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# Validation of a Novel Instrument to Measure Elements of Franciscan-Inspired Spirituality in a General Population and in Religious Persons

Arndt Büssing <sup>1,2,\*</sup> , Markus Warode <sup>2</sup>, Mareike Gerundt <sup>2</sup> and Thomas Dienberg <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Professorship Quality of Life, Spirituality and Coping, Faculty of Health, Witten/Herdecke University, 58313 Herdecke, Germany

<sup>2</sup> IUNCTUS—Competence Center for Christian Spirituality, Philosophical-Theological Academy, 48148 Münster, Germany; warode.iunctus@pth-muenster.de (M.W.); gerundt.iunctus@pth-muenster.de (M.G.); th.dienberg@web.de (T.D.)

\* Correspondence: Arndt.Buessing@uni-wh.de; Tel.: +49-2330-623246

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**Abstract:** Today there are several approaches for bringing mindfulness, which conceptually refers to the Buddhist Vipassana tradition, into organizations. Programs referring to value-based attitudes and behaviors derived from specific Christian contexts are rarely evaluated. A prerequisite are reliable instruments for measuring the respective outcomes. We therefore performed a cross-sectional study among 418 participants to validate an instrument measuring specific aspects of Franciscan-inspired spirituality (FraSpir), particularly the core dimensions and transformative outcomes. Exploratory factor analysis of this FraSpir questionnaire with 26 items pointed to four main factors (i.e., “Live from Faith/Search for God”; “Peaceful attitude/Respectful Treatment”; “Commitment to Disadvantaged and Creation”; “Attitude of Poverty”). Their internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha) ranged from 0.79 to 0.97. With respect to convergent validity, there were sound correlations with engagement in religious practices, gratitude and awe, and prosocial-humanistic practices. The 26-item instrument was found to be a reliable and valid instrument for use in training and education programs. Interestingly, nuns and monks scored significantly higher on the Faith and Poverty subscales than others, but similarly on the two subscales addressing considerate action in the world. These attitudes and behaviors are not exclusively valued by those of religious faith, but by all.

**Keywords:** spirituality; Franciscan; validation; questionnaire

## 1. Introduction

Today there are several approaches for bringing mindfulness into organizations (i.e., Apple, Google, Deutsche Bank etc.), to teach stressed managers and personnel how to meditate in order to reduce stress, increase well-being and performance, improve (more conscious) interaction with staff, and so forth (Vogus and Sutcliffe 2012; Dane and Brummel 2013; Reb and Choi 2015). These approaches refer to meditation techniques derived from a Buddhist Vipassana tradition, yet often without this specific context. Trained attitudes are foremost experiential awareness (attention) and non-judgmental acceptance (non-reaction) of the situation as it is. These behaviors can be learned by all, whatever their religious or spiritual orientation.

However, there are also other approaches which refer to value-based attitudes and behaviors derived from specific Christian contexts (Fernando 2007; Dienberg et al. 2007; Rohrhirsch 2013; Benke 2008; Naughton and Specht [1985] 2011; Bouckaert and Zsolnai 2011; Zindel 2012). One of these refers to Franciscan spirituality. This specific school of spirituality has its foundation in the life of medieval friar S. Francis of Assisi (1181/82–1226), founder of Franciscan orders.

The later S. Francis was born as Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone, a son of a prosperous merchant, and lived the carefree life of a wealthy young man and powered by ambitious career dreams. Confronted with a serious illness he experienced a significant spiritual crisis which was the start of his spiritual conversion, aiming to find a deeper sense and for the ultimate in life.

During a pilgrimage to Rome he lived the life of a beggar, which further changed his attitudes. Giovanni started to live as a poor person and to imitate the life of Jesus Christ. Because he regarded the whole experiential creation as a reflection of God, he thus regarded everything (all creatures, the elements, sun and moon, and even death and his chronic illness) as his brothers and sisters. This long way of spiritual transformation which started with inner conflicts, lost perspectives, and break with his previous life resulted in an experience of God's presence in all suffering others and the whole of creation. Thereby he won a new view of world and society, person and church (Kuster 2016).

This lifestyle attracted many followers who were later organized as "Friars Minor". They were obliged to assume personal and corporate poverty as an attitude of humility. Still today, S. Francis is recognized for his patronage of the sick and the poor and the natural environment. Aspects of Franciscan-inspired spirituality are fundamental training concepts for organizations (Blastic 1993; Dienberg 2009, 2013; Warode and Gerundt 2015; Warode 2016), which, to date, have not been evaluated. A first step for such an evaluation is an operationalization of circumscribed aspects of Franciscan-inspired spirituality, so that they can be measured and quantified in a standardized way. Here it was the intention to analyze the prevalence of the respective ideals and attitudes referring to Franciscan spirituality in today's society.

