



Conference Proceeding: Constructing and Validating the Al-Akhlaq Al Karimah Quality of Life (AK-QOL) Scale for Muslims

Kurniawan, I. N., & Dewi, W. A. K.

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Abstract: This study involves a first attempt in constructing and validating a psychological instrument called the Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah Quality of Life (AK-QOL) for Muslims. Our preliminary studies involved 372 students of Universitas Islam Indonesia and included the Maqashid Shariah Quality of Life (I-QoL; Mohamad, Ali, Yusoff, & Omar, 2015) and World Health Organization Quality of Life-Brief Version (WHOQOL-BREF) (WHO, 1996) as validation criteria. This study went through exploratory factor analysis to explore the possibilities of what underlying components AK-QOL can assess in terms of Muslims' quality of life. The finding of moderate to strong correlation with the criterion variables shows early support for the AK-QOL, suggesting it may be used to assess the quality of life of Muslims not only in Indonesia, but in the Middle East region as well.

ملخص البحث: هذه الدراسة هي محاولة أولى لاعداد مقياس للصحة النفسية باسم "الأخلاق الكريمة للمسلمين". تشمل الدراسة الأولية 372 من طلاب الجامعة الاسلامية في اندونيسيا و تم استخدام مقياسين خارجيين لتأكيد النتائج أحدهما إسلامي و الآخر من منظمة الصحة العالمية. في هذه الدراسة تم تحليل العوامل و مقارنة النتائج لاستكشاف المكونات الأساسية التي يمكن لهذه الأداة تقييمها من حيث جودة حياة المسلمين و صحتهم النفسية. تم اكتشاف ارتباط معتدل إلى قوي مع المتغيرات المعيارية مما يظهر الدعم المبكر للمقياس و أنه يمكن استخدامه لتقييم نوعية حياة المسلمين و صحتهم النفسية ليس فقط في إندونيسيا ، بل في منطقة الشرق الأوسط أيضاً.

Keywords: Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah; quality of life; Indonesia; Muslims; measurement; Middle East

About the Authors: Irwan Nuryana Kurniawan, M.Sc., and Wanadya Ayu Krishna Dewi, S.Psi., MA, are psychology lecturers at the Islamic University of Indonesia, Yogyakarta, as well as advisory board members and researchers at PUSKAGA (Pusat Kajian Anak dan Keluarga: Child & Family Study Center). Irwan has an interest in developmental and family psychology, with research projects including the development of psychological measurements and interventions based on Islamic teachings, such as Taqwa toward Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala, Tawadhu (Humility), Ikhlas (Sincerity), and Gratitude. Wanadya's interests include conflict resolution, positive psychology and Islamic psychology, with projects on motivation, happiness, quality of life, and humility.



Address correspondence to: Irwan Nuryana Kurniawan at kurniawan-in@uii.ac.id

Research in positive psychology and wellbeing aims to determine the underlying factors that shape the satisfaction and happiness of societies; an important part of this research includes the development of instruments to adequately measure it. The model for measuring the quality of life in Muslim societies has so far emphasized an objective measure of the fulfillment of social and cultural needs such as wealth, social status, and physical prosperity. According to Islamic beliefs, a person who obtains quality of life demonstrates impeccable faith towards Allah the Almighty and has the capability to carry out His commandments and withdraw from His prohibitions. This ability manifests itself in a life that is peaceful, productive, and beneficial for others. It also leads to salvation in this world and in the Hereafter. According to the Maqasid al-Shariah, the purposes of Islamic principles (Auda, 2007), quality of life is shown to the extent that an individual preserves their faith, soul, wealth, mind, offspring, and honor. Yet, quality of life in Muslim societies is largely determined by measures developed in predominantly Christian-Jewish traditions. For example, Abdel-Khalek (2010) conducted a study on quality of life with a sample of 224 Muslim students in Kuwait using the Arabic version of the World Health Organization Quality of Life Scale-Brief (WHOQOL-BREF). Likewise, the evaluation of the quality of life in Indonesian society also relies upon measures developed from cultures with different faith values (Kristanti, Setiyarini, & Effendy, 2017; Perwitasari & Urbayatun, 2016; Sohn, 2017).

