

ITALIAN VALIDATION OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS INTERNALIZATION SCALE

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The Christian Religious Internalization Scale (CRIS; Ryan, Rigby, & King, 1993) measures two different types of internalization of religious values and behaviors: an introjected internalization, mainly based on seeking self and others' approval, and an identified internalization, that represents the adoption of religious behaviors as personally chosen and valued. In the present study, we tested the CRIS factor structure in an Italian sample, estimated its reliability and internal consistency, and explored its intercorrelation with other measures of religiosity and with two measures of personal well-being. Results showed that a 10-item version of the CRIS is a valid measure as it captures the different degrees of religious internalization in Italian youths; identification subscale (and not introjection) showed positive correlations with attending church and religious groups, with perceived subjective importance of religion and with satisfaction with life and religious well-being.

Key words: Religiosity; Religious internalization; Validation; Youths; Italy.

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Since Allport's (1950) writing about religiosity, scholars have tried to identify valid measures in order to grasp people's different ways of approaching religion. Nowadays, in the context of a new wave of interest for religiosity (e.g., Emmons, 1999; Sedikides, 2010), social psychologists have renovated the call for an approach to religiosity not as an undifferentiated and stable phenomenon, but as a more complex experience, which implies a more detailed analysis of the *different* ways of being religious (Pargament, 2002). In fact, religious people can feel and behave differently in how they live their faith: even among people belonging to the same religious denomination and to the same country, religious values can be internalized in different ways.

In particular, if we consider the relationship between Italian citizens and religious identity, we can see that it has been undergoing a rapid change in the last decades. The most evident feature of this transformation is the increased distance between youths and religion: 73% of Italian youths aged between 18 and 34 years declare to identify themselves in a religious faith, whereas this percentage is 80.2% for people aged 35-64 and 90% for people over 65 years (Rovati, 2011). Moreover, Italian youths are experiencing a radicalization of positions, with the number of nonbelievers experimenting an increase (recent data attest 27.6%), and, on the other hand, a stable percentage of church attendees (12.3%), and of youths who regularly attend religious services and are also involved in groups, volunteering, and so forth (8.7%) (Pagnoncelli, 2013).

During the last decades, several studies have tried to shed light on this multiplicity of ways of “being religious.” In particular, an interesting analysis of the concept of religious identity derives from self-determination theory, which offers a specific conceptualization of the different ways in which values are endorsed. This conceptualization is based on the concept of internalization, which implies that a value can be assumed by the individual with different degrees of autonomy (or self-determination), in a continuum between being endorsed because of external pressure or constriction and being endorsed because it is personally valued, in an independent and autonomous way, that is, a self-determined way (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Within this framework, it is possible to describe two types of internalization of religion that vary in their relative autonomy and, thus, correspond to different degrees of endorsement of religion: introjected internalization and identified internalization. The introjected internalization of religion (herein: introjection) represents an adoption of religious behaviors and values which is predominantly based on social pressures and associated with the seeking of approval from oneself and from others. On the opposite side, identified internalization of religion (herein: identification) refers to the adoption of religious values as personal values, personally chosen and valued, that is, a more autonomous and self-determined form of religiosity (Ryan et al., 1993).

The two types of internalization can also be interpreted as presenting different degrees of “maturity,” which are in line with previous research about religiosity. In fact, introjection emphasizes the search for approval, belonging and social recognition, in a way that can be similar to extrinsic religiosity (Allport & Ross, 1967), whereas identification stresses the personal importance of religiosity, as in Allport and Ross’ intrinsic scale. Moreover, identification includes some accents of the quest orientation (Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993), as it highlights the chance of learning new things provided by religious attendance.

Religious internalization has been assessed through the Christian Religious Internalization Scale (CRIS, also called Religious Self-Regulation Questionnaire; Ryan, Rigby, & King, 1993). This scale was developed for research with a Christian population and measures the motives underlying individual engagement in various religious behaviors. In the original scale, there are two reliable and validated subscales, Introjected Religiosity and Identified Religiosity, each composed by six items, which were originally tested with different Christian samples in the United States and showed good reliability properties.

