


# Standardization of *Taqwa* (Piety) Scale for Muslims: An Exploratory Study

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## Abstract

Taqwa (piety) is a construct in Islamic psychology. It correlates with a large number of behavior such as sustainable capacity building, Islamic leadership, employees' happiness, and workplace deviance. But the earlier studies have failed to capture the assessment of taqwa from the Qur'anic perspective. In the present study, an attempt is made to standardize a taqwa scale. In the first phase, a pool of 30 items was generated for each of the three domains of the construct (Faith in God, Love for God, and Fear of God), and subject matter experts judge the items' content for the relevance, clarity, and simplicity on a 4 point Likert rating scale. Item content validity index and interrater reliability of each item were calculated. In the final version, 28 items remained content valid. A total of 229 Muslim students purposively drawn, completed the measure. The mean age of the participants was 22.66 (SD= 1.84). The Taqwa Scale consisted of twelve items with 6 point-Likert rating scale. Exploratory Factor Analysis yielded three factors, namely, faith in God (7 items), love for God (3 items), and fear of God (2 items). Content validity, inter-rater reliability, factorial validity, composite reliability, and construct validity provide strong evidence of the reliability and validity of the taqwa Scale.

## INTRODUCTION

In Islam, *Taqwa* (piety) is a symbol of virtuous character of human kind that denotes “*Waqaf*”, human instinct to guard against harmful. It is cardinal virtue of faith, fear of almighty, the love for greatness of Almighty (Aabed, 2006; Zubair, 2010), and inner-consciousness of a person towards Allah (Rahman & Shah, 2015; Khan et al., 2010). It relates to moral development of human kind and gives a sense of guilt and regret when the person commits sin and is the fear that constrains a person from sinning when nobody familiar is around (Jabeen, 2018). *Taqwa* has also been conceptualized as a state rather than virtue or trait of Islamic personality, a state of highest human's spiritual closeness to God (Triyuwono, 2016).

### *Taqwa*: Concept and Definitions

*Taqwa* is an Arabic word which generally implies righteousness of the fear of Allah. The Arabic meaning of *Taqwa* is self-defence and avoidance (Yusof et al., 2013). *Taqwa* is the major attribute of Islam and can be defined as “God's consciousness” (Maham & Bhatti, 2019). Furthermore, it refers to volition with God in mind for daily activities, ranging from fear to awe to mindful awareness (Robinson-Bertoni, 2017). Some of the notable definitions

by Islamic scholars are given below in terms of the three (fear of Allah, faith in Allah, and love for Allah) Qur'anic aspects of *Taqwa*.

Hamid (2003), in defining *taqwa* is fear for Allah, stated that it refers primarily to the strength of one's soul in its relationship to God as indicated by one's instinctive fears of God to the extent that one is afraid of committing. In addition, Mohammad et al. (2015) stated *taqwa* is the inner consciousness and fear of one's duty and accountability towards Allah. Maham & Bhatti (2019) found meaning for this term that is avoidance of Allah's punishment by following his commands and avoiding what is forbidden. The heart's state of consciousness of the presence of Allah and anticipating His acceptance while keeping away from doing wrong in fear of His punishment. Maham & Bhatti (2019), defining *taqwa* is faith in Allah, denotes that a believer's strict observance of the commandments of the *shariah* (Islamic laws) and divine laws of nature and life. According to Ahmad & Khan (2016), *Taqwa* is an essential element in Islamic spirituality and the aim of the Islamic belief system and is rooted firmly in the Islamic creed of absolute monotheism. Lastly, love for Allah emphasis on piety in human life creates an ever-deepening awareness of the perpetual presence of God. Allah loveth the beneficent (3: 134).

