

VALIDATION STUDY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE PERCEPTION OF THE EFFECTS OF PRAYER

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Abstract

Objectives. The effectiveness of prayer in resolving the issues that individuals encounter is a subject of interest not only for the faithful but also for those seeking alternatives to the pragmatic solutions designed for the social context in which they find themselves. That is why the main objective of this study was to construct a questionnaire to measure the perception of the effects of prayer.

Material and methods. The construction of the questionnaire was achieved by developing a consistent number of items that were then applied to a representative sample and by subjecting the results to exploratory and confirmatory factorial analyses. The fidelity of items, subscales, and scales was also measured.

Results. The specific statistical analyses for the validation of the questionnaire were performed, and thus the adequacy index of each variable was calculated for the complete model of the questionnaire ($KMO = .96$), and following the sphericity test, a score $\chi^2_{(1035)} = 18257, p < .001$, statistically significant, was obtained. Thus, the values of the indicators for the validation of the factorial structure are within the accepted limits ($RMSEA = .04, TLI = .94, \chi^2/df = 1.94, p < .001$).

Conclusions. Assessing the effectiveness of prayer in improving people's lives is still a controversial topic and difficult to prove, but the degree to which people perceive positive effects is measurable and is a topic of general interest. The validation of this questionnaire is a novelty among the scales in the Romanian language.

Keywords: faith in the effects of prayer, introspection, emotion regulation, compassion for others, self-control.

Introduction

One of the most well-known truths about humanity is the positive perceived benefits of prayer on the overall well-being of those who engage in it. There is an increasing amount of evidence supporting these effects based on numerous studies that have found relationships between important psychological characteristics and prayer, as viewed by Salazar (2008) as an act of communication with God that can be approached from the perspective of efficacy and authenticity. The efficacy of prayer refers to its power or ability to produce certain effects. Prayers need to be "authentic", meaning that there should be a correspondence between the act of prayer and the mental

state of believing that prayer can have a positive impact. Furthermore, the authenticity of prayer involves a sincere and profound sense of faith and spiritual connection during this act (Sharp, 2010).

Additionally, prayer allows a person to acquire a certain kind of self-knowledge and, therefore, to be drawn closer to God. Through introspection and meditation during prayer, an individual can explore his/her thoughts, feelings, and deep-seated beliefs. This self-awareness can lead to a better understanding of oneself and enhance the connection with divinity. Prayer can provide a sense of inner peace and spiritual fulfillment, thus enabling a deeper proximity to God (Cockayne, 2017). It can provide opportunities for self-reflection as practitioners become more aware of their own thoughts and emotions, as well as those of others (Leffel, 2011, as cited in Greenway, 2020). Lambert et al. (2009, as cited in Greenway, 2020) have found that the time spent in prayer positively correlates with an increase in gratitude. According to this theory, prayer promotes prosocial behavior, as individuals who pray frequently perceive themselves to be kinder. Prayer can amplify positive emotions, similar to meditative practices, and can also amplify other emotions. For example, it can evoke feelings of reverence, respect, awe, or humility as one approaches and communicates with a powerful supernatural being. These emotions can similarly energize the respective resources and spill over into other areas of life. Prayer can provide an opportunity for reasoning and reflective thinking to take place amidst the business of everyday activities (Greenway, 2020). People who pray, especially those who believe they are praying to a powerful and holy supernatural being, may experience increased humility, as these prayers amplify both the emotions felt during prayer and others as well. Additionally, when prayers refer to virtues and vices, they directly influence the usual behaviors or actions of the individual, more than when they modify their own emotions (Fredrickson et al., 2008, as cited in Greenway, 2020).

Prayer has started to be used in therapeutic techniques, not only in patristic psychotherapy but also in other approaches. For example, Christian prayer healing accompanied by emotion-focused therapy procedures significantly contributes to progress in overcoming emotional blockages by finding in God a Person who is friendly towards emotions (Wan, 2021). Prayer-based psychotherapy helps the recipient become a person of noble and religious character, with the qualities of recognizing the union with God, increased self-awareness, understanding one's own weaknesses, and striving to improve them, as well as enhancing motivation in life (Makarrim, 2022). Prayer provides individuals with resources they can use to develop individual strategies for emotion regulation. In particular, the relationship with God through prayer brings individuals closer to a person to whom they can express and unload their anger; positive reflections that help maintain self-esteem; reinterpretation of cognitions that make situations appear less threatening; a person with whom they can interact to "eliminate" negative stimuli that induce emotions; and a role model for emotion management. Subsequently, after emotional regulation based on these formed resources, there is a positive influence on social action (Sharp, 2010).

