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Initial Validation of the Spiritual Thoughts and Behaviors Scale

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Abstract

The Spiritual Thoughts and Behaviors Scale was developed as part of a study exploring the relationship between spirituality and generosity. One goal of the study was to see if there was a relationship between individuals' spiritual thoughts and their spiritual behaviors; particularly those behaviors of charitable (financial) giving, volunteerism, and donations of goods and services. The Spiritual Thoughts and Behaviors Scale is an 18 item self-report scale constructed to provide a global religiosity score comprised of two subscale scores: spiritual behaviors (7 items) and spiritual thoughts (11 items). Data was collected from both university students and a local church congregation. The purpose of the present study is to investigate the validity of the Spiritual Thoughts and Behaviors Scale by exploring its internal consistency, convergent validity and factor structure.

Introduction

Traditionally, religiosity as a construct has been measured by the conscious religious thoughts and espoused beliefs that individuals subscribed to. Current trends in the measurement of religiosity are also gauging individuals' religious behaviors as well as their beliefs (Storch, Roberti, Heidgerken, Storch, Lewin, Killiany, Baumeister, Bravata, Geffken 2004).

Buhrow, Milner, Mock, Stevenson, and Tuerck, (2008) designed the Spiritual Thoughts and Behaviors Scale, an 18 item self-report measure on spirituality, to assess both an individual's spiritual thoughts and behaviors with the hope of obtaining two subscale scores and an overall measure of an individual's religiosity. The goal was to develop a single measure of religiosity comprised of two dimensions: spiritual thoughts and spiritual behaviors.

The purpose of this study is to examine the validity of this measure of spirituality by measuring internal consistency, convergent validity, and factor structure of spiritual thoughts and behaviors. The RCI-10 (Worthington et al), a religious commitment inventory; and the Spiritual Well-being Scale (Ellison and Paloutzian), which assesses one's relationship with God, will be used to determine convergent validity.

Methods

Participants

- **University Group** - students were randomly selected from a list of graduate and undergraduate students from a small, Christian university in the Pacific Northwest. Data were collected in two separate data collections one year apart. 177 chose to participate.
- **Church Group** (n=68) community members from a local Christian church's email list chose to participate
- Total = 245 participants – age: M=33.0 years (s=13.1)

Instruments

- Spiritual Thoughts and Behavior Scale - two subscales: spiritual beliefs and spiritual behaviors – an 18 item self-report survey on religiosity.
- Spiritual-Well Being Scale – a 20 item scale with two subscales: religious well-being and existential well-being
- Religious Commitment Inventory-10 – a ten item scale assessing religious commitment

Procedure

- Participants were sent an email, which detailed information about the rationale and procedure of the study. Those who consented self-administer an internet survey via SurveyMonkey. Non-respondents were sent a reminder email before data collection was terminated.

Results

Internal consistency was good for SB (alpha = .83) and ST (alpha = .86). However, item SB7 had a corrected item-total correlation of -.019 with the other spiritual behavior items; thus this item did not fit well with the SB subscale; without it the SB alpha was .88.

Alpha was .92 for all the spirituality items; again item SB7 did not fit and had a corrected item-total correlation of .017. Internal consistency was also very good for both SWB (alpha = .91) and RCI (alpha = .94).

A principal component factor analysis was performed on the spirituality items with an Oblimin rotation. Four eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were reported: 7.75, 1.32, 1.15, and 1.03, accounting for 43.03, 7.31, 6.37, and 5.70 per cent of the variance respectively. A scree plot suggested one or two factors (see Figure 1). A forced two-factor solution resulted in several items that loaded on both factors and the factors correlated at .55. A forced one factor solution indicated that 16 of the 18 items loaded on a single factor at .47 or above with 9 items loading above .70. ST1 and SB7 did not load on this factor (see Table 1). These results suggest a beliefs and behaviors comprise a single factor for this sample.

