Evaluation of Validity Indices of Spiritual Competence Questionnaire

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Abstract

Introduction: Spiritual competence in personal and occupational lives increases compatibility, adaptation, problem-solving skills, finding meaning in life events, inner and outer peace, dynamism, and vitality and can have positive effects on other aspects of life. The first step to improve the status of spiritual competence in society is its evaluation, with currently few tools in Persian for its measurement. Therefore, this study aimed to translate and validate the Spiritual Competence Questionnaire.

Methods: After translation to Persian, the formal validity of this questionnaire was inference using the opinions of nine experts based on Waltz and Basel and Lawshe's theory. Moreover, 179 individuals completed the study questionnaire to measure the reliability and perform exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Microsoft Excel (2016) and SPSS software (version 24) were used for statistical analysis.

Results: The validity of this questionnaire in two dimensions was 90% (content validity index; simplicity of questions: 88%, relevance of questions: 96%, and clarity of questions: 87%) and 97% (content validity ratio: standard). The reliability of this tool, which was calculated based on Cronbach's alpha, was 89%. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin index in EFA was 88%, and the mean variance for seven factors was 67%.

Conclusions: In addition to good reliability and validity, this tool is quite simple and fluent. Furthermore, with the possibility to be completed in 15 - 20 min, the questionnaire has the necessary features to assess the spiritual worthiness of individuals in different age groups.

Keywords: Spiritual Competence; Psychometrics; Factor Analysis

1. Introduction

Spirituality and religion play an important role in the lives of most individuals (1, 2) because spirituality includes profound truths and values that humans understand with their spiritual dimension and increases positive characteristics in humans (3, 4). Khorrami and Hodge consider religious rites, in addition to their central role in religion, to have many functions, such as the creation and perpetuation of self-control and the personal world. They also believe that religious rites help humans overcome problems that is why the need for spirituality and religion is one of the primary needs of human societies (5, 6).

Spiritual competence is considered a kind of cultural competence that is related to spirituality and religion, especially spiritual and religious worldviews that each individual has reached in life (7-9). In other words, spiritual competence refers to a set of spiritual abilities, capacities, and resources, the use of which in the personal and occupational lives increases compatibility, adaptation, problem-solving skills, finding meaning in life events, inner and outer peace, dynamism, and vitality (10, 11). In addition, spiritual competence goes beyond the physical and cognitive relations of the individual with the environment and enters the intuitive realm and the transcendent view of the individual to his/her life (12). This perspective includes all the events and experiences of an individual that have been influenced by a general view; the individual can use this attribute to frame and reinterpret his/her experiences. This process can give more meaning and value to individual events and experiences (3).

Spiritual worthiness consists of three components, namely (A) knowledge of an individual's personal spiritual worldview and related tendencies; (B) empathetic understanding of an individual's spiritual worldview; and (C) ability to develop penetration strategies that are appropriate, relevant, and sensitive to an individual's spiritual worldview (7). Spiritual competence also includes four subscales (i.e., awareness, awareness development, meaning production, and critical thinking) (13).

Amram believes that spiritual worthiness gives rise to a sense of meaning and mission in life, a sense of sanctity in life, and a belief in a better world (14). Vaughan states that spiritual competence is a framework for identifying and organizing required skills and competencies. Furthermore, spiritual competence increases the degree of adaptability and resilience of individuals (15). In general, spirituality is a fundamental dimension that grows and evolves in human beings since childhood. Moreover, spirituality can flourish, be interrupted, or become vulnerable through being affected by the environment. When it becomes vulnerable, the human perception of him/herself and God will be disrupted; this misconception causes damage to human growth and adaptation (16).

Although spiritual merit has a valuable place in occupational life and education, it has not been well addressed (17). The first step to improve the status of spiritual competence is to be aware of its status in society. The Spiritual and Religious Competency Assessment (SARCA) questionnaire is a suitable tool for the measurement of this situation that has not been translated and standardized in Persian up to now. On the other hand, there has been no suitable tool to measure this feature in Persian; therefore, this study aimed to translate and validate the SARCA questionnaire.

