



## ORIGINALES

### Perspective spirituality in members of alcoholics anonymous: pilot study

Perspectiva espiritualidad en integrantes de alcohólicos anónimos: estudio piloto

Linda Azucena Rodríguez-Puente<sup>1</sup>  
María Magdalena Alonso-Castillo<sup>2</sup>  
Javier Álvarez-Bermudes<sup>3</sup>  
Marco Vinicio Gómez-Meza<sup>4</sup>  
Nora Angélica Armendáriz-García<sup>1</sup>  
Eva Kerena Hernández Martínez<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Doctora en Ciencias de Enfermería. Facultad de Enfermería, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León. México.

<sup>2</sup>Doctora en Filosofía en Psicología. Facultad de Enfermería, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León. México.

<sup>3</sup>Doctor en Psicología Social. Facultad de Psicología, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León. México.

<sup>4</sup>Doctor en Estadística. Facultad de Economía, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León. México.

<sup>5</sup>Maestra en Ciencias de Enfermería. Profesor Titular Facultad de Enfermería "Dr. Santiago Valdés Sánchez", Universidad Autónoma de Coahuila. México.

E-mail: [lrpuente88@hotmail.com](mailto:lrpuente88@hotmail.com)

<http://dx.doi.org/10.6018/eglobal.16.3.260831>

Received: 10/06/2016

Accepted: 30/08/2016

#### ABSTRACT:

Spirituality is a concept that has been linked positively with physical and mental health of people and has been found to play an important role in the management and recovery of substance abuse like alcohol. The main objective of this study was to determine the spiritual perspective of the members of AA. The design was quantitative, descriptive cross-sectional. The population consisted of members of AA 3 suburban municipalities of Nuevo Leon, Mexico. A non-probability sampling was performed, the sample consisted of 35 adults from AA groups, Spiritual Perspective Scale (SPS) was used. The results show that the average rate of spirituality in the participants was 66.33 (SD = 17.23), the average spiritual practices was 59.64 (SD = 25.11) and spiritual belief was 70.70 (SD = 16.60). It is concluded that AA members have a high level of total spirituality, spiritual practices and spiritual beliefs.

**Keywords:** Spirituality; Alcoholics Anonymous; Alcoholism

#### RESUMEN:

La espiritualidad es un concepto que se ha relacionado de manera positiva con la salud física y mental de las personas y se ha observado que juega un papel importante en el manejo y recuperación del abuso de sustancias como el alcohol.

El **objetivo** principal de este estudio fue determinar la perspectiva espiritual de los integrantes de AA (Alcohólicos anónimos).

El **diseño** fue cuantitativo, descriptivo de corte transversal. La población estuvo conformada por integrantes de AA de 3 municipios suburbanos de Nuevo León, México. Se realizó un muestreo no probabilístico, la muestra estuvo conformada por 35 adultos pertenecientes a los grupos de AA, se utilizó la Escala de Perspectiva Espiritual (SPS).

Los **resultados** muestran que el promedio del índice de espiritualidad en los participantes fue de 66.33 ( $DE = 17.23$ ), el promedio de prácticas espirituales fue de 59.64 ( $DE = 25.11$ ) y el de creencias espirituales fue de 70.70 ( $DE = 16.60$ ).

Se **concluye** que los integrantes de AA tienen un nivel alto de espiritualidad total, en prácticas espirituales y en creencias espirituales.

**Palabras clave:** Espiritualidad; Alcohólicos Anónimos; Alcoholismo

## INTRODUCTION

Spirituality is a concept that has been positively related to the physical and mental health of people and has been observed to play an important role in the management and recovery of substance abuse such as alcohol<sup>1,2</sup>

In the case of dependence on alcohol and alcoholism, spirituality represents a concept of great importance. Different studies indicate that spirituality can act as a protective factor of alcohol dependence, favors in the treatment of recovery, is related to long periods of abstinence and helps in the management of craving<sup>2,3,4,5</sup>.