Correlation data showed that the Spiritual Thoughts and Spiritual Behaviors scales, as well as the Total Religiosity score correlated moderately to strongly in expected directions with self-reported spiritual maturity, religious knowledge, minutes of Bible reading, and importance of religion. They also correlated moderately to strongly with Existential Well-Being, Religious Well-Being, and Spiritual Well-Being. They correlated very strongly with the RCI-10. Correlation with age was trivial, and surprisingly, so was the correlation with frequency of attendance in this sample.

Table 1: Alpha Coefficients and Correlational Findings for Spirituality Scale

	Spiritual Behaviors	Spiritual Thoughts	Spiritual Total	Factor 1
Alpha Coefficients	.83	.86	.92	
EWB	.34**	.34*	.39**	.40*
RWB	.42**	.78**	.84**	.85**
SWB	.39**	.65**	.72**	.73*
RCI	.94*	.97**	.99**	.91**
Age	.11	.12	.11	0.13
Frequency of Attendance	.18	.21	.20	0.20
Minutes of Bible Reading	.39**	.40**	.41**	.41**
Minutes of Prayer	.08	-.06	-.07	-0.08
Religious Knowledge	.54**	.57**	.57**	.58**
Life Satisfaction	.29*	.36**	.34**	.34**
Spiritual Maturity	.28*	.28*	.29**	.29*
Importance of Religion	.82**	.80**	.83**	.83**
Factor 1	.94**	.97**	.97**	

Note: df = 71

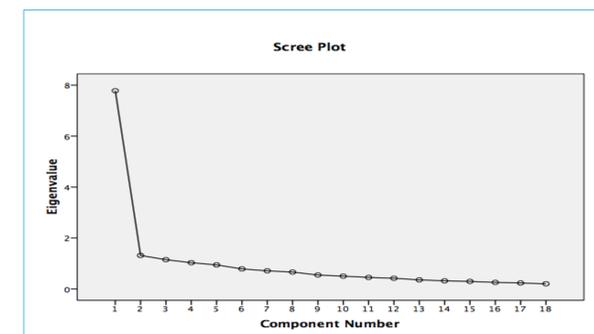
Results –cont.

Analyses of variance were computed for the spirituality scales, RCI-10 and SWB to see whether Christian profession was related to scores. No significant departures from homogeneity of variance were found. Those who profess Jesus Christ as Lord and seek to follow his teachings were compared with those who merely professed Jesus as Lord, or those who sought only to follow his teachings or did not profess to be Christian (who were combined for this analysis due to small numbers). Results indicated that those who rated themselves as both professing Jesus as Lord and seeking to follow his teachings scored significantly higher on Spiritual Thoughts, Spiritual Behaviors, Spirituality Total, and Spiritual Well-Being (see Table 2). There were no differences in scores on the spirituality scales related to gender and gender did not interact with Christian profession.

Table 2: Analyses of Variance for Group Differences for Christian Profession

Variable	F	Sig	Partial Eta2
Spiritual Behavior	25.09	<.001	0.43
Spiritual Thoughts	23.51	<.001	0.41
Spiritual Total	26.05	<.001	0.43
Regression Factor 1	25.84	<.001	0.43
Spiritual Well-Being	12.16	<.001	0.26

Note: df = 2, 68 for all analyses



Discussion

Results indicated good internal consistency for the spirituality items. However, factor results did not support the hypothesized distinction between thoughts and behaviors. A single factor emerged which included both thought and behavior items. Items ST1 (“My religious beliefs are not very important to me.”) and SB7 (If some one I know is in need of money, I rely on someone else to take care of it.”) did not load on this factor.

The surprisingly strong correlation with RCI-10 suggested that for this sample RC-10 was essentially a parallel measure and the spiritual behaviors and beliefs included here did not add to the RCI-10 items. In summary, beliefs and behaviors were strongly related in this sample. The Religiosity Scale proved adequately reliable and showed promising validity. However it is not clear that it adds any unique information not captured by the RCI-10.