2. Methods

The present descriptive constructive study was carried out to validate the SARCA questionnaire. In this study, Fluellen's (18) Spiritual and Religious Competence Questionnaire was localized and validated. This tool (i.e., the SARCA questionnaire) was developed in 2007 with 34 items. Studies performed by Young et al. (19, 20), Miller et al. (21), Cashwell et al. (22), Corey et al. (23), and Hage et al. (24) were used to extract the items of this questionnaire. It should be noted that items 2, 8, 10, 12, 14, 18, 20, 22, 26, 29, and 33 are designed in reverse to reduce errors and increase validity. This tool has a 6-point Likert scale from completely agree to strongly disagree.

In the first stage, this questionnaire was independently translated into Persian by three faculty members; then, in one session, these translations were compared to each other and reviewed, unified, and integrated after discussion. To ensure the accuracy of the translation of the Persian version, the Persian questionnaire was translated into English by two experts in psychology. Finally, the English-translated version was compared to the original version of the questionnaire, and the agreement between the two versions was checked.

The inference validity of the content of this questionnaire was examined using the views of nine faculty members of psychology. Using content validity, there is a possibility to answer whether this tool has considered all the main aspects of the concept, whether the tool precisely checks what it should, and whether the generalities and components of the questionnaire are acceptable to experts.

The content validity index (CVI) was based on the views of Waltz and Basel. This section examined experts' views on the relevance, transparency, and simplicity of the items. Each of these three areas had four options for Likert answers. Relevance included several options (i.e., irrelevant, requiring some changes, relevant but requiring minor changes, and entirely relevant). Transparency included several options (i.e., non-transparent, requiring some changes, transparent but requiring minor changes, and completely transparent). Simplicity included several options (i.e., non-simple, requiring some changes, simple but requiring minor changes, and quite simple).

For the calculation of the CVI, first, the score of each of the three dimensions was separately determined, and finally the average of these three dimensions was calculated as the CVI. For the determination of the score of each section (i.e., relevance, transparency, and simplicity), first, the number of individuals who scored the last two Likert options was added and then divided into the total number of experts (n = 9). According to Waltz and Basel, it is acceptable to score more than 7%.

The content validity ratio (CVR) of this tool was evaluated based on Lawshe's technique (1975). In this method, the items are provided to the experts, and they are asked to decide on the necessity of the questionnaire items, according to the Likert criterion (four options; absolutely necessary to completely unnecessary). Based on the Lawshe test, the CVR value was calculated at 0.78. Moreover, since the number of experts in this section was nine, the obtained score was considered acceptable. Ne is the number of panel members who regarded the presence of that item in the questionnaire as "necessary", and n is the total number of panel members. Since the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test index was higher than 7%, it was observed that the number of samples was sufficient. It should be noted that the number of samples in variable factor analysis and 3 - 10 samples per item were reported. After extracting the data in the Excel format, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed on the data using SPSS software (version 21).

The reliability of this tool was also examined using Cronbach's alpha. In addition, it should be noted that because the items in this questionnaire were different, it was not possible to use the bisection method. This study is the result of a PhD thesis in educational psychology, registered with the number 87925 in the Vice-Chancellor for Research and Technology of Islamic Azad University, Ghaenat Department, Iran.

3. Results

In this study, the presence of five experts was used to translate the questionnaire (the questionnaire translated from English to Persian by three experts and from Persian to English by two experts), three and two of whom had a PhD and a master's degree, respectively. After match-

ing the translated English questionnaire to the original questionnaire, 95% agreement was reached between the questionnaires. In the next stage, nine faculty members participated in the study to check the validity of the questionnaire. Seven and two faculty members had a PhD and a master's degree, respectively. The average age of the participants in this stage was within the range of 23 - 46 years, and the average work experience of the participants was 10 - 14 years. In this study, the validity of all options was acceptable (Table 1).

