

RESEARCH INFORMATION

The Religious Identity Scale

Development, structure, scoring, and preliminary psychometric evidence

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English-language research brief based on the author's book chapter in *Religious Identity of Young Poles*. The Polish acronym STR (Skala Tożsamości Religijnej) is retained throughout.

The Religious Identity Scale (STR) is a 33-item self-report instrument designed to assess five dynamic processes involved in the development of religious identity: exploration in breadth, exploration in depth, ruminative exploration, commitment making, and identification with commitments.

Purpose of this brief. This document provides international researchers with a concise account of the theoretical basis, development, administration, scoring, preliminary psychometric evidence, and appropriate limits of interpretation of the STR.

1. Conceptual foundation

The STR was inspired by the Dimensions of Identity Development Scale (DIDS) developed by Koen Luyckx and colleagues and by its Polish adaptation (DIDS/PL) prepared by Anna I. Brzezińska and colleagues. The STR transfers the five-process identity framework to the domain of religion and spirituality. It is intended to capture how individuals explore religious or worldview options, evaluate existing commitments, experience uncertainty, make commitments, and identify with the commitments they have made.

The scale focuses on processes of religious identity formation rather than on the intensity of religiosity alone. Accordingly, scores should not be interpreted as direct measures of faith, religious orthodoxy, spiritual maturity, or mental health.

2. Dimensions assessed by the STR

Exploration in Breadth (EB). Active consideration of different religious, spiritual, or worldview possibilities in relation to personal goals, beliefs, values, lifestyle, and future development.

Exploration in Depth (ED). Reflective evaluation of existing religious commitments, including seeking information and examining whether current choices correspond with personal standards and needs.

Ruminative Exploration (RE). Repetitive, difficult-to-resolve concern about religious identity questions and commitments. Higher scores may reflect uncertainty, tension, or difficulty reaching satisfactory answers; they are not diagnostic of a mental disorder.

Commitment Making (CM). The degree to which a person has made choices and commitments that are important to the development of their religious identity.

Identification with Commitments (IC). The degree to which religious commitments have been internalized and are experienced as personally meaningful, coherent, and consistent with one's present and anticipated way of life.

3. Instrument development

3.1 Item generation and content review

An initial pool of items was generated to represent the five theoretical dimensions. Psychologists and theologians then served as expert judges and rated the correspondence between each item and the theoretical description of its intended dimension on a seven-point scale. Sixty-nine items with the strongest content-based evaluations were retained for pilot testing.

3.2 Pilot analysis and item reduction

Pilot data were examined using exploratory factor-analytic procedures with a principal-components extraction. Five components were retained. Items were removed when their loading was below .45 or when similarly sized loadings on more than one component prevented an unambiguous assignment. This process reduced the instrument from 69 to 33 items. The resulting item assignments corresponded with the theoretical subscales in 98% of cases. Where conceptually adjacent dimensions were difficult to separate—particularly EB versus ED and CM versus IC—item assignment was guided by the pattern and magnitude of factor loadings together with the theoretical definitions.

3.3 Temporal stability

A subsample of 33 participants completed the instrument again after four weeks. Test–retest coefficients ranged from .64 to .94 across the five subscales. The factor loadings of items retained in the final version ranged from .605 to .866.

4. Administration and scoring

Respondents indicate how strongly each statement describes them using a seven-point response scale:

Response	Anchor
1	Strongly disagree
2–6	Intermediate degrees of agreement
7	Strongly agree

The instrument contains no reverse-scored items. For each subscale, calculate the arithmetic mean of the responses to the items listed below. Mean scores therefore remain on the original 1–7 metric, allowing direct comparison of a respondent’s relative standing across the five processes. A total STR score is not recommended because the five subscales represent distinct identity processes rather than a single continuum.

Code	Subscale	Item numbers	Items
EB	Exploration in Breadth	3, 8, 21, 26	4
ED	Exploration in Depth	6, 14, 22, 27, 29, 32	6
RE	Ruminative Exploration	2, 7, 10, 13, 19	5
CM	Commitment Making	1, 16, 18, 24, 30, 33	6
IC	Identification with Commitments	4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 15, 17, 20, 23, 25, 28, 31	12

Missing data. The source chapter does not specify a rule for handling missing responses. Researchers should define and report an a priori rule rather than imputing scores without justification.