The need for a quality of life measure that takes into account factors of spirituality, religion, and personal beliefs is recognized by researchers who developed the WHOQOL. Yet, although the WHOQOL is designed to reveal these quality of life aspects, we felt the addition of eight questions in the WHOQOL-SRPB was insufficiently representative in describing the quality of life criteria intended in Islamic beliefs (WHOQOL-SRPB Group, 2002, 2006). For example, questions such as, 'to what extent does faith give you comfort in daily life?' (Skevington, Gunson, & O'Connell, 2013) describe the role of faith in the quality of life a person has across their daily life, rather than using the quality of life criteria established by religious teachings. In Islamic belief, a Muslim is inherently qualified in this respect. This is shown in the verses of the Qur'an where Allah Almighty calls on Muslims to establish a high quality of life in this world and the Hereafter. This can only be achieved when Muslims do not equalize Allah Almighty with another deity, do not worship others but Him, obey His commandments, and withdraw from His prohibitions. It means relying on God as the criterion that must exist in developing questions for the measurement of the quality of life of Muslims.

The measurement model of the quality of life as just described, has not been widely developed. Mohamad et al. (2015) constructed the Measurement of Maqasid Shariah Quality of Life (I-QoL) in which the Islamic quality of life was represented by the five elements of Maqasid Shariah, including religion, life, mind, lineage, and property. The I-QoL measures quality of life based on those five elements which are believed to be obligatory in guarding one's Islamic belief. The findings showed that the I-QoL possesses satisfactory psychometric properties as noted by Nunnally (Iacobucci & Duhachek, 2003) wherein it is acceptable to have modest reliability, such as a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient (α) of .70, in preliminary validation research.



The present research proposes a model of Islamic quality of life based on Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah because, according to At-Tuwajjiri (2014) and Az-Zuhaili (2014), Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah becomes the determining indicator of success of all worship Allah the Almighty recommends for every Muslim. Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah, as mentioned by At-Tuwajjiri (2014), includes mobilizing goodness, resisting disturbance, and enduring interruption. This is based on the principles enforced among Muslims to conduct *amar ma'ruf, nahi munkar* which is believed to be one of the reasons one is perceived as a fortunate individual in the Sight of Allah Almighty.

Indicators of Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah in this study were formulated according to the Qur'an and Sunnah as the descriptors modeling the morality of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Quran, according to Mahmud (2004), discusses Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah without exception. The verses do not leave any matters relating to Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah. Every dimension relating to Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah is contained in the Qur'an, whether in the form of command, prohibition, or suggestion, both about Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah and morally disgraceful. Discussion of Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah in the Qur'an also varies, including Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah as individual members, as members of society, in politics, and in other matters. Similarly, the Qur'an explains the urgency of Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah in shaping society. The historical reality of the journey of humankind has shown that Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah plays a role in shaping the glory and destruction of society and its civilization.

Every command in the Qur'an - whether to believe in God, his apostles, follow his teachings, do justice and good, or those relating to eating and drinking without exaggeration - contain Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah values, which benefit the capacity of individuals, families, communities, countries, and Muslims now and in the future. Every restriction in the Qur'an, from the prohibition of associating Allah with another deity, disobeying His apostles, committing vile acts to life-related restrictions such as prohibitions on usury, consuming wealth by vanity, eating meat slaughtered without mentioning God's name, the ban on eating carcasses, pigs, or blood as examples, contains Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah values (Mahmud, 2004).

Despite the similarities with the MS-QoL, the model of Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah Quality of Life (AK-QOL; Kurniawan & Dewi, 2007) nevertheless differs. First, the AK-QOL does not ask respondents whether they merely pray, fast, or read the Qur'an, etc., as the I-QoL does, but rather, enquires about the quality and sincerity with which each is undertaken. For example, instead of asking whether respondents 'perform the five daily obligatory prayers' as in the MS-QoL, our questionnaire asks, 'Is it because Allah Ta' altogether you devote whole sincerity to present your heart in prayer, comprehend every word and prayer movement, and enforce it diligently in time, follow the conditions, and fulfill the pillars?'. Second, while the I-QoL was tested on individuals struggling with drug use and undergoing spiritual rehabilitation in treatment centers in Terengganu, Malaysia, the present study relied upon students of Universitas Islam, Indonesia as research participants. Religiosity using the religiosity scale was not measured in this study because most religiosity measures do not fit the Islamic concept and if so, such as the Psychological Measures of Islamic Religiousness (Raiya, Pargament, Mahoney, & Stein, 2008), only measure the practical aspects of Islamic commandments, but lack a measure of religious sincerity in conducting those commandments.