In an experimental study that involved exposing participants to video tasks of emotional suppression after they engaged in a Stroop task where they prayed for the desires and needs of others (Friese & Wänke, 2014), it was found that they performed better in emotional suppression compared to those who were allowed to pray freely. Researchers suggest that prayer may have this effect because it relies on social resources, and similar effects could be found if other social resources were used. Using the same research design but focusing on thought suppression (Friese & Wänke, 2014), those who engaged in thought suppression and prayer had better results in the Stroop task than those who engaged in free thinking and thought suppression. The authors suggest once again that these effects may be a result of utilizing social resources, and similar findings may arise from other interventions involving social interaction. Religion can influence multiple elements of

the emotion regulation process, including setting emotional goals, intrinsic or extrinsic emotional regulation, self-regulation abilities, beliefs about emotional malleability, the use of specific emotion regulation strategies, forming communities that provide social support in emotion regulation, and religious rituals. Religion shapes emotional experiences (reverence, gratitude, joy, guilt, and hatred) that individuals who pray seek to cultivate or inhibit based on religious values (Vishkin, Bigman, & Tamir, 2014). Another experimental study measuring emotion regulation through physiological reactivity, behavioral expressions, and self-reported stress levels before and after time spent in prayer, as well as cognitive mechanisms (cognitive reappraisal, positive reinterpretation, and religious coping), demonstrated that physiological reactions and behavioral conduct evolved after prayer while stress levels decreased. Cognitive reappraisal, positive reinterpretation, and relaxation were correlated with each other. An authentic prayer experience was also closely associated with cognitive reappraisal, positive reinterpretation, and a decrease in heart rate during prayer (Sokol, 2017). Research suggests that prayer expands people's psychological perspective through acceptance, which then improves the emotional management of personal issues, although it does not apply to cognitive mechanisms (McCulloch & Parks-Stamm, 2020). However, there are also studies that have not found significant effects of these activities on the regulation of human emotions, life satisfaction, or positive and negative emotional experiences. Despite this, participants in the prayer group reported feeling significantly less sad (Kossurok, 2012). Such an experimental study that highlighted certain specific limitations of studies that evaluate physiological changes induced by spiritual/religious experiences, especially those that utilize salivary markers, found there were no statistically significant discrepancies between the medians measured for the experimental group and control group, both before and after testing, for any of the seven variables: salivary alpha-amylase (sAA), secretory immunoglobulin-A (SigA), cortisol (sC), Salivary Testosterone, Salivary Oxytocin (sO), Interleukin 6 (sal IL-6), and Interleukin 8 (sal IL-8), and was also done in Romania. These findings align with the limited differentiation observed between the Control Group (CG) and Study Group (SG), both before and after testing, which also aligns with the outcomes of two additional related studies on the individual practice of prayer in the Christian-Orthodox tradition (PCOT). These studies pertain to psycho-emotional changes and EEG activity in the alpha, beta, and gamma frequency bands (results pending publication) (Mihalache, Zăgrean, Bălan, Stoleriu, & Zăgrean, 2023).

McCullough and Willoughby (2009) have argued that religion can promote self-control, influence how goals are set, pursued, and organized, facilitate self-discipline, foster the development of self-regulation capacity, and prescribe and encourage self-regulatory behaviors. The influences of religion on self-control and self-regulation have a positive effect on health, well-being, and social behaviour. Although there are also studies that have shown no significant difference in terms of self-control performance in groups with similar levels of negative disposition, those who first suppressed their emotions and then prayed exhibited a higher positive disposition compared to the control group (Yarollahi, Shairi, & Hasanzadeh Dastjerdi, 2019). Therefore, prayer can influence the well-being of individuals who practice it. Prayer can enhance well-being, particularly when it is linked to inner identity dialogues, and it can decrease well-being when linked to ruminative inner dialogues (Puchalska-Wasyl & Zarzycka, 2020).

A characteristic that religious individuals attribute to themselves is being universally prosocial. However, evaluations of behaviors suggest more limited prosociality, and some studies suggest a small causal relationship. Recent research has identified new moderators, with religiosity being more strongly linked to prosociality through self-image and altruism. A significant moderator remains the identity of the recipient: religious prosociality often favors religious groups over

external groups (Tsang, Al-Kire, & Ratchford, 2021). It is also important to know that personal religious convictions, when embraced and displayed within work environments, have the potential to instill significance and purpose into work. This, in turn, may foster positive work-related mindsets (such as work engagement) and ultimately result in increased reported levels of a particular aspect of contextual performance (David & Iliescu, 2020).