Hassan (2005) has theorized *taqwa* on the ground of ideological, ritualistic, experiential, intellectual, and consequential dimension of religion given by Stark and Globe (1968). He conceptualized Muslim piety on the basis of five dimensions where ideological dimension referred to as belief in Allah, belief in Qur'anic miracles, belief in life after death, belief in the existence of Devils, and belief that only those who believe in Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) can go to heaven. The ritualistic dimension of Muslim piety referred to as "*Salat* (daily prayers) and *Wudhu* (the cleansing of face and feet prior to performing the prayers); the devotional dimension referred as consulting Qur'an to make daily decisions and private prayer; the experiential dimension referred to as feeling of being in the presence of Allah; a feeling of being punished by Allah for some wrong done; a feeling of being tempted by the devil; the consequential dimension referred to as understanding the warranting beliefs about the existence of Allah.

Another theory is virtue ethics theory, propounded by Aristotle (350 BCE) (Ross & Brown, 2009). According to this theory what is right and wrong is based on specific trait and virtue every person must follow (Al-Aidaros & Shamsudin, 2013). Virtue theory emphasize on character rather than action, good person rather than good action (LaVan & Matrin, 2008). Self-control or self-restrain is one out of seven virtues suggested by Aristotle in this theory (Rachels & Rachels, 1993). In Islam, *taqwa* is also a virtue that relates to self-restrain from wrongdoing because of fear of Almighty (Hassan, 2005; Jabeen, 2018).

The measurement theories of Islamic religiosity have given different explanations. According to Krauss et al. (2005) the concept of *taqwa* represents Islamic religiosity which is a multidimensional construct that represents knowledge (*ilm*), belief (*iman*), practice (*amal*), consequences (*natajah*), and realization of excellence (*ihsan*).

### Empirical Studies

Few studies have examined the association of *taqwa* with employees' happiness (Maham & Bhatti, 2019), sustainable capacity building (Sarif, 2016), business leadership effectiveness (Sulaiman et al., 2015), workplace deviance (Bhatti et al., 2015) and Islamic leadership (Abed, 2006; Mohammad et al., 2015). Some of these studies have examined *taqwa* as a trait of *Muttaqqeen* (those who attain *taqwa*) and have made an attempt to conceptualize it as a bicomponential construct namely, Islamic Spirituality and Islamic social responsibility (Kamil et al., 2010). Hassan (2005) has taken into consideration the universal nature of piety and advocated that it is found in all religions as common. Khwajah (2012) has conceptualized *taqwa* both in terms of fear of God, adoration of the creator, and values like

empathy, equity, kindness, forgiveness, generosity, reverence for parents, mutual respect and fidelity to spouse, patience, and contentment, self-control, humility, and quest for ego-transcendence. Therefore, it seems that there is a lack of cohesion within the literature of *taqwa*.

One probable reason is adoption of different methodology. Those who adopted the social constructivist approach used interview as a method to highlight the dimensions of *taqwa*. They identified obedience and ethics as the underlying dimensions of *taqwa* through participants' interview (Kamil et al., 2010). Therefore, it is needed to adopt the systematic Qura'nic theory of *tawqa* which outlines the three aspects of it namely fear of Allah, faith in Allah and love for Allah.

### **Taqwa: A Qur'anic Perspective**

*Taqwa* is defined in the Qur'an as the whole pursuit of virtue and avoidance of dis-virtue in general (Dar, 1963). People with *taqwa* are self-controlled people who let the law of God rule them. *Taqwa* is dependent on and is the result of faith in God and adoration of Him (2: 21). According to the Qur'an, *taqwa* has three dimensions; faith in God, Love for God and fear of God. Emphasis on piety in human life creates an ever-deepening awareness of the perpetual presence of God. The presence of *taqwa* in people saves them from destruction (27: 53; 41: 18), helps them maintain God's Command in conjugal life (4: 129), in social life (2: 177), and assists them in faithfully fulfilling social obligation (25: 63; 25: 74). The motive of people with *taqwa* is not self-interest, but seeking of good for its own sake (2: 272), for which they may even sacrifice their lives (2: 207). The aim of such people is mainly a desire to increase self-purification without any idea of winning favor from any expecting any reward what so ever (92: 18; 2: 21). The three components of the construct fear, faith and love for Allah is found in many verses of the Holy Qur'an (9: 109; 4: 59; 2: 282; 3: 175; 5: 8; 7: 96; 65: 2-4)

