The Surrender to God Scale: Psychometric Validation and Psychological Correlates

Kelley Pugh  
*East Tennessee State University*

Andrea D. Clements  
*East Tennessee State University*, clements@etsu.edu

Jameson K. Hirsch  
*East Tennessee State University*, hirsch@etsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://dc.etsu.edu/etsu-works](https://dc.etsu.edu/etsu-works)

Part of the Community-Based Research Commons, Health Psychology Commons, and the Substance Abuse and Addiction Commons

Citation Information  

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Works at Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in ETSU Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. For more information, please contact digilib@etsu.edu.
The Surrender to God Scale: Psychometric Validation and Psychological Correlates

Copyright Statement
Copyright The Authors.
The Surrender to God Scale: Psychometric Validation and Psychological Correlates
Kelley C. Pugh, B.A., Andrea D. Clements, Ph.D., & Jameson K. Hirsch, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology, East Tennessee State University

ABSTRACT

- Surrender to God (STG), is a construct which quantifies the extent to which an individual willingly relinquishes control to God.
- An STG scale has been developed, yet remains unvalidated, as it relates to psychological constructs.
- Using undergraduate participants (N=249), we conducted a psychometric validation of the STG scale, and examined its potential relation with depression, anxiety, stress, and suicide risk.

METHOD

Participants:
- Sample: (N=249) college students from a public university in rural Appalachia
- Age: M=21.05, SD=5.203
- Sex: Female (n=161, 64.7%)
- Race: White (n=194, 77.9%); Black (n=29, 11.6%)
- Affiliation: Protestant (n=139, 55.8%); Other (n=31); Unsure (n=22); Agnostic (n=19); Nonreligious (n=12); Catholic (n=12); Atheist (n=8); Muslim (n=5); Jehovah’s Witness (n=1)

Measures:
- Surrender to God Scale (STGS)
- Religious Attendance
- Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness
  - Daily Spiritual Experiences
  - Forgiveness
  - Religious and Spiritual Coping
- Gratitude Questionnaire
- Dispositional Positive Emotions – Awe Subscale
- Wellness Behaviors Inventory
- Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scales (DASS)
- Suicide Behaviors Questionnaire – Revised (SBQR)

ANALYSES

- Principle Factor Analysis, followed by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (SPSS v24.0)
- Cronbach’s internal reliability estimate (alpha; α)
- Discriminant coefficients; determined by independent samples t-tests
- Pearson product-moment correlations

RESULTS

- Factorial: One underlying factor (scree plot and PFA)
- Cronbach’s Alpha = .98 (excellent internal reliability)
- Discrimination: High; between upper 1/3 and lower 1/3, with item differences ranging from 2.577-2.830
- Convergent Validity: strong significant positive relation (r>.60) to daily spiritual experiences, positive & overall coping, & feeling forgiven by God
- Divergent Validity: (1) significantly positively related, at a moderate level (r<.50), to religious attendance, forgiving self, forgiving others, gratitude and awe; (2) Unrelated to negative coping and wellness behaviors; (3) Inversely related to psychopathology and suicide risk, at p<.001 level.

SURRENDER - VALIDITY

| Daily Spiritual Experiences | .747 | <.001 |
| Positive Coping | .725 | <.001 |
| Negative Coping | -.055 | .365 |
| Overall Coping | .678 | <.001 |
| Forgiven by God | .692 | <.001 |
| Forgiveness - Self | .293 | <.001 |
| Forgiveness - Others | .238 | <.001 |
| Attendance | .485 | <.001 |
| Gratitude | .278 | <.001 |
| Awe | .224 | <.001 |
| Wellness Behaviors | .059 | .330 |

SURRENDER - CORRELATES

| Depression | -.347 | <.001 |
| Anxiety | -.255 | <.001 |
| Stress | -.349 | <.001 |
| Suicide Risk | -.319 | <.001 |

DISCUSSION

- Supporting hypotheses, the STGS was unifactorial, suggesting one true underlying construct (Costello & Osborne, 2005), and demonstrated excellent internal reliability (α=.98) (Ponterotto & Ruckdeschel, 2007) and strong discrimination values, categorizing those low and high in surrender.
- Also supporting hypotheses, the STG scale demonstrated convergent validity with measures of intrinsic religiosity; that is, surrender is related to measures assessing a relationship with God, suggesting that, although it is a measure of religious obedience and commitment, the STGS may also evoke aspects of spirituality.
- Finally, supporting hypotheses, the STGS demonstrated divergent validity (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015), evidenced by weakened positive correlations with religious attendance, self- and other-forgiveness, gratitude, and awe.
- Surrender was unrelated to wellness behaviours, which is surprising considering many religions promote stewardship of physical bodies (Hoffman, 1995; Powes, 2013).
- Surrender was also unexpectedly unrelated to negative coping, suggesting that while it may foster positive religious experiences, it may not, necessarily, protect against negative outcomes (Clements et al., 2011).
- Regarding depression, anxiety, stress, and suicide risk, surrender may lessen symptoms via the reduction of rumination or worry, facilitated by trust in God’s control (Friederich & White, 2015; Kuhb et al., 2017), or as a result of doctrinal beliefs regarding suicide or the sanctity of life (Disayavanish & Disayavanish, 2007; Topper & Schuberg, 2014).

LIMITATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Our collegiate sample was primarily white and Christian, limiting generalizability; future research with diverse populations is needed.
- A culturally sensitive version of the STGS should be developed (e.g., surrender to deity, surrender to Allah), with items reflecting varied religious doctrines.
- Future research should examine the mechanisms by which surrender is related to mental health and suicide risk.

IMPLICATIONS

- The STGS has strong psychometric qualities, supporting its use in future studies, and our findings highlight the relation between surrender and specific aspects of mental health (Park et al., 2016).
- The cognitive-emotional state of surrender could be leveraged therapeutically, when appropriate, by encouraging spiritual exploration and enhancing appraisals of trust in a higher power (Losery, 2010; Rosquist et al., 2012).

HYPOTHESES

- We hypothesized that the Surrender to God Scale would be unifactorial in nature, and demonstrate sound psychometric properties, such as strong internal reliability, strong discrimination value, convergent validity with measures of intrinsic religiosity and measures emphasizing relationship with God (e.g., daily spiritual experiences, feeling forgiven by God, and coping), and divergent validity (lower correlations) with religious attendance, self-forgiveness, other-forgiveness, gratitude, awe, and wellness behaviors (Oliva et al., 2008).
- We also hypothesized that surrender would be inversely related to depression, anxiety, stress, and suicide risk.