### 1.1. Franciscan Spirituality

In the Christian tradition, there are many different schools of spirituality that tried and try to live the *Imitatio Christi* in different ways. In all of these schools an "inner transformation" plays an essential role, and refers to an individual "source experience" (Waaijman 2002). This experience has changed peoples' life towards a more consequent and often radical *Imitatio Christi*. Others wanted to share the respective experience or to simply follow these role models on their radical way of life, and these followers were often organized as movements or religious communities with distinct structures and rules and unique forms of spirituality (i.e., Franciscans, Benedictines, Jesuits, etc.). Particularly the Franciscans as a non-monastic order have a clear focus on living from the Gospel with subsequent consequences for their life in the 'outside' world, living with and for others in need and respectful engagement for God's creation.

For our approach, we focus on essential elements of Franciscan spirituality. Its center is the Gospel (Dienberg 2016), and the development of specific attitudes and virtues as a process of 'inner transformation'. This transformation includes a basic new orientation towards the Gospel and its expression in today's concrete life. Closely related is an attitude of searching the Spirit of the Lord. For S. Francis, this search was expressed by a life in poverty, humility and fraternity, by attitudes of reverence and respect for the creation and all living beings, resulting in a peace-making mindset. Material and immaterial poverty—along with humility—is probably the most difficult and, at the same time, crucial attitude to be developed. Both values are seen as the central characteristics of a Franciscan way of following Christ (Peters 1995).

Poverty means to renounce material goods, not to cling to property or home. S. Francis intended to live in accordance with the Gospel, referring to Jesus who had no place to "lay his head" (Matthew 8:20). Poverty understood in this way means to avoid egoistic and self-centered attitudes and behaviors, to accept oneself as dependent. A consequence is to experience life as a gift, to search for God in the simple things in one's daily life, and in the poor and the suffering. Because of this attitude of being lesser, serving is the consequent reaction to the call of the world. It includes the attitudes of obedience, attentiveness and mindfulness towards the world, towards life and others. These aspects are crucial for an inner transformation for the sake of others, and also a service for a social and economic organization. S. Francis's intention was to find God and God's traces everywhere in the world and in everything that

lives and exists. This is not meant as romanticized enthusiasm for the beauty of nature, but as taking responsibility for the creation, a command that was given by God. In line with this, being related is a further aspect of the intended process of personal transformation. This can be through direct encounter with the creation around and with people, through attentive listening to the call of the world, and thus by taking responsibility for the protection and preservation of the environment and compassionate care for others.

Within the last years, several of these spiritual core competences (attitudes and behaviors based on Franciscan spirituality) were introduced in management and organizational development programs to combine theoretical and practice-oriented contents (Gerundt 2012; Warode and Gerundt 2015; Dienberg 2016; Dienberg and Warode 2015; Warode and Gerundt 2014). The relevance of these competences is theoretically described with respect to people's attitudes and behavior. In order to evaluate the transformative component of Franciscan spirituality in today's society, an instrument for measuring these has to address both the core component of Franciscan spirituality (faith) and the transformative components (outcomes).

### 1.2. Aim of the Study

We therefore intended to operationalize and make measurable specific aspects of Franciscan Spirituality, particularly the core dimension and the transformative outcomes. It was not aim to identify perfect Franciscans, but to analyze the prevalence of the respective ideals and attitudes in today's society, either as intentions or concrete behaviors. Therefore, a new instrument was developed (the Franciscan-inspired Spirituality questionnaire) and tested with participants either with or without a Christian background, in religious (nuns and monks) or lay persons, young adults and older adults, women and men.

## 2. Material and Methods

### 2.1. Enrollment of Participants

A heterogeneous sample of participants from a general population and, as a reference group, religious persons from Franciscan but also from other religious congregations was recruited. Calls for participation were sent to the German Superiors Congregation (Ordens-Oberen-Konferenz), to local Caritas societies, university students (i.e., Alpen-Adria Universität Salzburg and Witten/Herdecke University), a course on Christian Spirituality (University Zürich), and various social and management associations, but also to the private networks of the study team (snowball sampling). The sample should thus be regarded as a convenience sample.

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study on the first page of the questionnaire (which does not ask for names, initials or location), and were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. In completing this German-language questionnaire and sending it back to the study team, participants agreed that their data were anonymously evaluated. Because most of the local religious communities are small, we provided the opportunity to fill the questionnaire either online (used by 25% of nuns and monks) or as a print-out (used by 75% of the nuns and monks).