Table 1. Validity and Reliability of Spiritual and Religious Competency Questionnaire Options

Phrase	Simplicity	Relativity	Clarity	Content Validity Index	Content Validity Ratio
1. When working with children, I respect the purity of their nature.	0.67	1.00	0.78	0.81	1.00
2. I am concerned with guiding families who are looking for the spiritual or religious development of their children.	0.89	1.00	1.00	0.96	1.00
3. I always try to promote my spiritual beliefs and values.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
4. I can assess the intensity and depth of my parents' spiritual or religious beliefs through a simple conversation.	0.89	0.89	0.89	0.89	1.00
5. I can use the religious and spiritual beliefs of parents for the educational purposes of their children.	1.00	1.00	0.89	0.96	1.00
6. I am comfortable with my own spiritual and religious beliefs and values.	0.56	0.89	0.78	0.74	0.78
7. In dealing with children, I pay attention to the cultural context of their families.	1.00	1.00	0.89	0.96	0.78
8. I have difficulty in identifying spiritual and religious beliefs that may be beneficial to children and their lives.	0.89	1.00	0.89	0.93	1.00
9. I can identify religious and spiritual beliefs and practices that are detrimental to children's mental health.	0.78	1.00	0.89	0.89	1.00
10. I have difficulty in determining the relationship between religious and spiritual beliefs and educational issues.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
11. I have colleagues who are well aware of the spiritual and religious issues I share with them.	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.56
12. I do not confuse my mind too much with my inclinations, fears, doubts, and prejudices.	1.00	1.00	0.89	0.96	1.00
13. I know how to deal with spiritual and religious issues that may interfere with educational goals.	0.78	1.00	0.56	0.78	1.00
14. In a kindergarten, I encourage children to express their religious or spiritual beliefs or practices.	0.89	0.78	0.89	0.85	1.00
15. I do not oppose the spiritual and religious beliefs of children's parents.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
16. I know I believe that spirituality and religion can play a role in solving human problems.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
17. I know how to morally deal with religious and spiritual issues.	0.89	1.00	0.67	0.85	1.00
18. I have difficulty in recognizing constructive spiritual and religious beliefs and practices.	0.67	0.89	0.78	0.78	1.00
19. I also prefer to study my parents' spiritual and religious beliefs outside the workplace.	0.78	1.00	0.67	0.81	1.00
20. I do not know the source of my spiritual and religious beliefs and values.	0.89	1.00	0.89	0.93	1.00
21. I am ready to consult with spiritual and religious experts on the religious and spiritual issues of parents.	0.89	1.00	0.89	0.93	1.00
22. I do not use children's spiritual and religious language and imagery in therapy.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00

23. I try not to let my perception of parents' religious and spiritual practices and values negatively affect my work with their children.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
24. I strike a balance between spirituality and religion and educational subjects.	0.89	1.00	0.89	0.93	1.00
25. I understand how my beliefs affect my theoretical orientation and upbringing.	0.89	1.00	0.89	0.93	1.00
26. It is not easy to understand the connection between religious or spiritual beliefs and my educational work.	0.78	1.00	0.78	0.85	1.00
27. I encourage religious and spiritual beliefs and practices that connect children to them and the community around them.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
28. I notice the transfer of my emotions and thoughts to children about spiritual and religious issues.	0.56	0.89	1.00	0.81	1.00
29. I am not aware of religion-centered and spiritual-centered interventions.	0.89	1.00	1.00	0.96	1.00
30. I know how spirituality and religion can help individuals cope with problems and alleviate them.	0.78	1.00	0.67	0.81	1.00
31. I can recognize constructive spiritual and religious beliefs and practices.	1.00	0.89	0.89	0.93	1.00
32. I can recognize the similarities and differences between spirituality and religion.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
33. It is difficult for me to listen to my parents talking about spirituality and religion without personal judgment.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
34. I know how to use spirituality and religion in education.	1.00	1.00	0.78	0.93	1.00

The reliability and the internal consistency of the items of this questionnaire were calculated using Cronbach's alpha (89%). For EFA, this questionnaire was provided to 179 individuals who had educational degrees related to educational sciences. The mean age of these individuals was 36.6 years, with a standard deviation of 6.51. In addition, 164 participants (91.6%) in the study were married. Most participants (n = 84; 46.9%) had work experience within 5 to 10 years. Furthermore, 11, 120, 44, and 4 individuals had an associate degree, a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, and a PhD, respectively. The KMO coefficient in this analysis was 0.884, and the significance of Bartlett's test was less than 0.000 indicating the significance of EFA (Table 2).