These different ways of being religious, as defined in the self-determination theory framework and measured with the CRIS, are associated with different types of religious behaviors. Religious identification, for example, showed positive correlation with frequency of prayer (e.g., Neyrinck, Vansteenkiste, Lens, Duriez, & Hutsebaut, 2006), and was associated to more frequent family worship and larger financial donations to churches than religious introjection (Strahan & Craig, 1995). A more autonomous religious internalization was associated with religious observance in a sample of Jewish youths (Assor, Cohen-Malayev, Kaplan, & Friedman, 2005).

Introjection and identification have also been found to be associated with different psychological outcomes at an individual level. At the personal level, religious identification was found to correlate negatively with anxiety, depression, somatization and social dysfunction and positively with self-esteem, whereas introjection showed opposite sign correlations with the same outcomes (Ryan et al., 1993). The positive association with religious internalization and general wellbeing was confirmed in subsequent studies (e.g., Neyrinck et al., 2006). Interestingly, some scholars no-

ticed that the positive relationship between identification and wellbeing was mediated by a satisfying relationship with God (Kneezel, 2004, as cited in Neyrinck, Lens, & Vansteenkiste, 2005).

Recent studies have also showed that the two types of internalization are associated with different levels of prejudice. In particular, introjection is related with conformity values, whereas identification is connected with prosocial values, and these associations predict different levels of prejudice toward Muslims (Brambilla, Manzi, Regalia, & Verkuyten, 2013). This finding has a particular relevance in social psychology, due to the fact that the association between religiosity and prejudice has rarely showed such clear patterns with other measures of religious orientations (Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005).

The clear association between the two modes of religiosity measured by the CRIS and the outcomes described above (both personal and social outcomes) gives to the CRIS a particular interest. In fact, this scale seems to capture with particular efficacy the different nuances and emphasis associated with different ways of being religious and, thus, it seems to constitute an optimal answer to the call for valid instruments that we described above. Therefore, in the present study we tested the Italian validation of this scale and explored its association with behavioral and psychological outcomes.

THE PRESENT STUDY

Aims and Objectives

In the present study we addressed the study of the validation of the Christian Religious Internalization Scale in the Italian context. In particular, the study was designed in order to satisfy four principal aims: 1) to test the CRIS factor structure in an Italian sample; 2) to estimate the reliability and internal consistency and subscale intercorrelations of the CRIS; 3) to explore the intercorrelation of the CRIS with other measures of religiosity; 4) to test the intercorrelation of the CRIS subscales with personal wellbeing (both general satisfaction with life and religious wellbeing).

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 421 Italian youths all self-defined as Catholic, 41% males and 59% females, aged between 15 and 30 ($M_{age} = 19.89$, $SD = 2.72$); all participants were residing in Italy (51% in a big or medium-sized city, 49% in a small town), and 95% of them lived with parents.

Procedure

Participants were contacted by a member of the research team in schools and religious associations. Then, they responded to a questionnaire after giving informed consent. Participation was voluntary and was not compensated in any way.

Measures

Respondents completed the questionnaire in Italian. All the measures were translated into Italian with a back-translation procedure, as recommended by the guidelines of the International Test Commission (Hambleton, 1994). The survey included different measures of religiosity, demographic data and other variables which are not reported here.

The *Christian Religious Internalization Scale* (Ryan et al., 1993). Participants were asked to reply on a response scale from 1 (*not at all true*) to 7 (*very true*), to 12 items, six for introjected religiosity and six for identified religiosity. Two example items for the introjection subscale are: “An important reason why I attend church is because one is supposed to go to church,” “When I turn to God, I most often do it because I would feel guilty if I didn’t.” Example items for the identification subscale are: “When I turn to God, I most often do it because I find it satisfying to me,” “An important reason why I attend church is that by going to church I learn new things” (see Appendix A for the original scale and Appendix B for the Italian translation).