### 2.2. Measures

#### 2.2.1. Franciscan-inspired Spirituality Questionnaire (FraSpir)

Referring to core concepts of Franciscan spirituality (Warode and Gerundt 2014, 2015), we conceptually started with six theoretically derived main topics (ideals). These were intended to represent attitudes and behaviors which could be principally found in all persons, not only in nuns and monks, namely:

- Living from the Gospel.
- Searching for the Spirit of the Lord.

- Attitude of (material and immaterial) Poverty.
- Awe and respect for the Creation.
- Considerate action in the World: Fraternal encounter and support of disadvantaged persons.
- Considerate action in the World: Sustainable and peace-bearing values.

The group regarded Living from the Gospel and Searching for the Sacred as core principles which would have an influence on a person's attitudes and behaviors. With these conceptual considerations in mind, we formulated 30 items which could fit to these topics (between four to seven items for each topic), and discussed their putative relevance in terms of face validity.

The items were scored on a five-point scale from disagreement to agreement (0—does not apply at all; 1—does not truly apply; 2—half and half (neither yes nor no); 3—applies quite a bit; 4—applies very much).

The resulting item pool was then submitted to empirical investigation as the Franciscan-inspired Spirituality (FraSpir) questionnaire, and tested for its psychometric properties

### 2.2.2. Transcendence Perception (DESES-6)

The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale was developed as a measure of a person's perception of the transcendent in daily life, and thus the items measure experience rather than particular beliefs or behaviors (Underwood 2006, 2011). Here we used the six-item version (DSES-6; Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.91$ ), which uses specific items such as feeling God's presence, God's love, desire to be closer to God (union), finding strength/comfort in God, being touched by beauty of creation (Underwood and Teresi 2002). The response categories from 1 to 6 are: never/almost never; once in a while; some days; most days; every day; many times a day. Item scores were finally summed up.

### 2.2.3. Engagement in Spiritual Practices (SpREUK-P)

The generic SpREUK-P (P—practices module) questionnaire was designed to measure the engagement frequencies of a large spectrum of organized and private religious, spiritual, existential and philosophical practices (Büssing et al. 2005). The shortened 17-item instrument (SpREUK-P SF17) differentiates five sub-constructs (Büssing et al. 2012), namely:

- *Religious practices* ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ), i.e., praying, church attendance, religious events, religious symbols.
- *Existentialistic practices* ( $\alpha = 0.77$ ), i.e., self-realization, spiritual development, meaning in life, turn to nature.
- *Prosocial-humanistic practices* ( $\alpha = 0.79$ ), i.e., help others, consider their needs, do good, connectedness.
- *Gratitude/Awe* ( $\alpha = 0.77$ ), i.e., feeling of gratitude, reverence, experience beauty in life.
- *Spiritual (mind body) practices* ( $\alpha = 0.72$ ), i.e., meditation (Eastern style), rituals ("from other religious traditions than mine"), reading spiritual/religious book.

The items of the SpREUK-P are scored on a four-point scale (0—never; 1—seldom; 2—often; 3—regularly). The scores can be referred to a 100% level (transformed scale score), which reflect the degree of engagement in the distinct forms of a spiritual/religious practice (engagement scores). Scores > 50% indicate higher engagement, while scores <50 indicate rare engagement

### 2.2.4. Life Satisfaction (SWLS)

To measure life satisfaction, we relied on the German version of Diener's Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener et al. 1985). This five-item scale ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ) uses general phrasings such as "In most ways my life is close to my ideal", "The conditions of my life are excellent", "I am satisfied with my life", "So far I have gotten the important things I want in my life", and "If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing". Although this instrument does not differentiate the fields of

satisfaction, it is nevertheless a good measure of a person's global satisfaction in life, as it also addresses the self-assessed balance between the ideal and the given life situation. A benefit of the SWLS is the fact that it not contaminated with positive affect variables, vitality, health function, and so forth. It can thus be used to analyze which other dimensions of spiritual engagement and experience would contribute to a person's overall life satisfaction. The extent of respondents' agreement or disagreement is indicated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree".

### 2.2.5. Well-being (WHO5)

To assess participants' well-being, we used the WHO-Five Well-being Index (WHO-5). This short scale avoids symptom-related or negative phrasings and measures well-being instead of absence of distress (Bech et al. 2013). Representative items are "I have felt cheerful and in good spirits" or "My daily life has been filled with things that interest me". Respondents assess how often they had the respective feelings within the last two weeks, ranging from 0 (at no time) to 5 (all of the time).