Thus, the present study aims to explore preliminary evidence for the psychometric properties of the AK-QOL, including factorial validity, convergent validity, and reliability. A reliable questionnaire on Islamic quality of life can be used by interested parties, such as educational institutions and governments to evaluate and improve efforts to better the quality of life for all Muslims around the world, including Indonesian Muslims, where this study took place. The AK-QOL measure is based on the Islamic creed shared by the majority of Muslims around the world, and thus, can be a particularly useful research instrument for the purpose of evaluating research that addresses issues and solutions to improve the quality of life in Muslim societies.

Method

Participants

Two convenience samples of 372 undergraduate students of Universitas Islam Indonesia were recruited, divided into two studies, namely Study I with 192 students and Study II consisting of 180 students. In study I, 68% of samples were undergraduate female students and 89% were aged between 17 and 21 years old. In the second study, 63% of the respondents were also undergraduate female students and 85% were aged between 17 and 21 years old.

Measures

The *Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah Quality of Life* (AK-QOL; Kurniawan & Dewi, 2007) measure was developed to discover an Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah quality of life model. We identified the characteristics of Al-Akhlaq Al-Karim noted in the Qur'an and Hadith relevant to quality of life and found that Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah is developed based on the relationship an individual has with Allah Almighty, one's self, other human beings, and creatures from all worlds. Therefore, we took the characteristics that underline Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah such as ikhlas, muraqabah, tawakal, loving, purifying one's heart from hasad (envy), guarding ones speech, amanah - forgiving, giving advice, ihsan, tawadhu, being strong and courageous, zuhud, wara, shame, istiqamah, honesty, and husnuzhan. Further, we conducted an analysis and synthesis of these traits based on the Tafseer Qur'an and Islamic literature to find and formulate the concepts that became the reference in preparing the psychological measure of AK-QOL. We then composed items that represented these traits or excellent characteristics. The AK-QOL has two questionnaire formats, namely Form I which consists of 48 questions and Form W with 44 statements. Respondents were asked to state how often they did what was asked in each question or statement. All items were answered using a 5-point frequently scale (1= Never to 5 =Always)

The *Maqasid Shariah Quality of Life* (I-QoL; Mohamad et al., 2015) was developed to reveal quality of life based on the Maqasid Shariah approach which comprises five elements of Maqasid Shariah (religion, life, mind, lineage, and property). Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with its 52 items. In the Indonesian version (Kurniawan & Dewi, 2017), the I-QoL has a reliability coefficient of .89 for the current study.

The *WHOQOL-BREF questionnaire* (WHO, 1996) was used as a proxy for the development of this measure from the Western perspective; it has 26 items on a five-point Likert scale, which includes two global items about quality of life and health, as well as 24 items relating to



four domains calculated as the sum of seven items for physical, six for psychological, three for social and eight for environmental quality of life. For the Indonesian version (Kurniawan & Dewi, 2017), the WHOQOL-BREF has a reliability coefficient of .85 in the current study.

Finally, social desirability was measured using the *Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale - Short Form* (MCSDS-SF; Reynolds, 1982), developed to detect the tendency of individuals to present themselves favorably with respect to current social norms and standards, such as “I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable”. To obtain a socially desirable answer, three items require an affirmative response and eight need a negative response. For the Indonesian version (Uyun & Kurniawan, 2017), the MCSDS-SF had a reliability coefficient of .84 and .72 in the current study.

Procedure

The AK-QOL and the three Indonesian version questionnaires were administered anonymously to Universitas Islam Indonesian’s students during class sessions and all participants gave informed consent.

