituality is one of the main trends in contemporary psychology. One of the reasons for the interest in the study of religion is the salutary effects of religiosity on physical and mental health as well as health habits and longevity. Several studies obtained positive relationships between religiosity and subjective well – being including happiness, satisfaction with life and health. Measurement is a cornerstone of science and hence is a critical component of scientist investigations of religious phenomena. There were different reasons to construct the Arabic scale of Intrinsic Religiosity as reported in the introduction section.

All the 15 items of the ASIR are positive indicators to intrinsic religiosity. An affirmatively worded strategy was used in the construction of the ASIR because many participants face problems in understanding the negatively worded items when answering with double negative. Carver [37] maintained that «negatively worded items often turn out to be harder to understand or more complicated to answer than positively worded items» (p. 47). In a similar vein, Schriesheim [38] stated that negatively worded items impair response accuracy. As a remedy to the problem of understanding the double negatives, some researchers use negatively worded items (e.g., the sources of comfort for me are far from religion) in religiosity scales and then recode the responses. On the basis of the Baumeister [39] paper entitled: “*Bad is stronger than good*”, this procedure is problematic as there is evidence that items describing negative emotions tend to evoke much stronger responses than items describing positive emotions. People tend to underestimate the frequency of positive effect, but not negative effect. The last authors concluded that “bad emotions generally produce more cognitive processing and have other effects on behavior that are stronger than positive emotions” (p. 334).

Despite the good characteristics of the ASIR, there is a need to use item response theory to develop a short form of the scale, to run confirmatory factor analysis, and determination of normative values for different age groups particularly the old aged. The English version of the ASIR merits investigation in an English-speaking sample. These are projects for further studies [40-44].

Conclusion

The present study successfully demonstrated its main objective. The Arabic Scale of Intrinsic Religiosity (ASIR) characterized with good to high internal consistency, temporal

stability, and criterion - related validity. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the ASIR has good psychometric properties. It has several advantages, beside its good psychometric characteristics, i. e., the brevity (15 items), so it is far from both

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Appendix - I

Instructions: The following statements related to religious attitudes. Please answer each one, based on the following scale starts from Strongly Disagree to the Strongly Agree. Put a circle around one of the numbers following each statement.

	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I try hard to apply religion on the various aspects of my life.	1	2	3	4	5
2	My worship to God Almighty is the most important thing of my life.	1	2	3	4	5
3	My religious beliefs are behind my actions and approach to life.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Religion is the most important thing in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
5	God helps me in my entire life.	1	2	3	4	5
6	My religious beliefs are considered to be necessary for me.	1	2	3	4	5
7	My faith gives me the meaning and the goal of my life.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I consider myself committed to religion.	1	2	3	4	5
9	My faith is an integral part of my personality.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I see my faith as a source of comfort for me.	1	2	3	4	5
11	My faith affects many of my decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
12	I think that religion is an appropriate approach to life.	1	2	3	4	5
13	I believe that God is close to me.	1	2	3	4	5
14	I depend on Almighty God in all things.	1	2	3	4	5
15	Religiosity gives me the strength to face the difficulties of life.	1	2	3	4	5



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