In Mexico, the National Addiction Survey (2011) reports that 6% of the population developed alcohol dependency, equivalent to 4.9 million people between 12 and 65 years of age, of whom 10.8% are men and 1.8% for women. Alcohol dependence affects 4.1% of adolescents and 6.6% of adults, this proportion increased significantly among men from 2008 to 2011, showing a lower distance between men and adolescent women (3 men for each woman) Than what is observed in adults (7 men per woman). The proportion of adult women with alcohol dependence is 1.7% similar to that observed in adolescent women (2%); in men, a teenager with this condition is presented for every two people with alcohol dependence<sup>6</sup>.

Currently, AA represents the most widespread therapeutic resource to treat alcoholism in Mexico and other countries without claiming to be the most effective. AA adherence or affiliation may be beneficial to people experiencing this problem and stands out as a construct that supports the AA recovery process attendance at meetings and the level of participation in AA groups and indicates that the greater the involvement With the twelve-step program the recovery prognosis is best<sup>4,7,8,9</sup>.

Also, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and its 12-step program attaches great importance to the concept of spirituality. AA in its program assumes that alcoholism is a disease of the spirit that is why the 12 steps of AA are linked to spirituality and accentuate principles such as prayer, meditation and acceptance of a "God" so defined Personal or "Superior Power"<sup>2,10,11</sup>.

Spirituality has been defined by Reed as the personal perspective and the behaviors that express sense of belonging (relation) to a transcendent dimension or to something greater than itself. From this spiritual perspective, concepts such as "pray" and "Supreme Being" are significant for the construction of this construct. Specifically within the indicators of spirituality we can find prayer, meaning to life, reading and contemplation, sense of closeness to a Supreme Being, interaction with others and other experiences that may reflect spiritual interaction or participation<sup>1</sup>.

Studies carried out in AA indicate that spirituality is positively related to the percentage of days of abstinence, predicts non-consumption of alcohol, and that "spiritual awakening raises the probability of maintaining abstinence in AA2, Four.

However, in Mexico there are few studies conducted to know the level of spiritual perspective in this population. For nurses, it is extremely important to know those factors that favor abstinence in AA members for the development of interventions based on scientific evidence focused on the reinforcement of resources and skills that favor the non-consumption of alcohol in people dependent on Alcohol that are being treated. It should be noted that in our country we have not found studies performed by nursing professionals where this variable is addressed in AA population. Likewise, no studies have been found where the Spiritual Perspective Scale (SPS)<sup>1</sup> is used in this population.

Therefore, the main objective of this work is to determine the spiritual perspective in AA members. A pilot study.

### **Specific objectives**

1. Determine the filling time of the Spiritual Perspective Scale (SPS) in AA members.
2. Determine the Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient of the Spiritual Perspective Scale (SPS) in AA members.
3. Describe the frequencies and proportions of spiritual practices and beliefs according to the Spiritual Perspective Scale (SPS) in AA members.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

### **Study design**

The design was quantitative-descriptive. The population was made up of AA members from 3 suburban municipalities of Nuevo León, Mexico. A non-probabilistic sampling was performed, the sample consisted of 35 adults belonging to the AA groups.

### **Measurements**

Sociodemographic data. Personal Data Card (CDP) consisting of 8 questions that ask the sex, age, marital status, educational level, occupation, religion and age of admission to the AA program and the number of relapses.

Spirituality. The Spiritual Perspective Scale (SPS) 1, measures a knowledge of itself, a sense of connection with a being of a higher nature or the existence of a supreme purpose. The instrument is based on the conceptualization of spirituality as a particularly relevant human experience in the late stages of life development and at times where awareness of mortality is increased.

The scale consists of 10 statements that are graded in a range of 1 to 6 for a total score of 60. The first four questions correspond to the subscale of spiritual practices and respond with the following criteria: 1) Never, 2) Less than Once a year, 3) More or less once a year, 4) More or less once a month, 5) More or less once a week, and 6)

More or less once a day. Questions 5 through 10 correspond to the subscale of spiritual beliefs and are answered as follows: 1) Extremely disagree, 2) Disagree, 3) Disagree rather than agreed, 4) Agree rather than disagree, 5) Agree and 6) Extremely agree.