There are two distinct sources of religious prosociality: the religious perspective associated with the protection of the religious group and the supernatural perspective associated with belief in God. These two principles apply to different prosocial objectives and thus have different effects on prosocial behavior depending on the target and context (Preston, Ritter, & Ivan Hernandez, 2010). Helping others is associated with high levels of mental health, beyond the benefits of altruism and other known psychospiritual and demographic factors (Schwartz, Meisenhelder, Ma, & Reed, 2003). Helping others entails certain aspects: understanding their needs and praying for them; listening to them when they are in need and assisting them in finding solutions; supporting them in understanding the reasons behind their needs; guiding people to help themselves; and aiding them in finding an organization to assist them (Cornelius, 2013).

In conclusion, from Wood's perspective, religious rituals can be seen as psychological exercises that strengthen people's self-control capacity, enhance individuals' social bonding, and lead to social behaviors of willpower and group commitment (Koole, Meijer, & Remmers, 2017).

Material and methods

General objectives

The main objective of this research was to develop a questionnaire to measure people's perceptions of the psychic effects of prayer, validated on the Orthodox Christian population, an instrument that supports the completion with empirically obtained data of the entire theoretical support covered in this thesis, not having enough instruments to measure certain psychically perceived benefits of prayer.

Another goal is to identify differences in the perception of prayer effects according to demographics (gender, age).

Research questions

Without wishing to contradict the views previously expressed, this article aims to empirically evaluate the perceived benefits that prayer has for a person. Not having the audacity to believe that it can evaluate the effects of prayer in a person's life, it nevertheless wanted to find out what people's perception or belief is about these effects. In this regard, it also sought to find out how an Orthodox believer feels the effects of prayer in his life, both mentally and socially.

Participants and procedure

The study involved 441 people, aged between 18 and 76 ($M_{age} = 37.06$, $SD = 12.16$), of whom 100 are male (22.7%) and 341 are female (77.3%). The entire sample belongs to the Orthodox Christian confession, which is the main condition for participation in the study.

The construction of this scale began with the elaboration of items referring to changing moods, empathy, altruism, providence, introspection, self-evaluation, self-reflection, self-

knowledge, change of perception, change of behavior, change of way of thinking, strengthening willpower, resilience, etc. Initially, 74 items were elaborated, to which participants were asked to answer by choosing from 5 answer options (never, rarely, sometimes, often, always) rated from 1 to 5 on the Likert scale, according to the suggestions of the specialized literature. Following data collection, a number of statistical procedures were applied to establish the factorial structure.

In order to validate a questionnaire, the international standards required to perform statistical analyses to measure certain indices whose values are recommended to be found between certain thresholds unanimously accepted by psychometricians have been met. In developing this scale, most standardized tests for such proposals were conducted. Statistical analyses were carried out with the help of the Jamovi program.

Results

Exploratory Factorial Analysis for the Faith Questionnaire on the Effects of Prayer (FQEP)

In tables 1 and 2, it can be seen that there is an accepted suitability for the measured variables, the index $KMO = .96$, located between the proposed pages, following the spherical test, obtaining a score of $\chi^2_{(1035)} = 18257, p < .001$, statistically significant. The values of the indicators for validating the factorial structure are within the accepted limits, as follows: $RMSEA = .04, TLI = .94, \chi^2/df = 1.94, p < .001$ (Taasoobshirazi & Wang, 2016).

Table 1
Test of Sphericity

| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | | |
|-------------------------------|------|--------|
| χ^2 | df | p |
| 18257 | 1035 | < .001 |

Table 2
Indices of exploratory analysis tests

| Model Fit Measures | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------|-------|------------|-------|----------|-----|--------|
| RMSEA 90% CI | | | Model Test | | | | |
| RMSEA | Lower | Upper | TLI | BIC | χ^2 | df | P |
| .04 | .04 | .05 | .94 | -2108 | 1004 | 515 | < .001 |

The exploratory factorial analysis of the 74 items of the questionnaire revealed 13 factors (table 3). After extracting the 13 factors of the questionnaire, it was found that some of the items had a level of communalities lower than .30, which determined their extraction from the questionnaire, so that out of a number of 74 items, 46 were kept.