5. Preliminary psychometric evidence

5.1 Test–retest stability

Scale	Time 1 M	Time 1 SD	Time 2 M	Time 2 SD	r
EB	4.58	1.45	4.81	1.55	.69
ED	3.40	1.22	3.34	0.93	.68
RE	5.20	1.11	5.14	1.10	.64
CM	1.89	0.88	2.01	0.99	.86
IC	2.18	1.23	2.09	1.10	.94

Note. Four-week interval; n = 33; all reported correlations significant at $p < .01$.

5.2 Internal consistency

Subscale	Code	Cronbach's α
Exploration in Breadth	EB	.796
Exploration in Depth	ED	.845
Ruminative Exploration	RE	.773
Commitment Making	CM	.866
Identification with Commitments	IC	.952

The coefficients indicate acceptable to very high internal consistency in the reported sample. The particularly high coefficient for IC should be examined in future studies for possible item redundancy as well as reliability.

5.3 Relations among the five dimensions

	EB	ED	RE	CM	IC
EB	—	.165	.111	–.245	–.199
ED	.165	—	.261	.228	.464
RE	.111	.261	—	–.302	–.086
CM	–.245	.228	–.302	—	.679
IC	–.199	.464	–.086	.679	—

The strongest association was observed between CM and IC ($r = .679$), consistent with their conceptual proximity. EB was negatively associated with CM and IC, whereas ED was positively associated with RE, CM, and IC. RE was negatively associated with CM. These associations broadly correspond to the process model that informed the scale, but their magnitudes should not be treated as evidence of causal relationships.

5.4 Social desirability

STR subscale	Spearman's ρ with KAS	p
EB	-.001	.984
ED	.060	.141
RE	-.139	< .05
CM	.147	< .001
IC	.132	< .05

Because self-reports concerning religion may be influenced by impression management, the main study included the Social Desirability Questionnaire (KAS) developed by R. Ł. Drwal and J. T. Wilczyńska. EB and ED were not significantly associated with KAS scores. RE, CM, and IC showed statistically significant but small associations. These findings suggest limited shared variance with social desirability in the reported sample; they do not rule out all forms of response bias.

6. Interpretation of scores

Each score describes the relative intensity of one identity process. Interpretation should therefore focus on the configuration of subscale scores rather than labeling a single score as inherently healthy or unhealthy.

- Higher EB indicates broader consideration of religious or worldview alternatives.
- Higher ED indicates more active evaluation of commitments already made.
- Higher RE indicates greater difficulty resolving religious identity questions; it should be interpreted cautiously and never used as a clinical diagnosis.
- Higher CM indicates greater clarity in making religious identity commitments.
- Higher IC indicates stronger internalization of and identification with those commitments.

The five subscale means can also be used in person-centred analyses. The original study used k-means clustering to identify configurations interpreted as religious identity statuses. Cluster solutions are sample-dependent, however, and should be derived and validated anew in each population rather than transferred as fixed cut-off categories.

No diagnostic cut-offs. The available evidence does not support clinical thresholds, normative categories, or universal labels such as low, average, and high. Group comparisons and individual profiles should be interpreted with reference to the study sample, design, and cultural context.

7. Pilot sample

The pilot study included 138 full-time university students: 61 psychology students and 77 theology students; 65 participants were men and 73 were women. Because the sample was relatively small, educationally specific, and drawn from a religiously and culturally particular context, generalization beyond similar Polish student populations requires further evidence.

8. Limitations and priorities for further validation

- The initial evidence was based on a modest and specialized student sample.

- The exploratory component structure should be tested with confirmatory factor analysis in independent and more diverse samples.
- Measurement invariance should be examined across gender, age, educational background, religious affiliation, and cultural or language groups.
- External validity should be evaluated against theoretically related and distinct constructs.
- Temporal stability should be replicated in a larger sample.
- Potential redundancy within the IC subscale should be assessed.
- Translations and cross-cultural adaptations require systematic linguistic validation; direct translation of the Polish items is not sufficient.

9. Appropriate use and research collaboration

The STR is intended for research on religious identity development and related psychological or social processes. It should not be used as a stand-alone clinical, pastoral, legal, or diagnostic instrument. Researchers should report the language version, administration conditions, scoring rules, reliability estimates for their own sample, and any modifications to item wording.

Researchers interested in international collaboration, translation, cross-cultural adaptation, or further psychometric validation are invited to contact the author. Permission and conditions of access to the complete item set should be agreed with the author before administration, reproduction, translation, or online implementation.

Recommended citation

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