

Strength of religious faith in the Portuguese Catholic elderly: Effects of aging, gender, education, and religious participation

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Abstract

This study aimed to adapt the Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire (SCSRFQ)-Brief Version to the Portuguese elderly, and to investigate the effect of relevant and easy to assess predictors on the strength of religious faith. Participants were 778 non-institutionalized Catholic elderly (65 or older), with a majority of women, young-olds (65-74), with four years or less of education, and practicing Catholics. The sample was randomly split in two ($n = 389$) to study the invariance and the structural validity of the SCSRFQ-Brief Version across both groups. Following this step, a multiple indicators and multiple causes model for age, gender, educational level, and religious participation influence on strength of religious faith was tested across groups. All predictors were statistically significant, with religious participation being the most influential. The study of religion in the elderly is enriched by resource to valid multiple-item instruments as the SCSRFQ-Brief Version.

Keywords: Religious faith, elderly, religious participation, structural equation modeling, cross-validation