### **Research gap and rationale of the study**

Thus, it can be concluded that the literature on Islamic perspective to *Taqwa* appears to show an increasingly complex interpretation of the construct owing to the difference in the scholar's approach (Kamil et al., 2010; Hassan, 2005). Furthermore, none of these scholars empirically examined the theoretical structure of *taqwa* explained in the Holy Qur'an (Maham & Bhatti, 2019; Kamil et al., 2010).

### **Objective**

The present study aimed at standardizing *Taqwa* scale from Qur'anic perspective by using an empirical approach.

## **METHODS**

### **Items writing and content validity**

Initially 30 items representing the construct were pooled by cogitating the meaning and components of *Taqwa* as explained in Qur'an in terms of Faith in God, Love for God and Fear of God. After writing the items of scale, subject matter experts were approached who were representing to different countries and were well-versed with the Qur'anic perspective. Ten subject matter experts were asked to read the items and judge the content, they were four experts working in the area of Islamic Psychology belonging to UAE, USA, and India. In addition, six Professors teaching in the Centre of Qur'anic Studies and Department of Islamic Studies, in India were taken as subject matter experts. At the first step to content validity, experts' proposed words which reflect the content more appropriately, were incorporated and then the corrected version of the scale was sent back to them to judge the content validity of

each item in terms of item's relevance, clarity and simplicity on a 4-point Likert rating scale given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Showing the scales for rating items

Relevance	Clarity	Simplicity
1 [Not Relevant]	1 [Not clear]	1 [Doubtful]
2 [Item needs some revision]	2 [Item needs some revision]	2 [Item needs some revision]
3 [Relevant but needs minor revision]	3 [Clear but needs minor revision]	3 [Simple but needs minor revision]
4 [Very relevant]	4 [Very Clear]	4 [Very simple]

### Item-Content Validity Index (I-CVI)

I-CVI of each item was calculated by adding the number of those experts who judged the particular items as relevant (rating 3 or 4) and dividing the value by the total number of experts technically known as Universal Agreement Method (Polite et al., 2007). The value of I-CVI basically reflects the proportion of agreement among the experts regarding the relevance, clarity, and simplicity of the scale items measuring the theoretical construct and its value range between zero to one (Lynn, 1986; Waltz & Bausell, 1981). In this study, the evaluation criteria for interpreting the value of I-CVI using Zamanzadeh (2015) suggestions, range from 0 to 1 where I-CVI > .79, the item is relevant, between .70 and .79, the item needs

**Table 2.** Item- Level Content Validity Index (I-CVI) and the Modified Kappa for agreement of relevance ( $k^*$ ) of *Taqwa* Scale

Item	Relevance (rating 3 or 4)	Not Relevant (rating 1 or 2)	I-CVIs	$k^*$
1	8	2	.80	.79
2	7	3	.70	.68
3	9	1	.90	.90
4	8	2	.80	.79
5	10	0	1	1
6	9	1	.90	.90
7	8	2	.80	.79
8	9	1	.90	.90
9	10	1	1	1
10	9	1	.90	.90
11	7	3	.70	.68
12	9	1	.90	.90
13	6	4	.60	.55
14	10	0	1	1
15	8	2	.80	.79
16	7	3	.70	.68
17	8	2	.80	.79
18	9	1	.90	.90
19	8	2	.80	.79
20	9	1	.90	.90
21	7	3	.70	.68
22	8	2	.80	.79
23	8	2	.80	.79
24	8	2	.80	.79
25	8	2	.80	.79
26	9	1	.90	.90
27	9	1	.90	.90
28	10	0	1	1

Note:

I-CVI Mean = .92

$k^* > .75$  = Excellent, .60 - .74 = Good, and .40 - .59 = Fair

I-CVI > .79 = Relevant, .70 - .79 = needs revisions, and < .70 = eliminated

**Table 3.** Item Content Validity Index (I-CVI) and the Modified Kappa for agreement of clarity ( $k^*$ ) of *Taqwa* Scale

Item	Clear (rating 3 or 4)	Not Clear (rating 1 or 2)	I-CVIs	$k^*$
1	8	2	.80	.79
2	9	1	.90	.90
3	9	1	.90	.90
4	10	0	1	1
5	8	2	.80	.79
6	8	2	.80	.79
7	8	2	.80	.79
8	8	2	.80	.79
9	7	3	.70	.68
10	9	1	.90	.90
11	7	3	.70	.68
12	8	2	.80	.79
13	8	2	.80	.79
14	9	1	.90	.90
15	8	2	.80	.79
16	7	3	.70	.68
17	8	2	.80	.79
18	9	1	.90	.90
19	8	2	.80	.79
20	9	1	.90	.90
21	8	2	.80	.79
22	8	2	.80	.79
23	8	2	.80	.79
24	9	1	.90	.90
25	6	4	.60	.55
26	9	1	.90	.90
27	9	1	.90	.90
28	9	1	.90	.90

Note:

I-CVI Mean = .81

$k^* > .75$  = Excellent,  $.60 - .74$  = Good, and  $.40 - .59$  = Fair

I-CVI  $> .79$  = Relevant,  $.70 - .79$  = needs revisions, and  $< .70$  = eliminated

revisions, and if the value is below  $.70$  the item is eliminated.

### Inter-Rater Reliability

After the I-CVI (Item content validity index) for all the scale items were obtained, inter-rater reliability was calculated by using Modified Kappa Statistic ( $k^*$ ) (Yimprayoon, 2013). For this the probability of chance (PC) for the agreement was calculated first for each item (see Polit et al., 2007) and then Modified Kappa Statistic was calculated by entering the numeric value of Pc (Probability of chance) and I-CVI (see Polit et al., 2007). For interpreting the value of  $k^*$  evaluation criteria given by Cicchetti and Sparrow (1981) was adopted as  $k^*$  of  $.40-.59$  Fair,  $k^*$  of  $.60-.74$  Good, and  $k^*$  of  $.75-1.00$  Excellent. The inter-rater reliability of all the ten judges was found high for most of the items of this scale.

### Sample and Procedure

In this study purposive sampling method was used. For sample size determination the rule of thumb  $N:q$  ratio was used, where  $N$  is sample size and  $q$  is parameter ratio and it should be at least 1:5. So in this study the minimum sample required was 150. So, the sample of the current study was adequate ( $N = 229$ ). The selected items were administered to 229 participants where 1 participant dropped out. The participants were pursuing undergraduate and post-graduate courses in the Department of Islamic Studies, Arabic, and Centre for Qur'anic

**Table 4.** Item Content Validity Index (I-CVI) and the Kappa for agreement of simplicity (k\*) of *Taqwa* Scale

Item	Simple (rating 3 or 4)	Not Simple (rating 1 or 2)	I-CVIs	k*
1	8	2	.80	.79
2	7	3	.70	.68
3	10	0	1	1
4	10	0	1	1
5	9	1	.90	.90
6	7	3	.70	.68
7	9	1	.90	.90
8	9	1	.90	.90
9	9	1	.90	.90
10	8	2	.80	.90
11	8	2	.80	.90
12	8	2	.80	.79
13	8	2	.80	.79
14	9	1	.90	.90
15	8	2	.80	.79
16	8	2	.80	.79
17	8	2	.80	.79
18	9	1	.90	.90
19	9	1	.90	.90
20	8	2	.80	.79
21	9	1	.90	.90
22	9	1	.90	.90
23	10	0	1	1
24	10	0	1	1
25	10	0	1	1
26	9	1	.90	.90
27	9	1	.90	.90
28	9	1	.90	.90

Note:

I-CVI Mean = .87

k\* > .75 = Excellent, .60 - .74 = Good, and .40 - .59 = Fair

I-CVI > .79 = Relevant, .70 - .79 = needs revisions, and < .70 = eliminated

studies, Aligarh Muslim University, India. Before administering the scale, consent of participants was taken. The mean age of the participants was 22.66 ( $\pm$  1.84 SD).