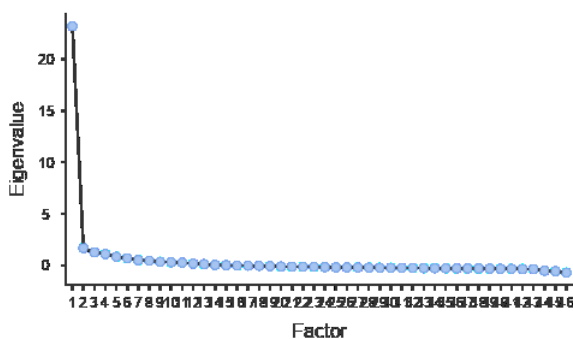
Table 3
Exploratory Factorial Analysis of the Perception Questionnaire on the Effects of Prayer

| Items (anexa 1) | Factor Loadings | Item-scale correlation | Uniqueness |
|--|-----------------|------------------------|------------|
| Emotion Regulation ($\alpha=.87$) | | | |
| i7 Prayer is the act through which I rid myself of negative emotions. | .787 | .833** | .227 |
| i6 Prayer relieves me of a spiritual burden. | .733 | .869** | .237 |
| i5 Prayer helps me have a better emotional disposition. | .685 | .885** | .362 |
| i8 to unload myself from worries, troubles, inner tensions. | .640 | .827** | .306 |
| Sensory Deprivation ($\alpha=.83$) | | | |
| i3 to use social media less. | .939 | .834** | .132 |
| i4 to distance myself from sources that visually/aurally demand from me. | .769 | .905** | .362 |
| i2 to communicate less in social contexts. | .706 | .865** | .504 |
| Self-control ($\alpha=.91$) | | | |
| i55 to maintain patience in the face of problems being resolved. | .801 | .865** | .107 |
| i56 to cope more easily with everyday stressful situations. | .611 | .910** | .244 |
| i54 to acquire better management of disturbing emotions (anxiety, anger, rage, indignation). | .604 | .895** | .231 |
| i53 to handle conflict situations more effectively. | .411 | .896** | .319 |
| Introspection ($\alpha=.92$) | | | |
| i27 to analyze my own conscience more. | .689 | .875** | .173 |
| i24 to reflect on my real needs. | .596 | .859** | .263 |
| i25 to be more attentive to the connotation of the thoughts that come to my mind. | .594 | .892** | .226 |
| i26 to delve deeper into myself. | .549 | .853** | .271 |
| i23 to analyze my inner states more profoundly. | .407 | .888** | .234 |
| Increase Will-power ($\alpha=.88$) | | | |
| i60 to feel stronger in accomplishing my activities. | .831 | .834** | .106 |
| i61 to be more efficient in tasks that require effort from me. | .607 | .867** | .257 |
| i59 to be perseverant in achieving goals. | .495 | .912** | .304 |
| i57 to reach my personal objectives. | .483 | .852** | .409 |
| Interpersonal Intuition ($\alpha=.86$) | | | |
| i14 to intuit events, people, and things in my life more easily. | .980 | .946** | .110 |
| i15 to recognize the emotional state and feelings of others more easily. | .760 | .935** | .226 |
| Faith in Divine Providence ($\alpha=.88$) | | | |
| i21 to strengthen my faith and hope in divine providence. | .729 | .908** | .144 |
| i22 to feel genuine support as a result of communion with God. | .643 | .906** | .197 |
| i20 to better understand the will of God and what He asks of me. | .615 | .883** | .226 |
| Compassion for Others ($\alpha=.88$) | | | |
| i13 to be interested in the needs of the sick or those facing problems of any kind. | .754 | .887** | .131 |
| i11 to be more attentive to the needs of those around me. | .546 | .829** | .203 |
| i12 to be more empathetic/compassionate towards people. | .499 | .895** | .305 |
| i16 to support more those who need me. | .440 | .821** | .321 |

| Altruism ($\alpha=.82$) | | | | |
|---|--|------|--------|------|
| i18 | to adopt an ethical/moral behavior towards the rules of the community in which I live. | .699 | .878** | .216 |
| i17 | to become more available to engage in social-philanthropic projects. | .615 | .897** | .325 |
| i19 | to consider the common good as well. | .584 | .812** | .310 |
| Changing Perspective ($\alpha=.90$) | | | | |
| i68 | to perceive a much deeper aspect of reality. | .642 | .846** | .212 |
| i66 | to see the world with 'different eyes.' | .599 | .881** | .261 |
| i67 | to find a deeper meaning in the events that happen to me. | .565 | .900** | .211 |
| i51 | to direct my thoughts in a positive manner. | .363 | .906** | .305 |
| Self-knowledge ($\alpha=.82$) | | | | |
| i32 | to become aware of my own limits in communication. | .662 | .847** | .197 |
| i33 | to better understand my role in relation to the community's objectives. | .553 | .893** | .237 |
| i31 | to self-disclose. | .484 | .860** | .534 |
| Prosociality ($\alpha=.88$) | | | | |
| i46 | to become more respectful towards the elderly. | .662 | .886** | .151 |
| i47 | to become more responsible and trustworthy. | .605 | .913** | .139 |
| i45 | to become loyal to friends and my reference group. | .371 | .909** | .243 |
| Changing of Behavior ($\alpha=.90$) | | | | |
| i39 | to give up certain undesirable behaviors for myself and others. | .590 | .884** | .184 |
| i38 | to improve my way of interacting with others. | .548 | .919** | .224 |
| i42 | to replace harmful habits with more constructive ones. | .400 | .861** | .259 |
| i43 | to humble myself (reduce selfishness). | .371 | .853** | .332 |