### 2.3. Statistical Analyses

Descriptive statistics, internal consistency (Cronbach's coefficient  $\alpha$ ) and factor analyses (principal component analysis using Varimax rotation with Kaiser's normalization), as well as first order correlations (Spearman rho), were computed with SPSS 23.0. Given the exploratory character of this study, significance level was set at  $p < 0.01$ . With respect to classifying the strength of the observed correlations, we regarded  $r > 0.5$  as a strong correlation, an  $r$  between 0.3 and 0.5 as a moderate correlation, an  $r$  between 0.2 and 0.3 as a weak correlation, and  $r < 0.2$  as negligible or no correlation.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Participants

Among the 418 enrolled participants, men were predominant (62%); most had a high school education (70%) and were Catholics (65%). Twenty-two percent of participants were from a religious congregation, and 22% were university students; the other participants were from the fields of pedagogy, medicine, psychology, theology, and others professions (Table 1). Among the Religious (nuns and monks), 73% were from Franciscan congregations, and 27% from other religious congregations. All further sociodemographic data are depicted in Table 1.

Participants' life satisfaction was in the upper range, well-being scores in the upper mid-range, and Transcendence perception in the mid-range (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Description of the sample (N = 418).

	Scores	Range
Age (years) (Mean $\pm$ SD)	43.9 $\pm$ 18.7	18–88
Gender (%)		
Women	37.6	
Men	62.4	
Educational level (%)		
Secondary school (Haupt-/Realschule)	13.9	
High school (Gymnasium)	70.1	
other	15.9	
Religious denomination (%)		
Catholic	64.9	
Protestant	20.1	
Other	4.1	
None	10.9	

**Table 1.** Description of the sample (N = 418).

	Scores	Range
Profession (%)		
Students	22.2	
Medicine/psychology	14.4	
Pedagogy	13.9	
Theology	7.8	
Other	21.2	
Religious community	20.5	
Life satisfaction (SWLS) (Mean $\pm$ SD)	28.8 $\pm$ 4.6	6–35
Well-being (WHO5) (Mean $\pm$ SD)	60.7 $\pm$ 17.3	12–100
Transcendence perception (DSES-6) (Mean $\pm$ SD)	21.4 $\pm$ 7.8	6–36

### 3.2. Reliability and Factor Analysis of the FraSpir Questionnaire

Factor analysis revealed a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of 0.94, which is a measure for the degree of common variance, indicating its suitability for statistical investigation by means of principal component factor analysis. From the primary item pool we eliminated four items with either factor loadings  $<0.5$  or strong side loadings. Exploratory factor analysis of the resulting 26 items pointed to four main factors, which accounted for 67% of variance (Table 2). Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of these four sub-scales ranged from 0.79 to 0.97.

The Difficulty Index of these items (mean value 2.55/4) is 0.64; all but three items are in the acceptable range from 0.2 to 0.8 (Table 2). The response to the items 21–23 indicate ceiling effects, which are due to desired behaviors.

With 13 items, factor 1 was the strongest (43% explained variance), followed by factor 2 with six items (13% explained variance), factor 3 with four items (6% explained variance), and factor 4 with three items (5% explained variance). Factor 1 can be labeled "Live from the Faith/Search for God" and is comprised of 10 items referring to the theoretical topics "Living from the Gospel" and "Searching for the Spirit of the Lord", two items referring to "Awe and respect for the Creation" and one from the topic "Attitude of Poverty". Factor 2 can be labelled "Peaceful attitude/Respectful treatment" and uses six items referring to "Considerate action in the world: Lasting and peace-bearing values". Factor 3 can be labelled "Commitment to the Disadvantaged and Creation" and is comprised of two items each from the topics "Awe and respect for the Creation" and "Considerate action in the world: Fraternal encounter and support of disadvantaged people". Factor 4 can be labelled "Attitude of Poverty" and uses three items referring to the topic "Attitude of Poverty".