Exploratory factor analysis was used to achieve the first objective of revealing the structure of Islamic quality of life factors based on Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah (excellent character). Factor analysis allows researchers to find the factorial validity of questions that are constructed to reveal a conjunction – also called the validity of the context. The exploratory factor analysis is not to test the hypothesis but to explore the possibility of a factor structure that underlies the correlation patterns among the existing questions (Brace, Kemp, & Snelgar, 2012).

Correlational analysis was used to answer the second research question, namely to examine the convergent validity of the Islamic Quality of Life based on excellent character. A positive correlation between Islamic Quality of Life with the variables of I-QoL and WHOQOL-BREF show evidence of convergent validity. The internal consistency approach, which emphasizes that the number of items contained in a measurement scale produces consistent information with the same direction, was selected to measure Cronbach’s Alpha reliability coefficient.

Results

The results of our exploratory factor analysis offer initial proof of factorial validity of the AK-QOL Form I and Form W. The existence of Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah Quality of Life Measurement Model was indicated by the KMO measure of sampling adequacy for both forms that reached 0.9 and the significance value (p) of the Bartlett test for both forms of less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$).

The AK-QOL Form I produced single factor with 7.762 initial eigenvalues ≥ 1 and was able to explain the total variance of Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah Quality of Life of 55.44% (see Table 1). The single factor in Form-I is called Takwa to Allah because the items extracted contain the quality of human relations with God and relationships between people. The relationship between humans and their God and the relationship between humans in this study is defined as the quality of life when the two forms of relationship are based on the principle of faith that is not associating partners with Allah. The quality of life in the context of human relations with God is represented



by the following questions: Is it because of God alone that you choose to accept suffering and sickness as a provision of Allah Ta'ala calmly, steadfastly and wholeheartedly, and refrain from complaining? Representing quality of life in human relations, the following question is asked: If someone upsets you through words or deeds, is it because of Allah alone that you choose to hold back and forgive? From the perspective of Al-Akhlaq Al Karimah, accepting suffering in life, showing restraint and using forgiveness does not automatically qualify someone for a good quality of life if the individual did not do it because of Allah alone.

Table 1

Psychometric Properties of Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah Quality of Life (AK-QOL)

Psychometric properties	Parallel form of AK-QOL	
	Form I (2 nd Study)	Form W (1 st Study)
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.920	0.927
Barlett's Test of Sphericity (<i>Approx. Chi-Square; df; Sig</i>)	1529.29 (91/0.000)	2389.796 (231/0.000)
Total initial eigenvalues, number of components	7.762, one component	11.794, two components 1 st Component: 9.384 (42.65% of variance) 2 nd Component: 2.594 (11.79% of variance)
Total variance explained	55.44% of variance	54.45% of variance
Reliability statistics (Cronbach Alpha/N if item deleted)	0.937 (14 items)	1 st Component: 0.932 (14 items) 2 nd Component: 0.878 (8 items)

The AK-QOL Form W resulted in two factors with initial eigenvalues of 9.384 and 2.594 for factor 1 (akhlaq towards Allah Almighty) and factor 2 (akhlaq towards creatures of all worlds) respectively, and these two factors together account for the total variance of the AK-QOL at 54.45%. These factors, akhlaq towards Allah Almighty and akhlaq toward creatures of all worlds, together, define quality of life as the foundation of Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah (excellent character) which is accomplished when ones' excellent character is met through their Lord, Allah Almighty. When an individual possesses impeccable faith in Allah Almighty, it is assured the individual will act accordingly with Allah Almighty's commandments and withdraw from His prohibitions, all of which establish structure, harmony, and justice in the world. Therefore, one's faith in Allah



Almighty will manifest in conducting religious-based deeds and excellent behavior made habitual and thus, develop an excellent character towards all humankind and to creatures of all Worlds.

Tables 2 and 3 below offer preliminary evidence for the convergent validity of Form W and Form I of the AK-QOL. There is a moderate correlation between the WHOQOL-BREF and AK-QOL ($r = 0.393$, $p < 0.05$), except for the dimensions of social relationships, which are weakly correlated ($r = 0.171$, $p < 0.05$). This shows that the AK-QOL has similar statistical properties with the WHOQOL-BREF. The other three dimensions of WHOQOL (Physical, Psychological, and Environment) show the same moderate level of correlation with Form I of the AK-QOL. Although both instruments are developed with different perspectives, they can be summarized as having similarities in the same latent constructs of quality of life.