Note. 'Minimum residual' extraction method was used in combination with a 'oblimin' rotation
 **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 1
Principal components analysis (PCA)



The remaining 13 factors are: emotion regulation (4 items), sensory deprivation (3 items), self-control (4 items), introspection (5 items), increased willpower (4 items), interpersonal intuition (2 items), faith in Divine Providence (3 items), compassion for others (4 items), altruism (3 items), changing perspective (4 items), self-knowledge (3 items), prosociality (3 items), and changing of behavior (4 items).

Table 4
Variance of questionnaire factors

| Factor | SS Loadings | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
|--------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1 | 3.21 | 6.99 | 6.99 |
| 2 | 2.16 | 4.68 | 11.67 |
| 3 | 3.32 | 7.21 | 18.88 |
| 4 | 3.19 | 6.94 | 25.82 |
| 5 | 3.09 | 6.71 | 32.53 |
| 6 | 2.23 | 4.84 | 37.38 |
| 7 | 2.76 | 6.01 | 43.38 |
| 8 | 2.73 | 5.94 | 49.33 |
| 9 | 2.62 | 5.69 | 55.01 |
| 10 | 2.60 | 5.65 | 60.66 |
| 11 | 2.15 | 4.68 | 65.35 |
| 12 | 2.29 | 4.98 | 70.33 |
| 13 | 2.17 | 4.72 | 75.05 |

Internal Consistency of the Faith Questionnaire on the Effects of Prayer (FQEP)

As can be seen in Table 5, following the application of the fidelity test for the Faith to the Effects of Prayer questionnaire, the Chronbach alpha score is .97 for the entire questionnaire. The average scores obtained by the research participants ranged from 2.91 (*SD* = .93) for sensory deprivation to 4.35 (*SD* = .64) for emotion regulation. Other high average scores are at the subscales faith in Divine Providence (*M* = 4.27, *SD* = .68), self control (*M* = 4.20, *SD* = .67), introspection (*M* = 4.20, *SD* = .66), compassion for others (*M* = 4.18, *SD* = .65), changing perspective (*M* = 4.15, *SD* = .70), changing of behavior (*M* = 4.11, *SD* = .70), prosociality (*M* = 4.08, *SD* = .78), and increased willpower (*M* = 4.08, *SD* = .69). Other scores, also high, were obtained at the subscales altruism (*M* = 3.95, *SD* = .70), self knowledge (*M* = 3.77, *SD* = .79) and interpersonal intuition (*M* = 3.72, *SD* = .91).

Table 5
The central tendency of the scores of the variables measured (N = 441)

| | Mean | SD | Skewness | Kurtosis | | |
|----------------------------|------|-----|----------|----------|------|-----|
| | | | SE | SE | | |
| Emotion regulation | 4.35 | .64 | -1.42 | .11 | 3.95 | .23 |
| Sensory deprivation | 2.91 | .93 | -.20 | .11 | -.54 | .23 |
| Self-control | 4.20 | .67 | -.85 | .11 | 1.82 | .23 |
| Introspection | 4.20 | .66 | -.98 | .11 | 3.52 | .23 |
| Increased willpower | 4.08 | .69 | -.60 | .11 | .98 | .23 |
| Interpersonal intuition | 3.72 | .91 | -.43 | .11 | -.10 | .23 |
| Faith in Divine Providence | 4.27 | .68 | -1.14 | .11 | 2.80 | .23 |
| Compassion for others | 4.18 | .65 | -.70 | .11 | 1.25 | .23 |

| | Mean | SD | Skewness | | Kurtosis | |
|----------------------|------|-----|----------|-----|----------|-----|
| | | | | SE | | SE |
| Altruism | 3.95 | .70 | -.43 | .11 | .66 | .23 |
| Changing perspective | 4.15 | .70 | -.96 | .11 | 2.16 | .23 |
| Self-knowledge | 3.77 | .79 | -.43 | .11 | .67 | .23 |
| Prosociality | 4.08 | .78 | -.92 | .11 | 1.48 | .23 |
| Changing of behavior | 4.11 | .70 | -.88 | .11 | 1.86 | .23 |

Inferential analysis

One of the goals of the study was to investigate the differences in these variables depending on demographic characteristics such as gender and age. The gender analysis identified statistically significant differences only for sensory deprivation ($t_{(439)} = 7.69, p = .006$), where men ($M = 3.04, SD = .80$) scored higher than women ($M = 2.88, SD = .96$).

