

DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INSTRUMENT
TO MEASURE THE STRESS LEVEL
OF MEN AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS IN MIDLIFE

178000

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE
FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
ARTS AND SCIENCES
DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

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February, 1992



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CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

The focus of this study was the development and validation of an instrument to measure the stress level of men and women religious in midlife, be they priests, Brothers, or Sisters.

The instrument development project consisted of three phases: (a) developing the content domain of the instrument, (b) validity and reliability studies, and (c) refining the instrument, including instructions for administration and scoring, as well as the construction of percentile ranks.

Phase I consisted of the following steps:

1. Interview with members of the target population, as well as with experts who have had experience dealing with middle-aged religious as superior or spiritual director.
2. Survey of the concepts of stress, its sources and indicators, and stressful behaviors as experienced by the respondents.
3. Construction of the item pool based on the responses of the subjects in #1 and #2.
4. "Judging" of the item pool by two sets of "judges" with the end in view of discarding those items they considered not relevant.



Phase II was accomplished by:

1. Field testing of the preliminary form.
2. Factor analysis for construct validity and identify the factors that contribute to the scores of the instrument, as well as analyze the interrelationships of the data.
3. Item analysis of the data to determine reliability of the instrument.

Phase III centered on the final drafting of the form, improving the instructions for administration and scoring of the Inventory, and the construction of norms.

Two groups of middle-aged religious for Phase I and another group for Phase II took part in the study. Four religious superiors and three spiritual directors provided the concept of stress. Two sets of "judges": one set consisting of 35 Psychology majors, 22 Guidance Counselors, and four college Psychology instructors; the other set made up of four Ph.D.s, 1 major superior, and 1 spiritual director, helped choose for elimination the items which were not relevant.

A total of 167 middle-aged men and women religious participated in the different steps of Phase I and 254 in the validity study of the Inventory.

The findings were as follows:

Sources of Stress: In the search for content domain, the focus of the study was the question: What are the sources and indicators of stress as experienced by men and women religious in



midlife; how does stress manifest itself in their behavior?

An examination of the subjects' responses revealed that stress in midlife has its source in: interpersonal relationships, the apostolate, the wear and tear of community living, and the family of the religious. Inasmuch as the syndrome of stress is a psychological one, it manifests itself not just in the external behavior, but also in the way the individual perceives other people, the world, and self. This is translated in the way he/she thinks, feels, reacts, and acts. Feelings of insecurity, anxiety over many things, negative views and attitudes, conflicts in interpersonal relationships are therefore the common indicators of stress in midlife.

The preliminary item pool was submitted for judging by raters and by experts. Items judged not relevant by a cut-off percentage of concurrence in each group were eliminated. After the judging of the first group (concurrence cut-off: 70%), 14 were eliminated. The remaining 173 items were next submitted for judging by the experts who rated by 80% concurrence. Seven more items were discarded.

Phase II focused on the reliability and validity studies, specifically on the determination of the internal consistency and content and construct validation of the instrument. When tested for internal consistency, the reliability coefficient of the factors, taken separately, were: for Factor 1, Factor 2, Factor 3, and Factor 4: .9329, .9329, .8602, and .9241 respectively.

The factor analysis results showed the preponderance of four main



factors. Tentatively labeled, they are Factor 1 - Negative View of Self, Others, and the World; Factor 2 - Feelings of Insecurity; Factor 3 - Temporal Concerns, and Factor 4 - Anxieties about the Future.

Items analysis gave the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis, as well as item-total correlation. This analysis resulted in 87 items. However, because of the overlapping of some items, only 52 items were left for the final form: 10 items in Factor 1, 16 in Factor 2, 8 in Factor 3, and 18 in Factor 4.

Based on the results of the 254 respondents who had completed the SLI, norms were constructed in terms of percentile ranks.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were suggested by an analysis of the study:

1. The sources of stress among men and women religious in midlife are interpersonal relationships both inside and outside the community, their job, community living itself, and the family they left.

2. Based on the results of the statistical analyses of the data, it may be concluded that the instrument is valid and reliable.

Recommendations

This is an initial effort at constructing an instrument to



measure the stress level specifically of religious men and women in midlife. It is a humble beginning, but at this point of its development, the Inventory can be used to determine the level of stress of the target population, the results of which can be used as a first step in determining which religious may be in need of professional help. This will therefore be helpful as material for the helping intervention. Inasmuch as the items are indicative of stressful behavior, the total score reflects the stress level of the respondent. Therefore, the higher the score, the higher the level of the stress experience, and possibly be indicative of a need for counseling and further help for the subject.

It is recommended that the Inventory be used as a part of a battery of psychological tests to aid in the counseling of middle-aged religious. It will provide some glimpse into the psychological state of the person so as to determine the need for professional counseling.

It is moreover recommended that further studies be made:

1. on variables that correlate with stress; e.g. family and educational/religious background, position(s) held in the community/diocese, apostolate engaged in, place of assignment, or tenure.
2. on stress level of male and female religious separately.

