Summary

For use in Lutheran and other Protestant samples this author has evaluated Batson & Ventis’ Doctrinal Orthodoxy Scale and Woodrum’s Moral Conservatism Index, and developed and evaluated Kaldestad’s Liberal Belief Scale, and Kaldestad’s Humanistic Morality Scale. The content validity, the discriminant validity, the internal consistency, the factor structure and the inter-correlations of the scales have been investigated in three Norwegian samples. Only subjects with some positive attitude to Christianity were included in the samples. These two scales for assessment of doctrinal belief and these two scales for assessment of moral attitudes are found to be satisfactory and fruitful for use in the empirical research in the psychology of religion in Lutheran and other Protestant samples in Norway, and they should also be considered for use internationally.

1. Introduction

1.1. The relevance for practical theology and psychiatry

For psychiatrists it is important to have knowledge about the whole human being, including how the patients’ religiosity may affect their personality and mental health, and vice versa. It is important for ministers and pastoral counsellors to have knowledge about how the clients’ personality and mental health may affect their Christian belief and morality. Only with such knowledge can psychiatrists and pastoral counsellors, each from their own professional background and points of view, help the patient/client in the best possible way.

The purpose of this study was to develop valid, reliable and relevant Norwegian scales to assess Christian doctrinal beliefs and moral attitudes, for use in empirical research in the psychology of religion in Norway. Hopefully, the Norwegian scales also may be translated for use in other countries.

1.2. Theoretical background

In the international empirical research in the psychology of religion investigations
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of the relationships among religiosity, personality and mental health have not reached clear conclusions.

Until recently in Norway we had no empirical quantitative research in the psychology of religion. The author in cooperation with a hospital chaplain has started to investigate the relationships between Christian religiosity, personality and mental health in Norwegian samples.

Ninety-two percent of the Norwegian population are members of the Norwegian Lutheran State Church, and most other Norwegians are also Protestants. From early in this century there has been a schism between orthodox and liberal doctrines in our country. From the eighteenth century we have had a strong pietistic movement with a rather restrictive, Christian morality. After World War II many Christians in Norway developed more lenient Christian or humanistic moral attitudes.

We have not had any Norwegian questionnaires until now, for the assessment of orthodox and liberal doctrinal beliefs or for conservative Christian or humanistic morality attitudes. This author, therefore, found it necessary to try out Norwegian translations of internationally used questionnaires in these fields, and when suitable questionnaires did not exist, to develop new scales for use in Lutheran and other Protestant samples. The special Norwegian religious and moral history and circumstances were taken into consideration.

1.3. Empirical evaluative research on relevant religiousness questionnaires

Basset et al. (1981) made an overview of the attempts to assess religious variables reported in Psychological Abstracts from 1927 to 1977. They developed The Shepherd Scale themselves with a good validity and reliability for Christian living based on The New Testament.

Fullerton & Hunsberger (1982) were of the opinion that there was a lack of a reliable, valid and suitable assessment instrument for orthodox doctrinal belief in the research literature until then, and developed their own 24-item Christian Orthodoxy Scale, which they found unidimensional, valid and reliable. Later Hunsberger (1989) developed a satisfactory six-item short version of the scale (SCO).

With their starting point in the questionnaire of Stark & Glock (1970), Lupfer & Wald (1985) added some new items, and based upon Principal Component Factor Analysis they chose 13 items which loaded highly on the first factor, and got their Christian Orthodoxy Scale with a very high internal consistency.