Table 6
Analysis of gender differences of measured variables

| | | Mean | SD | S.E. M | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | | |
|-------------|--------|------|-----|--------|---|------|------------------------------|------|-----------------|------------|----------|-----------------------|------|-----|
| | | | | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Diff. | SE Diff. | 95% C.I. of the Diff. | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | Low | Up | |
| Sensory | male | 3.04 | .80 | .08 | eva ¹ | 7.69 | .006 | 1.54 | 439 | .122 | .16 | .10 | -.04 | .37 |
| Deprivation | female | 2.88 | .96 | .05 | evna ² | | | 1.71 | 190.80 | .089 | .16 | .09 | -.02 | .35 |

¹Equal variances assumed

²Equal variances not assumed

Upon analyzing the data, statistically significant differences were found in four out of the thirteen variables across different age categories. Specifically, for emotional regulation, the study found very small differences between the six age categories. The category with the lowest score was young people up to 24 years old ($M = 4.14, SD = .81$), while the highest score was recorded by the 35-44 age group ($M = 4.45, SD = .60$), followed closely by the category of 55-64 years ($M = 4.44, SD = .47$). For interpersonal intuition ($F_{(5,435)} = 2.41, p = .036$), participants over the age of 65 scored the highest ($M = 4.09, SD = .66$), while those in the 25-34 age category scored the lowest ($M = 3.54, SD = .95$). A similar hierarchy was observed for altruism ($F_{(5,435)} = 4.10, p = .001$). Looking carefully over the results, in terms of changing behavior ($F_{(5,435)} = 2.60, p = .025$), we notice that the change is less for younger participants (18–24 years, $M = 3.93, SD = .76$; 25–34 years, $M = 4.01, SD = .70$) than for more mature ones.

Table 7
Analysis of age differences of measured variables

| | | N | Mean | SD | SE | 95% CI for Mean | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------------------------|-------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----------------|-------------|----------------|-----|-------------|------|------|
| | | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | | | | | |
| Emotion regulation | 18-24 | 76 | 4.14 | .81 | .09 | 3.96 | 4.33 | 5.13 | 5 | 1.02 | 2.52 | .029 |
| | 25-34 | 125 | 4.32 | .62 | .05 | 4.21 | 4.43 | 177.22 | 435 | .40 | | |
| | 35-44 | 119 | 4.45 | .60 | .05 | 4.34 | 4.56 | 182.35 | 440 | | | |
| | 45-54 | 78 | 4.41 | .56 | .06 | 4.28 | 4.53 | | | | | |
| | 55-64 | 32 | 4.44 | .47 | .08 | 4.27 | 4.61 | | | | | |
| | 65+ | 11 | 4.38 | .50 | .15 | 4.04 | 4.72 | | | | | |
| | Total | 441 | 4.35 | .64 | .03 | 4.29 | 4.41 | | | | | |
| Interpersonal intuition | 18-24 | 76 | 3.76 | .81 | .09 | 3.58 | 3.95 | 9.83 | 5 | 1.96 | 2.41 | .036 |
| | 25-34 | 125 | 3.54 | .95 | .08 | 3.37 | 3.70 | 355.03 | 435 | .81 | | |
| | 35-44 | 119 | 3.85 | .95 | .08 | 3.67 | 4.02 | 364.86 | 440 | | | |
| | 45-54 | 78 | 3.66 | .94 | .10 | 3.44 | 3.87 | | | | | |
| | 55-64 | 32 | 3.95 | .60 | .10 | 3.73 | 4.16 | | | | | |
| | 65+ | 11 | 4.09 | .66 | .20 | 3.64 | 4.53 | | | | | |
| | Total | 441 | 3.72 | .91 | .04 | 3.64 | 3.81 | | | | | |
| Altruism | 18-24 | 76 | 3.88 | .67 | .07 | 3.72 | 4.03 | 9.93 | 5 | 1.98 | 4.10 | .001 |
| | 25-34 | 125 | 3.74 | .71 | .06 | 3.61 | 3.86 | 210.52 | 435 | .48 | | |
| | 35-44 | 119 | 4.07 | .71 | .06 | 3.94 | 4.19 | 220.45 | 440 | | | |
| | 45-54 | 78 | 4.09 | .74 | .08 | 3.93 | 4.26 | | | | | |
| | 55-64 | 32 | 4.07 | .48 | .08 | 3.89 | 4.24 | | | | | |
| | 65+ | 11 | 4.09 | .55 | .16 | 3.71 | 4.46 | | | | | |
| | Total | 441 | 3.95 | .70 | .03 | 3.88 | 4.01 | | | | | |
| Changing of Behaviour | 18-24 | 76 | 3.93 | .76 | .08 | 3.75 | 4.10 | 6.27 | 5 | 1.25 | 2.60 | .025 |
| | 25-34 | 125 | 4.01 | .70 | .06 | 3.89 | 4.14 | 209.43 | 435 | .48 | | |
| | 35-44 | 119 | 4.20 | .58 | .05 | 4.10 | 4.31 | 215.70 | 440 | | | |
| | 45-54 | 78 | 4.22 | .73 | .08 | 4.06 | 4.39 | | | | | |
| | 55-64 | 32 | 4.23 | .76 | .13 | 3.95 | 4.50 | | | | | |
| | 65+ | 11 | 4.22 | .55 | .16 | 3.85 | 4.59 | | | | | |
| | Total | 441 | 4.11 | .70 | .03 | 4.04 | 4.17 | | | | | |