Subjective importance of religion. The subjective importance of religion was measured in response to the item “How important is religion to you?,” from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*).

Frequency of church attendance. Participants rated the frequency of their church attendance by answering the question “How often do you attend religious services?” on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*several times each day*).

Frequency of group attendance. Participants were asked to express the frequency of participation in activities of their religious groups (except religious services). The item was “How often do you attend the activities of your religious group?,” with scale answers from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*several times each day*).

Satisfaction with life scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Participants answered a 4-item scale about their current satisfaction with life, in which they had to express their agreement or disagreement with some statements, with scale answers from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Example items are: “In most ways my life is close to my ideal,” “I am satisfied with life.” Cronbach’s alpha was = .83.

Religious wellbeing (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982). Six items measured religious wellbeing, that is, the satisfaction associated with their relationship with God, expressing their agreement from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 6 (*completely agree*). Example items are: “I believe that God loves me,” “I have a personally meaningful relationship with God.” Alpha was = .88.

Demographics. Participants were asked to indicate their gender, age, the place where they lived, if they lived with parents or with others, and their perceived level of family wealth (“How would you describe your family’s level of financial wealth?,” from 1 = *very poor* to 5 = *very rich*).

Plan of Analysis

The sample was randomly divided into two groups by using the odd-even split method. The first group (Group A) consisted of 210 participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 19.94$, $SD = 2.72$; 64% females) and the second group (Group B) consisted of 211 participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 19.93$, $SD = 2.76$; 54% fe-

males). We first conducted exploratory factor analysis with Group A and then we conducted confirmatory factor analysis and scale reliability with Group B.

RESULTS

Exploratory factor analysis. Group A was used to determine the primary factor structure using exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The extraction method used was the principal axis factoring (PAF) with Varimax rotation. The analysis presented a significant Bartlett sphericity test: $\chi^2(66) = 1177.370$ ($p < .000$) and a satisfactory test of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) = .848. This means that a dimension-reducing procedure such as factor analysis is justified and that the items could be considered apt for factor analysis.

The EFA showed the presence of two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 (see Appendix C). The scree plot also confirmed the 2-factor structure (see Appendix D). The two factors explained a total of 51.40% of the variance. When analyzing factor loadings, the first factor appeared to be measured by items 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, and 11 (with loadings ranging from .53 to .85) and the second factor appeared to be measured by items 3, 5, 7, and 12 (with loadings from .56 to .80), as shown in Table 1. Items were retained for further analysis if they had a factor loading of .50 or higher. Of the 12 items from the original scale, 10 items were retained. Excluded items were item 2 (whose loadings were equally distributed between the two factors) and item 10 (which converged on the second factor but the loading was $< .50$).

TABLE 1
 Factor loadings, means and standard deviations of the 12 items

	Factor loadings		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	1	2		
Item 1	.753	.093	4.17	1.67
Item 4	.741	.144	3.74	1.61
Item 6	.846	-.029	4.60	1.54
Item 8	.811	.123	4.08	1.66
Item 9	.812	.087	4.40	1.53
Item 11	.530	.232	3.21	1.60
Item 2	.393	.378	2.75	1.41
Item 3	.017	.651	1.70	1.18
Item 5	.210	.768	2.68	1.35
Item 7	.237	.796	2.38	1.35
Item 10	-.068	.488	1.70	1.22
Item 12	.184	.557	2.89	1.79

Note. Values in boldface type represent loadings above .50. Factor loading 1 = identification, 2 = introjection. Each item had a response scale from 1 to 7.

Reliability, internal consistency and subscale intercorrelation. The coefficient alphas were .85 for the full scale (10 items), .89 for Identification subscale (six items), and .79 for Intro-

jection subscale (four items). A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to determine the subscale intercorrelation, which was of medium entity, $r(210) = .31, p < .001$.