**Table 2.** Reliability and factorial structure.

		Mean ± SD	Difficulty Index (2.55/4 = 0.64)	Corrected Item-Scale Correlation	α if Item Deleted (α = 0.95)	Factor Loading			
Theoretical Topics	Cronbach's Alpha					Live from the Faith/Search for God	Peaceful Attitude /Respectful Treatment	Commitment to the Disadvantaged and Creation	Attitude of Poverty
	<b>Eigenvalue</b>					11.1	3.3	1.5	1.4
Living from the Gospel	f1 My faith is my orientation in life.	2.5 ± 1.5	0.63	0.81	0.92	<b>0.892</b>			
Searching for the Spirit of the Lord	f7 I listen to God's word in me.	1.9 ± 1.4	0.48	0.84	0.94	<b>0.891</b>			
Searching for the Spirit of the Lord	f5 I try to track down the divine in the world.	2.3 ± 1.5	0.58	0.84	0.94	<b>0.874</b>			
Living from the Gospel	f4 My faith/spirituality gives meaning to my life.	2.5 ± 1.5	0.63	0.83	0.94	<b>0.871</b>			
Searching for the Spirit of the Lord	f11 I feel a longing for nearness to God.	2.0 ± 1.6	0.50	0.81	0.94	<b>0.862</b>			
Living from the Gospel	f2 I try to live in accordance with my religious beliefs.	2.5 ± 1.4	0.63	0.77	0.94	<b>0.858</b>			
Searching for the Spirit of the Lord	f8 I keep times of silence before God.	2.0 ± 1.5	0.50	0.82	0.94	<b>0.852</b>			
Searching for the Spirit of the Lord	f6 I have a sense of the sacred in my life.	2.2 ± 1.4	0.55	0.81	0.94	<b>0.842</b>			
Searching for the Spirit of the Lord	f9 Before important decisions I seek advice in prayer.	2.0 ± 1.5	0.50	0.77	0.94	<b>0.805</b>			
Searching for the Spirit of the Lord	f10 I always try to remain a seeker.	2.5 ± 1.4	0.63	0.71	0.94	<b>0.746</b>			
Awe and respect for the Creation	f14 Again and again I am awed by the beauty of God's creation.	2.9 ± 1.3	0.73	0.70	0.94	<b>0.689</b>			
Awe and respect for the Creation	f17 I feel a great gratitude that I want to share with others.	2.6 ± 1.2	0.65	0.74	0.94	<b>0.610</b>	0.305	0.347	
Attitude of Poverty	f12 I maintain a humble deal with the resources entrusted to me.	2.5 ± 1.1	0.63	0.55	0.95	<b>0.524</b>			
Lasting and peace-bearing values	f23 It is important to me to understand the positions and opinions of other people and to accept them internally (although I do not necessarily share them).	3.3 ± 0.8	0.83	0.31	0.95		<b>0.812</b>		
Lasting and peace-bearing values	f22 I always try to put myself into others and wonder how I would feel in their situation.	3.3 ± 0.7	0.83	0.27	0.95		<b>0.775</b>		
Lasting and peace-bearing values	f24 I always check my attitudes and views, because the others might be right.	3.1 ± 0.8	0.78	0.33	0.95		<b>0.724</b>		
Lasting and peace-bearing values	f21 I am conscious of the fact that I deal with others well and respectfully.	3.5 ± 0.6	0.88	0.27	0.95		<b>0.693</b>		

**Table 2.** Reliability and factorial structure.

		Mean $\pm$ SD	Difficulty Index (2.55/4 = 0.64)	Corrected Item-Scale Correlation	$\alpha$ if Item Deleted ( $\alpha = 0.95$ )	Factor Loading			
						Live from the Faith/Search for God	Peaceful Attitude /Respectful Treatment	Commitment to the Disadvantaged and Creation	Attitude of Poverty
Lasting and peace-bearing values	F25 I actively go to people who are not so good with me, and try to clarify the causes.	2.2 $\pm$ 0.9	0.55	0.38	0.95		0.602		
Lasting and peace-bearing values	F26 In conflicts I always try to find ways of reconciliation.	2.7 $\pm$ 0.8	0.68	0.29	0.95		0.571		
Awe and respect for the Creation	f15 I actively engage for the well-being of disadvantaged people.	2.5 $\pm$ 1.1	0.63	0.56	0.95			0.839	
Fraternal encounter and support of disadvantaged	f20 I actively engage in the social field.	2.6 $\pm$ 1.3	0.65	0.47	0.95			0.784	
Fraternal encounter and support of disadvantaged	f18 I am trying to find ways to help people in need.	2.7 $\pm$ 1.0	0.68	0.50	0.95			0.746	
Awe and respect for the Creation	f16 I am actively involved in the protection and maintenance of creation.	2.1 $\pm$ 1.1	0.53	0.57	0.95	0.349		0.629	
Attitude of Poverty	f29 I can well imagine relinquishing material possessions.	2.2 $\pm$ 1.1	0.55	0.51	0.95				0.823
Attitude of Poverty	f30 Not clinging to material possessions gives me a sense of serenity and freedom.	2.4 $\pm$ 1.2	0.60	0.57	0.95	0.375			0.775
Attitude of Poverty	f28 Professional advancement and career are not a decisive motivator in my life.	2.5 $\pm$ 1.2	0.63	0.48	0.95				0.660
<b>Excluded items</b>									
Fraternal encounter and support of disadvantaged	f19 With all I do (also professionally), I try to help others get better.	3.3 $\pm$ 0.9							
Living from the Gospel	f3 My ethical and religious beliefs shape my actions (even in my professional life).	2.8 $\pm$ 1.4							
Lasting and peace-bearing values:	f27 In conversations with others it is important to me not to teach.	2.6 $\pm$ 0.9							
Attitude of Poverty	f13 My life, my talents and abilities are a gift for me.	3.3 $\pm$ 1.0							



### 3.3. Expression of FraSpir Scores in the Sample

The participants scored highest on “Peaceful attitude/Respectful treatment”, while all other sub-scales scored in the mid-range (Table 3). To clarify which sociodemographic variables were related to the expression of the FraSpir scores, we performed analyses of variance (Table 3).