### Validity

For validity, exploratory factor analysis using principal axis factor extraction approach was used to determine the factor structure of *Taqwa* scale. Varimax rotation (orthogonal rotation method) was used under the theoretical underpinning of the construct assuming that factors of the construct are uncorrelated. Orthogonal rotation assumes that factors are uncorrelated with each other (Gorsuch, 1988). In the first step, the factorability of 28 items was examined by examining the item-correlation matrix and it was assured that each item should correlate with at least one other item for their suitability in factor analysis. In the context of factor analysis, although no limits are placed on what is too high or low correlations, variables (items are treated as variable) that have no significant correlation may not be the part of any factor, and if a variable has a large number of correlations, it may be part of several factors. We can note that pattern and see how they may reflect as the analysis proceeds (Hair, 2010). After that to assess the overall significance of the correlation matrix for factor analysis further Bartlett Test of Sphericity was taken into account ( $\chi^2 = 11209.116$ ,  $p < .001$ ). However, Bartlett Test only indicates the nonzero correlation in the scale items

(Hair, 2010). The value of KMO (Kaiser Meyer Olkin) which measures sampling adequacy was .856.

**Reliability**

The reliability of the scale was calculated by Composite Reliability (CR). The Composite Reliability of three factors of the scale Faith in God, Love for God, and Fear of God were .853, .855, and .68 respectively. The value of CR .70 and above is acceptable (Hair, 2010). The Cronbach’s coefficient alpha of the scale was .94.

**Construct Validity**

Val Dalen (1973) proposed that construct is the concept that includes several interrelated factors. Construct validity of this scale was measured by Average Variance Extracted (AVE) given by Fornell and Larcker (1981). This method measures the true variance accounted by the construct.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Results**

The items that had CVI over .79 were retained (1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28) and the items that had CVI in between .70-.79 (2, 6, 9, 11, 13, 16) were revised. After revision 28 items were retained (Table 2, 3, and 4).

**Discussion**

The aim of this study was to standardize the Taqwa (Piety) scale for Muslims. So, after the data collection on initial 28 items, factor analysis was conducted. Factor analysis requires measurement of sampling adequacy, because it does not look only at the correlations, but also at the pattern between variables (Hair, 2010). In this scale, Keiser-Myer-Olkin (KMO) was used as a measure of sampling adequacy and the value of KMO was found .856 which shows sampling adequacy for factor analysis as the value closer to 1 and higher to .60 is adequate

**Table 5.** Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Factor Loadings of scale items

Item No.	Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Common Factor Variance ( <i>h</i> <sup>2</sup> )
1	I believe that love for God is the core of human existence.	.799			.677
2	I am more evolving because I love God.	.794			.714
3	I worship God because of boundless love.	.761			.652
4	I believe that God loving person has neither fear nor anxiety.	.735			.750
5	I believe that true love for God makes you fearless.	.726			.677
6	Before doing any activity, I do not see anything in life except feel the presence of God	.574			.382
7	I believe that one should approach God with a doubtless and fearless heart.	.519			.510
8	I am a God loving person.		.868		.816
9	I am God loving by <i>Taqwa</i> .		.825		.703
10	I feel the presence and pleasure of God in all aspects of daily life.		.745		.651
11	I make an effort to reduce all the obstacles that prevent me from dedicating everything to God.			.726	.605
12	I have fear of doing <i>Haram</i> owing to God’s order.			.703	.599
	Composite Reliability	.853	.855	.68	
	Variance Explained (%)	42%	14%	8%	
	Total Variance Explained (%)			64%	