Confirmatory factor analysis. Group B was used for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA, performed with AMOS 16.0). CFA tested the model that included 10 items and two latent variables related to each other. All the fit indexes suggested a good fit (goodness of fit index, GFI = .94; comparative fit index, CFI = .97; normed fit index, NFI = .94; root mean square error of approximation, RMSEA = .06, 90% confidence interval: .04-.09). All parameters were significant at $p < .001$ and ranged from .43 to .86, as reported in Figure 1. In order to test a possible concurrent model we tested an alternative model with one single factor: the fit indexes were less adequate and in some cases not acceptable (GFI = .81; CFI = .81; NFI = .78; RMSEA = .16). Moreover, given the almost satisfactory loading of item 10 in EFA, we also tested the CFA with item 10 included, but the fit indexes were poorer (GFI = .91; NFI = .89; CFI = .92; RMSEA = .09). Additionally, only item 10 did not reach a significant factor loading; thus, item 10 was removed.

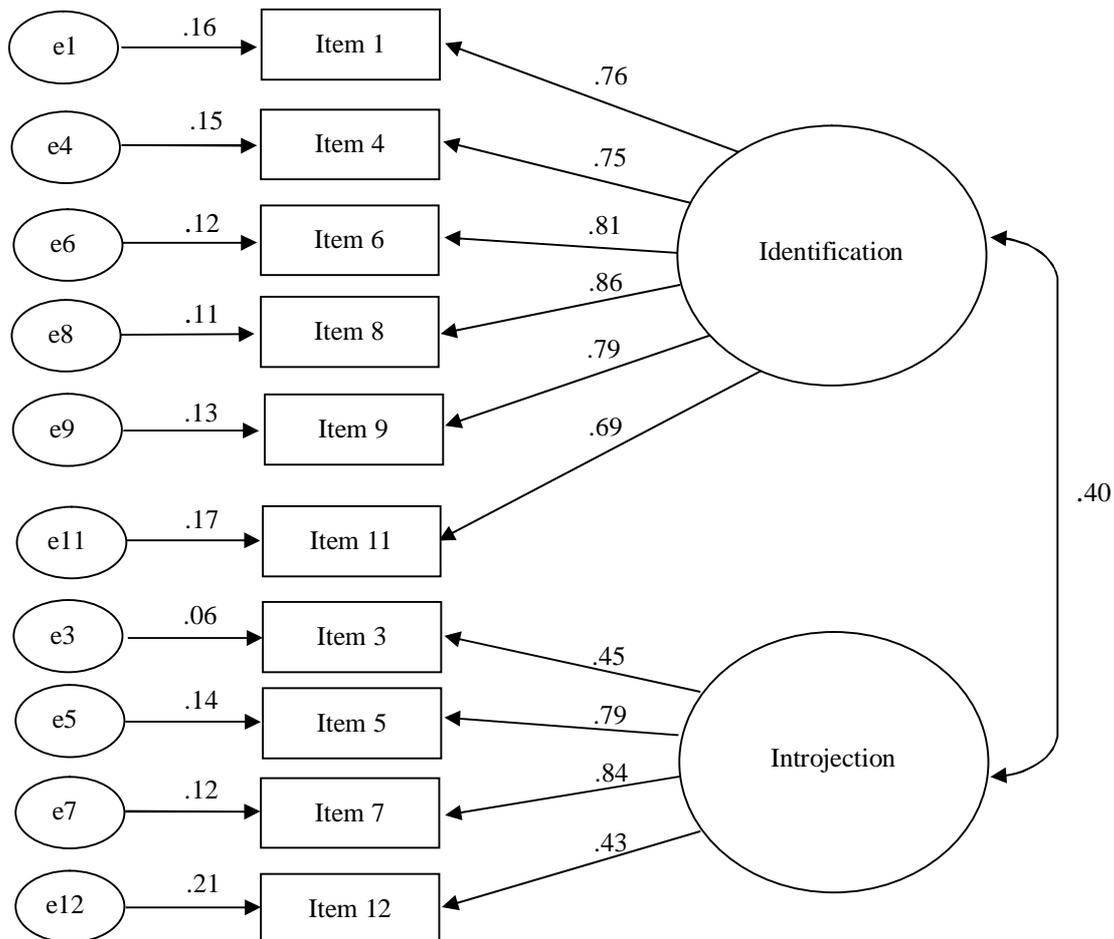


FIGURE 1
 Confirmatory factor analysis of the 10-item scale.