Indexes were obtained from each subscale and from the scale in general, where the highest score is the spirituality index. In order to classify the level of spiritual perspective of the participants, the levels established by Vázquez<sup>12</sup> were taken, which considers the following: low level of spirituality of 10-30 points, moderate level of 31-45 points, and high level of spirituality of 46- 60 points.

The original scale reports Cronbach's Alpha of .90, a study done in the Latin population, 13 the scale reported a Cronbach Alpha of .89.

### **Procedure for collecting information**

To begin with the implementation of this study, approval was obtained from the Ethics Committees for Research and Research at the Faculty of Nursing of the Autonomous University of Nuevo León (FAEN-D-1182).

Three AA centers were requested to request authorization from each group and its members, the purpose of the study was explained to them and those who agreed to participate were given informed consent. Subsequently, they were given a sealed envelope with the instruments and filled out the questionnaires, reinforcing the confidentiality and anonymity of the information. Finally, they were asked, at the end of the filling, to deposit the sealed envelope without identification in a sealed box that was in the front of the physical space where each group meets. When depositing the envelope with the instruments, they were thanked for the time and information provided.

### **Analysis of data**

It was performed through the SPSS statistical package for social sciences version 20. Descriptive statistics were used. The descriptive analysis of the continuous and categorical variables was performed using frequencies, proportions and measures of central tendency and variability. In addition, the reliability of the instrument was determined through Cronbach's Alpha.

## **RESULTS**

Regarding socio-demographic data, the mean age of the participants was 51.03 ( $SD = 13.82$ ) years of age, the majority were male in 97.1% (34), 37.1% were single, 31.4% had attended to primary level, the majority work (62.9%) and the Catholic religion predominated in 68.6%. Regarding the age of admission to AA, the average was 35.06 years ( $SD = 9.81$ ) and mean relapse was 4.17 ( $SD = 10.08$ ).

The instrument filling time was 30 minutes including CDP. Cronbach's Alpha of the Spiritual Perspective Scale (SPS) for this study was .90.

The 37.1% (13) of the participants reported mentioning spiritual matters when they are talking to their family or friends about once a month, 37.1% (13) mentioned that more or less once a day you share with others the problems And joys of living in accordance

with their spiritual beliefs, 40.0% (14) reads spiritual materials about once a day and 60.0% pray in private or do meditation more or less once a day (Table I).

**Table I.-Frequencies and Proportions of Spiritual Practices**

	1		2		3		4		5		6	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. When you are talking to your family or friends, how often do you mention spiritual matters?	6	17.1	4	11.4	1	2.9	13	37.1	9	25.7	1	2.9
2. How many times do you share with others the problems and joys of living according to your spiritual beliefs?	5	14.3	2	5.7	1	2.9	2	5.7	12	34.3	13	37.1
3. How many times do you read materials of something spiritual?	7	20.0	0	0.0	1	2.9	0	0.0	13	37.1	14	40.0
4. How often do you pray in private or do meditation?	3	8.6	1	2.9	2	5.7	0	0.0	8	22.9	21	60.0

Note: 1 = Never, 2 = Less than once a year, 3 = More or less once a year, 4 = More or less once a month, 5 = More or less once a week, 6 = More or Less once a day, f = frequency, % = proportions.

The 51.4% (18) of the participants agree that forgiveness is an important part of their spirituality, 45.7% (16) agrees to see spirituality as a guide to making decisions in their daily lives, 51.4% (18) strongly agrees that their spiritual beliefs are an important part of their life, 57.1% strongly agree that they often feel very close to God, or to a "greater power" at important moments in their life. Daily life, 54.3% (19) strongly agree that their spiritual beliefs have influenced their lives and 51.4% (18) strongly agree that their spiritual beliefs are especially important because they answer many of the questions they have about the meaning of life (Table II).