Discussions

According to Curelaru (2018), 42% of Romanians pray daily, and 27% pray even multiple times a day. Adding up the main positive responses, it results that 90% of us pray at least several times a year, with the remaining 10% either praying less frequently, not at all, or not knowing or refusing to answer. Additionally, 83% of respondents stated that prayer has helped them to a very large extent or to a great extent in life (IRES, 2015). There have been limited research efforts in the field of religious psychology among the Romanian population, despite the quality of the available studies. This might be attributed, at least in part, to the absence of specific instruments to validate and substantiate "the effects of the interiorization and the transformation of the human spiritual powers produced by it in the very depths of the human being" (Holbea, 2022).

Given the variations in religious faith and behavior, there are instances in which creating scales tailored to the specific religion under study becomes essential. Utilizing scales designed for other religious denominations might not encompass the particular nuances required to provide meaningful insights for the research. Many studies are focused on samples from the U.S. population, often including individuals affiliated with neo-Protestant religions. However, the results from these studies may not be directly applicable to other religious contexts. Therefore, research investigating the psychological implications of religiosity should involve an analysis of the distinct dimensions of the particular religion being studied. Achieving this could be facilitated by fostering collaboration between psychology researchers and experts in the specific religious field. An interdisciplinary approach would enhance the conceptualization and comprehension of religiosity (Rusu & Turliuc, 2011).

The Faith in the Effects of Prayer questionnaire was developed to measure the degree to which people believe their prayers have an effect on their psychic lives. For this questionnaire, based on specialized literature, some of the psychological aspects that could be changed as a result of practicing prayer have been identified. This theoretical model is related to concepts such as emotion regulation, sensory deprivation, self-control, introspection, increased willpower, interpersonal intuition, faith in divine providence, compassion for others, altruism, changing perspective, self-knowledge, prosociality, and changing of behaviour.

Older international studies assert that the significance of spiritual aspects, which increase with age, varies when it comes to the gender of adolescents. As such, girls with high levels of spirituality show an interest in future perspectives, whereas boys correlate spirituality more strongly with family life and school situation (Büssing, Föller-Mancini, Gidley, & Heusser, 2010). A study from Romania reveals that education within a theological context instructs students in various aspects related to the pedagogy of prayer. An education that emphasizes the significance of both individual and communal prayer within the church context significantly reduces gender-based differences concerning prayer (motivations, underlying mental states, and long-term effects). Furthermore, the data underscores that girls tend to pray more frequently than boys, displaying a higher propensity to express gratitude to God for received assistance and experiencing a greater sense of inner peace through personal prayer (Oprîş & Oprîş, 2022). In the present research, although statistically significant differences were found based on age and gender in variables such as sensory deprivation, emotion regulation, interpersonal intuition, altruism, and changing of behavior, it is considered relevant that the change of behavior is less pronounced for younger participants compared to those who are more mature.