(Tabachnik & Fidell, 2013). The KMO value of .856 is Meritorious (Kaiser & Rice, 1974). In this study, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used for factor extraction. It was guided by theoretical approach and factors were interpreted to the extent they were consistent with the definition of *Taqwa*. Three factors were retained on the a priori theoretical knowledge of the construct. After that factor naming was done on the basis of nature of items grounded in theoretical approach. Factor 1 was named as Faith in God, Factor 2 was named as Love for God and Factor 3 was named as Fear of God. The factor loading of items to the respective factors are listed in ascending order (Table 5). Total 12 items were retained with the minimum factor loading (.50). This criterion for factor loading is based on statistical power to specify factor loading for different sample size. For the sample size of 200 minimum factor loading should be .40 (Hair, 2010). The first factor consisted of 7 items with factor loading ranges from .799 - .519 accounting 42% of the variance, the second factor consisted of 3 items with factor loading ranges from .868 - .745, accounting 14% of the variance and the third factor consisted of 2 items with factor loading ranges from .726 - .703, accounting 8% of the variance in construct. Three Factors accounted for 64% of the variance with Eigen value above 1. The Composite reliability of the factor 1, 2, and 3 were .853, .855, and .676 respectively. Composite reliability often known as construct reliability is a measure of internal consistency in scale items.

The value of AVE for this scale is .53 which is acceptable as the value of .50 and above is reported as acceptable (Hair, 2010). According to Dillon and Goldstein (1984), in a scale if the variance extracted is greater than .50 it shows that the validity of both the construct as well as the individual variables is high. Hence this scale has good construct validity. This study has standardized the *Taqwa* scale to assess Muslims' piety. The content validity, interrater reliability, internal consistency, and factor structure of the scale were examined. This scale assesses three factorially derived dimensions: faith in God, love for God, and fear of God. The scale accounted for a substantial amount of variance in the construct. The 28 items were found to be reliable and valid for the assessment of Muslim piety.

### Implications

Standardization of the *Taqwa* (piety) scale for Muslims has implications for the assessment of faith for counselling. Therefore, the findings of this study will help Muslim counsellors in assessing the 'piety' of Muslims and in dealing with the mental health problems of Muslim clients. Assessing clients' level of piety can also assist counsellors in understanding how it may affect the counselling process. Islamic counselling emphasizes spiritual solutions based on love and fear of the Almighty and the duty to fulfill our responsibilities as the servants of the Almighty. Muslim scholars need to further adapt the *Taqwa* scale in different cultures for cross-cultural validation of the scale. There is tremendous within-group variability in all religious groups. Hence, counselling experience with a member of a Muslim religious sect may not necessarily translate to applied work with another person from the same faith.

### Limitations and Future Directions

The measure was standardized on an Indian Muslim population, which is one of the study's limitations. As a result, the researchers must validate the scale before making any conclusions regarding the individuals' *taqwa* in other nations. This very first study to investigate a *taqwa* scale based on exploratory factor analysis. Thus, confirmatory factor analysis could be carried out in the future.



## CONCLUSION

In this study, *Taqwa* Scale was developed following the Qur'anic perspective. A 12 item scale was developed for measuring three dimensions of Muslims' *taqwa*, namely, Love for Allah, Fear of Allah, and Faith in Allah based on the Qur'an. The content validity, inter-rater reliability, factorial validity, construct validity, and composite reliability of *taqwa* Scale was found satisfactory. This scale is suitable for the assessment of *tawqa* for the Muslim clients.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Akbar Husain conceptualized and led the study, Fauzia Nazam, and Mubashir Gull collected the data, Fauzia Nazam performed the statistical analysis, Akbar Husain & Fauzia Nazam wrote the Introduction, Fauzia Nazam wrote the Method, Results, Discussion, and edited the manuscript.

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