Table 2

Convergent Validity for Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah Quality of Life–Form W (AK-QOL-W)

Criterion variables	AK-QOL	Pearson's r	p	Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI
MS-QOL	AK-QOL	0.725***	< 0.001	0.663	1.000
MS-QOL	Taqwa of Allah	0.697***	< 0.001	0.631	1.000
MS-QOL	Al-Akhlaq Al-Karim toward Gods' Creation	0.578***	< 0.001	0.493	1.000

Note. All test one-tailed, for positive correlation. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, one-tailed

The weak correlation between the AK-QOL and Social Desirability in Table 3 also indicates a low tendency to respond according to social norms when filling out the questionnaire. The results of the reliability test for Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah using the internal consistency approach shows that the AK-QOL Form W has a reliability coefficient α of 0.934 and 0.937 reliability coefficient α for Form I.



Table 3

Convergent Validity for Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah Quality of Life–Form I (AK-QOL-I)

Criterion variables	AK-QOL	Pearson's <i>r</i>	p	Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI
Social Desirability	AK-QOL	0.234***	< 0.001	0.114	1.000
WHOQOL-BREF	AK-QOL	0.393***	< 0.001	0.284	1.000
Social Relationship WHOQOL-BREF	AK-QOL	0.171*	< 0.05	0.049	1.000
Physical Health WHOQOL-BREF	AK-QOL	0.334***	< 0.001	0.220	1.000
Psychological Health WHOQOL-BREF	AK-QOL	0.312***	< 0.001	0.197	1.000
Environmental Health WHOQOL-BREF	AK-QOL	0.330***	< 0.001	0.215	1.000

Note. All test one-tailed, for positive correlation. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, one-tailed

Discussion

The findings in the present study show that AK-QOL, both Form I and Form W, have preliminary and satisfactory psychometric properties, including structural validity, convergent validity, and reliability. Both formats of the AK-QOL can be alternatives to existing measures as sensitive, representative, valid and reliable instruments in evaluating the quality of life of Muslims. It is expected that intervention programs to improve the quality of life of Indonesian, or other Muslim societies, may be more effective and targeted as these can now be based on measures that are adapted to the values and beliefs owned by the majority of Muslim communities, and which reflect their notions of wellbeing. Nevertheless, future research on additional sample respondents is needed to fully address the adequacy of the measure.

The present findings support previous research about the important role of religion in the quality of human life, often expressed in studies as involvement, participation, spirituality, and personal belief (Barefoot, 2015; Ferriss, 2002; Idler, McLaughlin, & Kasl, 2009). Current research reinforces the association between religiosity and health, well-being, and social behavior. Religion promotes self-control and influences how goals are selected, pursued, and organized. It also facilitates self-monitoring, prescribes and fosters proficiency in a suite of self-regulatory behaviors. Some of religion's influences on health, well-being, and social behavior may results from religion's



influence on self-control and self-regulation (McCullough & Willoughby, 2009). These findings are also in line with studies on the positive role of religious coping on mental health (Hebert, Zdaniuk, Schulz, & Scheier, 2009; Olson, Trevino, Geske, & Vanderpool, 2012), including those done in Muslim samples (Aflakseir & Coleman, 2009; Gardner, Krägeloh, & Henning, 2014). Religious beliefs and practices may help individuals better cope with stressful life circumstances and give them comfort, meaning, a sense of control, hope, as well as life satisfaction (Weber & Pargament, 2014).

The present research findings reinforce the notion that issues, potential solutions, and evaluations of the effectiveness of interventions may be done from a religious standpoint. The values of humanity found in life may be more meaningful for the religiosity and spirituality of Muslim individuals if they can relate to the Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah they exercise. By realizing the close relationship between Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah and Allah Ta'ala, Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah will feel their life full of meaning in every activity. They will be loved by the people around them and obtain a glorious place in the presence of Allah Ta'ala (Al-Adawy, 2010). Thus, using Al-Akhlaq Al-Karimah can serve as a tool that encompasses the achievement of Muslims' quality of life not only in the present world but also with reference to the quality of life possible in the hereafter.

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