With respect to gender there were some small but significant differences for “Peaceful attitude/Respectful treatment” and “Commitment to Disadvantaged and Creation”, but none for the other sub-scales. All but one sub-scale (“Peaceful attitude/Respectful Treatment”) showed significant differences for age. Here, the highest scores were found in the oldest and the lowest in the youngest cohort (Table 4). Education level showed significant differences only for “Attitudes of poverty”, which scored highest in participants with secondary school education (data not shown).

Participants with a religious affiliation scored significantly higher on all sub-scales compared to those without a religious affiliation (data not shown). Religious (nuns or monks) scored significantly higher on “Live from the Faith/Search for God” and on “Attitude of Poverty”, but not on the other sub-scales (Table 3). There were no significant differences between participants from Franciscan congregations or other religious congregations ( $F < 1.0$ ; n.s.). However, monks had significantly higher subscale scores than nuns, particularly for “Live from the Faith/Search for God” ( $F = 22.8$ ;  $p < 0.0001$ ) and “Commitment to Disadvantaged and Creation” ( $F = 12.6$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ), and less pronounced for “Peaceful attitude/Respectful treatment” ( $F = 9.2$ ;  $p = 0.003$ ) and “Attitude of Poverty” ( $F = 7.1$ ;  $p = 0.009$ ).

**Table 3.** Mean score values of Franciscan-inspired spirituality (FraSpir) subscales.

		Live from the Faith/Search for God	Peaceful Attitude/Respectful Treatment	Commitment to the Disadvantaged and Creation	Attitude of Poverty
All	Mean	2.34	3.03	2.47	2.34
	SD	1.18	0.56	0.95	0.98
All	z-Mean <sup>1</sup>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	z-SD	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
<b>Gender</b>					
Women	z-Mean	−0.09	−0.19	−0.20	−0.05
	z-SD	1.04	1.06	1.02	0.96
Men	z-Mean	0.06	0.12	0.12	0.03
	z-SD	0.98	0.95	0.97	1.03
F-value		2.22	9.44	10.29	0.57
p-value		n.s.	0.002	0.001	n.s.
<b>Religious Community</b>					
No	z-Mean	−0.23	0.00	−0.04	−0.19
	z-SD	0.97	0.97	1.03	0.95
Yes	z-Mean	<b>0.88</b>	0.02	0.16	<b>0.74</b>
	z-SD	<b>0.49</b>	1.12	0.89	<b>0.84</b>
F-value		102.72	0.06	2.82	67.34
p-value		<0.0001	n.s.	n.s.	<0.0001
<b>Age Groups</b>					
<30 y	z-Mean	− <b>0.82</b>	0.07	−0.34	− <b>0.61</b>
	z-SD	<b>0.81</b>	0.93	1.09	<b>0.99</b>
30–40 y	z-Mean	−0.14	−0.08	−0.20	0.00
	z-SD	0.91	0.91	1.00	0.82
40–50 y	z-Mean	0.25	−0.10	0.02	0.17
	z-SD	0.89	1.11	0.92	0.76
50–60 y	z-Mean	<b>0.62</b>	−0.05	0.41	0.33
	z-SD	<b>0.57</b>	0.98	0.75	0.88
>60 y	z-Mean	<b>0.59</b>	−0.04	0.23	<b>0.51</b>
	z-SD	<b>0.72</b>	1.11	0.90	<b>0.87</b>
F-value		65.94	0.46	10.01	25.61
p-value		<0.0001	n.s.	<0.0001	<0.0001

Notes: <sup>1</sup> z-means and standard deviations (SD) are standardized z factor values; strong deviations from the standardized mean are highlighted (bold).

### 3.4. Correlations between FraSpir Scores and Other Measures of Spirituality

The FraSpir items were moderately to strongly interrelated (particularly the sub-scale “Live from the Faith/Search for God”, which correlated strongly with “Attitude of Poverty”), while “Live from the Faith/Search for God” was only weakly related to “Peaceful attitude/Respectful treatment” (Table 4).