Since the dimensions were not specified in the main questionnaire, seven dimensions were identified for this questionnaire after performing factor analysis, which were named using the content of the items. The first dimension (i.e., self-awareness) includes seven items (i.e., 8, 10, 18, 20, 25, 28, and 32). The second dimension (i.e., awareness development) includes eight items (i.e., 12, 16, 17, 29, 30, 31, 33, and 34). The third dimension (i.e., critical thinking) includes five items (i.e., 1, 4, 5, 13, and 22). The fourth dimension (i.e., consulting with others) includes four items (i.e., 7, 11, 19, and 21). The fifth dimension (i.e., attitude) includes four items (i.e., 2, 9, 23, and 27). The sixth dimension (i.e., meaning production) includes three items (i.e., 14, 24, and 26). Finally, the seventh dimension (i.e., cognition) includes three items (i.e., 3, 6, and 15).

Table 2. Final Statistical Characteristics of Questionnaire Dimensions Using Exploratory Factor Analysis

Dimension	Initial Eigenvalues			Total Square Load Extraction		
	Total	Variance Percentage	Cumulative Percentage	Total	Variance Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1	11.48	34.80	34.80	11.48	34.80	34.80
2	3.11	9.43	44.28	3.11	9.43	44.24
3	1.95	5.93	50.17	1.95	5.93	50.17
4	1.53	4.43	54.81	1.53	4.64	54.81
5	1.46	4.34	59.25	1.46	4.43	59.25
6	1.28	3.89	63.15	1.28	3.89	63.15
7	1.19	3.62	66.77	1.19	3.62	66.77

4. Discussion

The present study was conducted due to the importance of spiritual competence and the lack of standard tools for its measurement to obtain a suitable basis for research in this field. Spiritual competence is the use of spiritual capacities to adaptively solve life problems and achieve goals (25). Hosseini et al. consider spiritual competence an ability to understand the most profound concepts and goals and the best motivation to achieve transcendent goals (26). Other researchers also believe that strengthening spiritual competency in human beings causes an individual to be able to face life problems more calmly and gently, find more solutions to problems, and provide dynamism and movement to her/his life (27).

The most important step in starting to localize a questionnaire is the ease of translation and the desired quality of the translated version into a secondary language, which means that researchers should avoid choosing vague opaque words with multiple meanings as much as possible. In this study, based on the opinion of experts and by re-translating the questionnaire and examining its compliance with the original questionnaire, it was determined that the translation of the questionnaire used correct and precise expressions.

Validity was checked for the accuracy, simplicity, and comprehensibility of each item. The confirmation of the content of the items by experts showed that the questionnaire had a good validity. In other words, this tool with clear and correct items can assess the spiritual worthiness of individuals.

In the next step, the reliability of the questionnaire, which is one of the most important criteria for tool quality, was examined using Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient of 89% was obtained for the whole questionnaire, indicating the high reliability and internal consistency of this questionnaire. In other words, it can be said that the spiritual competency questionnaire had internal consistency and acceptable stability. The strength of this tool is its ability to detect differences, which makes it possible to identify meaningful connections occurring in research.

After examining the validity and reliability of the tool, EFA was used to determine the factors of the questionnaire. Relevant calculations showed that the questionnaire content was saturated with seven factors with a factor load of at least 3%. These seven factors together determine 67.7% of the total variance. In other words, 76.7% of the questionnaire can measure the attribute of spiritual competence. The EFA of 34 items divided this questionnaire into seven dimensions, namely self-awareness, awareness development, critical thinking, consulting with others, attitude, meaning production, and cognition.

4.1. Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, the SARCA questionnaire, which is based on the Fluellen questionnaire, was reviewed from the perspective of educational experts and key knowledgeable individuals, and their experiences were examined through in-depth and qualitative investigation. In addition to good reliability and validity, this tool is quite simple and fluent. Moreover, with a possibility to be completed in 15 - 20 min, the questionnaire has the necessary features to assess the spiritual worthiness of individuals. Therefore, due to a lack of valid and reliable tools and in accordance with cultural conditions in Iran, this questionnaire can be helpful in the assessment of the spiritual competence of individuals in Iran.

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