Intercorrelation with other measures of religiosity and with religious behaviors. In investigating different criteria for validity of scores on the CRIS, we hypothesized that scores on the two subscales of identification and introjection would be differently correlated with other measures of religious behaviors and to a single-item measure of religiosity. Table 2 shows that identification subscale is highly positively correlated with subjective importance of religion and also with church attending and participating in religious groups, whereas the correlation of introjection with the same measures is lower if not nonsignificant as in the case of group attending.

We also investigated whether differences in gender and age might occur. The correlations between age, gender and religious identification suggest that identification is higher in the female population and in the oldest participants.¹

Intercorrelation with personal wellbeing. Last, we explored the intercorrelations of the two CRIS subscales with a measure of satisfaction with life and with a measure of religious well-being. As shown in Table 2, the Pearson correlation coefficient showed a correlation of medium entity between identification subscale and satisfaction with life scale, whereas no significant linear correlation was found between the introjection subscale and satisfaction with life. In addition, the correlation with religious wellbeing was higher in the case of identification than in the case of introjection.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study investigated the Italian validation of the Christian Religious Internalization Scale (Ryan et al., 1993). First, the scale factor structure was explored: results showed that the scale presents a 2-factor structure, including the subscales of identification and introjection as in the original scale. Then, reliability was tested and the two subscales proved to have good internal consistency. Last, intercorrelations of the two subscales with other measures of religiosity showed that identification, and not introjection, was positively and strongly correlated with participating in religious activities, with the subjective importance of religion and with personal wellbeing; also, religious identification seems to be higher than introjection in female participants and in older participants.

These findings confirmed not only the psychometric properties of the 2-factor scale but also the interpretation of the two factors: in fact, the association of identification with perceiving religion as more important for oneself and with greater church attendance supports the hypothesis of identification as a full endorsement of religious values and behaviors, versus introjection as a more extrinsic way of being religious. Moreover, the correlation between identification and satisfaction with life and between identification and religious wellbeing confirm previous findings about the positive connection between identification and better personal outcomes.

Regarding the positive correlation of identification with age, this pattern of relation was also found in one of the samples which participated in the original validation (see Ryan et al., 1993) and it could concur to the idea of a more “mature” form of religiosity associated with identification rather than with introjection. Finally, identification is higher for female participants, reflecting a peculiarity of Italian youths’ religiosity which was also found in other studies (Grassi, 2006). Thus, these findings can be interpreted as in line with previous literature about religious identity, age and gender. Notwithstanding this, we believe that future research should usefully further explore the reliability of CRIS’ use with older populations, such as adults and the elderly.

TABLE 2
 Measures' intercorrelations ($n = 421$)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Identification	–								
2. Introjection	.32**	–							
3. Gender (1 = male, 2 = female)	.13**	–.01	–						
4. Age	.24**	–.02	.01	–					
5. Subjective importance of religion	.74**	.19**	.13*	.25**	–				
6. Church attending	.58**	.20**	.09	.25**	.60**	–			
7. Religious group attending	.46**	.09	.05	.17**	.57**	.63**	–		
8. Satisfaction with life	.35**	.06	.04	.06	.23**	.17**	.18**	–	
9. Religious wellbeing	.73**	.22**	.13**	.29**	.64**	.49**	.42**	.37**	–
Mean	4.04	2.36	–	19.89	3.43	3.26	2.45	4.55	3.66
SD	1.36	1.04	–	2.72	0.94	1.11	1.36	1.29	1.02

Note. * Correlation is significant at the .05 level (two-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed).