With respect to convergent validity, “Live from the Faith/Search for God” correlated strongly with Transcendence perception (DESE-6), with the frequency of Religious practices (SpREUK-P), and moderately with Gratitude/Awe (SpREUK-P) and with Prosocial-humanistic practices (SpREUK-P) (Table 4). “Commitment to Disadvantaged and the Creation” correlated strongly with “Prosocial-humanistic practices”, which is plausible from a conceptual point of view, too. Similarly, “Peaceful attitude/Respectful Treatment”, as a non-religious attitude and behavior, was moderately related to Prosocial-humanistic practices, but not to Religious practices. The scale “Attitude of Poverty” was weakly related to Religious practices and Transcendence perception.

With respect to discriminant validity, the FraSpir subscales correlated either marginally or only weakly with life satisfaction or well-being (Table 4). Because “Commitment to Disadvantaged and the Creation” was moderately related to life satisfaction, the underlying four variables were tested independently. It was found that item f20 (“I actively engage in the social field”) correlated best with life satisfaction ( $r = 2.8$ ;  $p < 0.0001$ ).

**Table 4.** Correlation analyses.

	Live from the Faith/Search for God	Peaceful Attitude /Respectful treatment	Commitment to the Disadvantaged and Creation	Attitude of Poverty
Live from the Faith/Search for God	1.000			
Peaceful attitude/Respectful treatment	0.292 **	1.000		
Commitment to Disadvantaged and Creation	<b>0.496 **</b>	<b>0.439 **</b>	1.000	
Attitude of Poverty	<b>0.577 **</b>	<b>0.305 **</b>	<b>0.384 **</b>	1.000
Transcendence Perception (DSES-6)	<b>0.816 **</b>	<b>0.305 **</b>	<b>0.413 **</b>	<b>0.488 **</b>
<b>Spiritual-Religious Practices (SpEUK-P SF17)</b>				
Religious practices	<b>0.700 **</b>	0.075	<b>0.348 **</b>	<b>0.359 **</b>
Prosocial-humanistic practices	<b>0.305 **</b>	<b>0.414 **</b>	<b>0.509 **</b>	0.235 **
Existentialistic practices	0.185 **	0.222 **	0.175 **	0.039
Gratitude/Awe	<b>0.456 **</b>	0.218 **	<b>0.307 **</b>	0.228 **
Spiritual Mind-Body practices	0.285 **	0.138 **	0.172 **	0.232 **
<b>Life satisfaction/Well-being</b>				
Life satisfaction (SWLS)	0.185 **	0.267 **	<b>0.304 **</b>	0.122
Well-being (WHO5)	0.127 **	0.227 **	0.199 **	0.061

\*\*  $p < 0.01$  (Spearman rho); moderate to strong correlations are highlighted (bold).

## 4. Discussion

The FraSpir questionnaire was not intended to be a specific measure for identifying good Franciscans, but to operationalize and make measurable relevant values and behaviors related to Franciscan Spirituality in a general population. Particularly the core dimensions (“Living from the Gospel” and “Searching for the Spirit of the Lord”) and the transformative outcomes, specifically an “Attitude of poverty”, “Awe and respect for the Creation” and “Considerate acting in the world” were in the forefront of interest.

The tested 26 items of the FraSpir questionnaire had a very good internal consistence (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.95) and clustered in four main factors, which accounted for 67% of variance (Cronbach’s alpha of these four factors ranged from 0.79 to 0.97).

The first factor (“Live from the Faith/Search for God”) represents the intended core dimensions, and includes also three items referring to feelings of gratitude and awe in terms of the creation and of maintaining a humble relationship to entrusted resources. This connection between the underlying

dimensions of Search (for God), Trust (in the Gospel) and Respect (of Creation) is interesting from a conceptual and theological point of view.

Factor 2 (“Peaceful attitude/Respectful treatment”) is represented exclusively by items of the theoretically derived topic “Considerate action in the world: Lasting and peace-bearing values”. It refers to the intentions to change perspectives and to understand the positions and opinions of others, and thus represents the intention to deal with others in respectful ways. Moreover, it also includes the intention to actively solve conflicts, to clarify the causes and to find ways of reconciliation. This topic refers to good interaction with others.

Factor 3 (“Commitment to Disadvantaged and Creation”) consists of two items each from the theoretically derived topics “Considerate action in the world: Fraternal encounter and support of the disadvantaged” and “Awe and respect for the Creation”. It combines intentions and concrete behavioral aspects of prosocial engagement for persons in need on the one hand, but also an active engagement for the “protection and maintenance of creation”. This topic refers to taking responsibility for others and the environment.

Factor 4 (“Attitude of Poverty”) is represented by three items of the respective theoretical topic, specifically on an intentional ability not to cling to material possessions or to strive for successful career as the main motivator in life; both as an inner act of “serenity and freedom” from material and immaterial possessions.