Conclusions

The questionnaire that was designed to highlight the effects of prayer on human development consists of 46 items, divided into 13 subscales, measuring various aspects of spiritual dynamics within an individual's psychological structure. After applying statistical procedures in accordance with internationally accepted theories, the index scores have shown good performance in relation to the research objectives.

The differences in these perceived benefits of prayer have been analyzed based on independent variables such as gender and age. The results have been compared with those obtained from other similar studies to establish relationships and draw meaningful conclusions. By examining how prayer impacts different demographic groups, we can better understand its effects and identify any potential variations.

The subjective benefits of prayer seem to be very internally consistent and organized in a coherent and logical structure of belief. Nevertheless, we caution readers not to confuse this construct with the actual manifested effects of prayer, which is a subject still open for debate.

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Annex 1

Chestionarul de percepție asupra efectelor rugăciunii

| Item | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Reglarea emoțiilor | |
| i7 | Rugăciunea este actul prin care scap de emoțiile negative. |
| i6 | Rugăciunea mă scapă de o împovărare sufletească. |
| i5 | Rugăciunea mă ajută să am o dispoziție emoțională mai bună. |
| i8 | să mă descarc de supărări, necazuri, tensiuni interioare. |
| Deprivare senzorială | |
| i3 | să folosesc mai puțin mijloacele social-media. |
| i4 | să mă îndepărtez de sursele care mă solicită vizual/auditiv. |
| i2 | să comunic mai puțin în contexte sociale. |
| Autocontrol | |
| i55 | să îmi păstrez răbdarea față de probleme în curs de rezolvare. |
| i56 | să fac față mai ușor situațiilor cotidiene stresante. |
| i54 | să dobândesc un mai bun management al emoțiilor perturbatoare (anxietate, furie, mânie, revoltă). |
| i53 | să gestionez mai bine situațiile conflictuale. |
| Introspecție | |
| i27 | să îmi analizez mai mult propria conștiință. |
| i24 | să reflectez asupra nevoilor mele reale. |
| i25 | să fiu mai atent/ă la conotația gândurilor care îmi vin în minte. |
| i26 | să aprofundez lăuntru meu. |
| i23 | să îmi analizez mai profund stările lăuntrice. |
| Creșterea voinței | |
| i60 | să mă simt mai puternic în realizarea activităților mele. |
| i61 | să fiu mai eficient în realizarea activităților care necesită un efort din partea mea. |
| i59 | să fiu perseverent în realizarea scopurilor. |
| i57 | să îmi ating țelurile personale. |
| Intuiție personală | |
| i14 | să intuiesc mai ușor evenimentele, oamenii, lucrurile din viața mea. |
| i15 | să recunosc mai ușor dispoziția sufletească și sentimentele altora. |
| Încredere în providența divină | |
| i21 | să îmi întăresc credința și nădejdea în providența divină. |
| i22 | să simt un sprijin real ca urmare a comuniunii cu Dumnezeu. |
| i20 | să înțeleg mai bine voia lui Dumnezeu și ceea ce îmi cere El. |

Compașiune

- i13 să fiu interesat de nevoile bolnavilor sau persoanelor cu probleme de orice natură.
- i11 să fiu mai atent/ă la nevoile celor din jur.
- i12 să fiu mai empatic/mai compasional față de oameni.
- i16 să îi sprijin mai mult pe oamenii care au nevoie de mine.

Altruism

- i18 să adopt un comportament etic/moral față de regulile comunității în care trăiesc.
- i17 să devin mai disponibil în a mă implica în proiecte social-filantropice.
- i19 să mă gândesc și la binele comun.

Schimbarea perspectivei

- i68 să percep o latură mult mai profundă a realității.
- i66 să văd lumea cu „alți ochi”.
- i67 să găsesc un sens mai profund în evenimentele care mi se întâmplă.
- i51 să îmi direcționez gândurile într-o manieră pozitivă.

Autocunoaștere

- i32 să îmi conștientizez propriile limite în comunicare.
- i33 să îmi conștientizez mai bine rolul în raport cu obiectivele comunității.
- i31 să mă autodezvălu.

Prosocialitate

- i46 să devin mai respectuos față de vârstnici.
- i47 să devin mai responsabil și mai de încredere.
- i45 să devin loial față de prieteni și grupul meu de referință.

Schimbarea comportamentului

- i39 să renunț la anumite comportamente indezirabile pentru mine și pentru alții.
 - i38 să îmi îmbunătățesc modul de a interacționa cu ceilalți.
 - i42 să schimb obișnuințele nocive cu altele mai constructive.
 - i43 să mă smeresc (să îmi reduc egoismul).
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