The present validation study can be of interest for a variety of topics in social psychology. In particular, the use of the CRIS for research with youths could allow scholars to take a deeper look at people's religiosity compared with simple measures of religious affiliation or religious behaviors. For example, both people high on introjection and people high on identification could affirm that they take part in religious services and activities, but we know from the CRIS subscales that the reasons for engaging in these activities are different; moreover, these different motives for endorsing religious behaviors such as church attendance lead to different patterns of participation, with highly identified people taking part both in religious services and group activities and highly introjected people taking part only in religious services and not in group activities. In another study we investigated if and how group activities can influence youth's religious internalization (Brambilla, Assor, Manzi, & Regalia, 2014).

In sum, in the actual panorama characterized by a variety of different ways of belonging to a religious denomination, more sophisticated measures of religious identity are strongly recommended. The CRIS seems to be a very useful instrument not only in the field of religious identity study, but in different psychosocial research that would consider youth's religiosity as a possible source of influence in youth's life. The 10-item formulation proposed here seemed to be reliable and apt to be easily used in research; however, where the original 12-item scale is preferred, we suggest to refine the translation of items 2 and 10 in order to make them more representative of the introjection factor.

NOTE

1. In order to further investigate age differences, we split the sample into two groups, late adolescents up to 19 years and young adults from 20 years or more, and tested for mean differences in all the measures considered. The only significant mean difference regarded church attendance: mean of church attendance was higher for young adults ($M_{\text{age}} = 3.67$, $SD = .91$) than for late adolescents ($M_{\text{age}} = 3.04$, $SD = 1.1$). Furthermore, we tested the scale invariance in the two age groups and results showed nonsignificant differences between the two groups, $\Delta\chi^2(11) = 6.532$, $p = ns$. Given these results, we considered the sample as a whole, without distinction between youths and young adults.

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APPENDIX B

CRIS Italian translation

Ora leggerai quattro affermazioni, ognuna delle quali è seguita da tre possibili risposte. Leggi l'affermazione e poi per ogni risposta indica quanto è vera per te.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>per niente vera</i>		<i>in parte vera</i>			<i>assolutamente vera</i>	

A. Una ragione per cui penso sia importante condividere la mia fede con gli altri è:

1. perché Dio è importante per me e mi piacerebbe che anche altre persone lo conoscessero*
2. perché mi sentirei a disagio con me stesso se non lo facessi***
3. perché voglio che gli altri cristiani mi approvino**

B. Quando mi rivolgo a Dio, molto spesso lo faccio perché:

4. mi fa piacere passare il tempo con Lui*
5. mi sentirei in colpa se non lo facessi**
6. trovo che sia una cosa che mi arricchisce*

C. Una ragione per cui penso sia importante la preghiera personale è:

7. perché se non lo facessi mi sentirei in colpa**
8. perché pregare mi dà un senso di pienezza*
9. perché trovo che la preghiera sia una cosa buona per me*

D. Una ragione importante per cui vado in chiesa è:

10. perché in Italia è normale andare in chiesa***
11. perché andando in chiesa imparo cose nuove*
12. perché mi sento in dovere di farlo**

Note. * = Identified Regulation ** = Introjected Regulation *** = items dropped from the final version.

APPENDIX C

Eigenvalues (extraction method: Principal axis factoring)

Factor	Initial eigenvalues			Extraction sums of squared loadings			Rotation sums of squared loadings		
	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	4.717	39.310	39.310	4.290	35.751	35.751	3.723	31.028	31.028
2	2.347	19.562	58.873	1.878	15.647	51.398	2.444	20.370	51.398
3	.919	7.659	66.532						
4	.772	6.434	72.966						
5	.652	5.431	78.397						
6	.575	4.791	83.188						
7	.491	4.092	87.279						
8	.441	3.674	90.953						
9	.348	2.900	93.853						
10	.301	2.511	96.364						
11	.246	2.046	98.411						
12	.191	1.589	100.000						

APPENDIX D

Scree plot