With respect to convergent validity, the correlations with external measures are sound and plausible. Specifically, factor 1 (“Live from the Faith/Search for God”) correlate strongly with respondents’ Transcendence perception and their engagement in religious practices. Factor 3 (“Commitment to Disadvantaged and Creation”) correlated strongly with the frequency of Prosocial-humanistic practices, while factor 2 (“Peaceful attitude/Respectful treatment”) was moderately related to Prosocial-humanistic practices. Factor 4 (“Attitude of Poverty”) showed only some weak correlations with Religious practices and Transcendence perception; it is thus not per se a specific spiritual attitude, but might be the consequence of a distinct life style.

With respect to discriminant validity, the FraSpir factors were either not, or only marginally, related to respondents’ life satisfaction or well-being. This would indicate that the items are not contaminated with these feelings and perceptions. However, “Commitment to the Disadvantaged and Creation” was moderately related to life satisfaction, which is not plausible at first glance. Detailed analyses revealed that the best correlating variable was f20 (“I actively engage in the social field”), which would indicate that being engaged socially might result in good feelings and contribute to life satisfaction.

When “Live from the Faith/Search for God”, “Commitment to Disadvantaged and Creation” and “Attitudes of Poverty” are moderately to strongly related to religious engagement of participants, but not “Peaceful attitude/Respectful treatment” (which could be regarded as a socially desired behavior), then one would expect that these attitudes and behaviors score high particularly in Religious (nuns and monks). This is in fact true for the factor “Live from the Faith/Search for God” and for “Attitudes of Poverty”, but not for “Commitment to the Disadvantaged and Creation” or “Peaceful attitude/Respectful treatment”. This means that a person’s “Considerate action in the world” is not exclusively a matter of being religious but relevant for all participants. A respectful and peaceful relational behavior may have been shaped by previous religious demands and imperatives, but today it seems to be more an ethical issue than a religious imperative.

Interestingly, particularly “Commitment to the Disadvantaged and Creation” scored significantly lower in women than in the male participants recruited in this sample, and also lower in nuns compared to monks. The reason for this gender-associated commitment differences is unclear. Further, “Commitment to Disadvantaged and Creation” was significantly lower in younger participants compared to older ones. For age, one may assume a shift of priorities or meaning-in-life constructs with increasing age. Data from [Fegg et al. \(2007\)](#) would underline age-related differences in meaning-in-life dimensions with priorities for altruism and spirituality, particularly in older participants.

It is important to note that “Peaceful attitude/Respectful treatment” scored highest for all the respondents. This indicates that it is a generally accepted and socially desired behavior. In contrast, “Commitment to the Disadvantaged and Creation” scored much lower (but nevertheless in the higher range). Both are from the theoretically defined factor “Considerate action in the world”, and thus the associations are plausible from a conceptual point of view. Particularly, the slightly lower scoring Commitment scale was much more related to the Faith and Gratitude component than the factor addressing respectful treatment of others. The latter might be more an intention (which thus would score higher), while the first is more an active and difficult to convert behavior (which thus would score lower).

Conceptually it is interesting that two gratitude and awe items (i.e., “awed by the beauty of God’s creation” and “great gratitude that I want to share with others”) load on factor 1, which covers the core topics “Living from the Gospel” and “Searching for the Spirit of the Lord”, while the other two items of the intended topic “Awe and respect for Creation” (i.e., “actively engaged for the well-being of disadvantaged people” and “actively involved in the protection and maintenance of creation”) would load with two other items, addressing active engagement in the social field, make up an independent factor labelled “Commitment to the Disadvantaged and Creation”. Gratitude and awe seem to be related to a longing for the Sacred in life. Detail analyses showed that both items, Awe (f14) and Gratitude (f17), were in fact related best, and strongly so ( $r > 0.60$ ), with faith, which gives meaning to life (f4), to having a sense of the Sacred in life (f6), to listening to God’s word (f7), and to the intention to search for the divine in the world (f5).

### Limitations

A limitation of this study is the dominance of participants with a high school education, of men and of Catholics. For the validation process this is not of major relevance, but for future studies a more balanced sample is needed. Further, the instrument’s sensitivity to change has to be analyzed in faith and value-based education programs which focus on a person’s transformation of attitudes and behaviors. These analyses are currently in preparation.

## 5. Conclusions

The 26-item FraSpir questionnaire was found to be a reliable and valid instrument, which might be useful in training and education programs that refer to value based attitudes and behaviors derived from specific Christian contexts. Particularly the transformative aspects of Franciscan spirituality seem to be of relevance also for non-religious participants, because a considerate action in the world with a focus on a peace-bearing respectful treatment of others (especially in the context of organizations) on the one hand, and a commitment to disadvantaged participants and the environment on the other, might be shared by most people.

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