**Table II.-Frequencies and Proportions of Spiritual Beliefs**

	1		2		3		4		5		6	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
5. Forgiveness is an important part of your spirituality	0	0.0	1	2.9	0	0.0	2	5.7	18	51.4	14	40.0
6. See spirituality as a guide to make decisions in your daily life	1	2.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	11.4	16	45.7	14	40.0
7. Your spiritual beliefs are an important part of your life	2	5.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.9	14	40.0	18	51.4
8. Often feels very close to God, or a "greater power" in important moments of your daily life	2	5.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	5.7	11	31.4	20	57.1
9. Your spiritual beliefs have influenced your life	2	5.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.9	13	37.1	19	54.3
10. Your spiritual beliefs are especially important because they answer many of the questions you have about the meaning of life	2	5.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.9	14	40.0	18	51.4

Note: 1 = Extremely Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Disagree more than in agreement, 4 = Agree rather than disagree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Extremely agree, f = Frequency, % = Proportions.

The index of spirituality in the participants presented an average of 66.33 (SD = 17.23), the average of spiritual practices was 59.64 (SD = 25.11) and the spiritual

beliefs were 70.70 (SD = 16.60) which are considered as a High level of spirituality (12) (Table III).

**Table III.-Index of spirituality**

	<i>n</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>
Total spirituality index	35	66.33	70.00	17.23
Index of spiritual practices	35	59.64	66.67	25.11
Index of spiritual beliefs	35	70.79	72.22	16.60

Note: *n* = sample,  $\bar{X}$  = mean, *Mdn* = median *SD* = standard deviation

## DISCUSSION

The main objective of this study was to determine the spiritual perspective in AA members, it was found that members of AA have a high spiritual outlook. This coincides with that reported by Kelly<sup>2</sup> who mentions that people who attend AA have a high level of spirituality. It is possible that spiritual level in the participants present a level because the program of step 12 of AA is based mainly on the conception of a "Supreme Being" and promotes spirituality in 11 of its steps.

The program leads the person dependent on alcohol (alcoholic) to admit their impotence against alcohol through the help of a higher power conceived individually and privately (1 to 3 Steps). Subsequently, an examination of conscience and a moral inventory are promoted, with the intention of repairing damages caused to third parties during the alcoholic stage (4 to 9 Steps). Then emphasis is placed on the continuity of self-observation, the permanent correction of errors and the spiritual dimension (10 to 11 steps). Finally (step 12) promotes helping other alcoholics or alcohol dependents to achieve sobriety<sup>14</sup>.

Because this is a pilot study, one of the objectives was to determine the time of filling of SPS in AA members, it was observed that the participants took approximately to answer the instrument along with the CDP, this is similar to the one reported by Galvin And Pérez<sup>15</sup> in her study of women with cancer. It is important to note that to date no studies have been located where SPS is used in AA population, because of this it was necessary to know SPS Reliability in AA members.

The SPS showed a Cronbach Alpha of .90 which is considered acceptable and coincides with that reported by the author of this scale<sup>1</sup> and higher than reported in other populations<sup>15</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS

The filling time of the instrument was thirty minutes.

The Spiritual Perspective Scale (SPS) reported for this study a Cronbach Alpha of .90.

High levels of spirituality perspective were reported on the full scale as well as on the subscale of spiritual practices and beliefs.

## Recommendations

It is recommended to carry out a validation of the SPS in AA population, and also to continue to use this instrument in AA members for future research and to conduct

studies where this variable is related to alcohol consumption, withdrawal time and the number of relapses in Members of AA.

## REFERENCES

1. Reed PG. Spirituality and well-being in terminally ill hospitalized adults. *Research in Nursing and Health* 1987; 10(5): 335–344. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/3671781>
2. Kelly JF, Stout RL, Magill M, Tonigan JS, Pagona ME. Spirituality in Recovery: A Lagged Mediation Analysis of Alcoholics Anonymous Principal Theoretical Mechanism of Behavior Change. *Alcoholism Clinical and Experimental Research* 2011, 35(3), 454-463. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3117904/pdf/nihms246551.pdf>
3. Robinson, E.A., Krentzman, A.R., Webb, J.R. & Brower, K.J. Six-month changes in spirituality and religiousness in alcoholics predict drinking outcomes an nine months. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* 2011, 72(4), 660-668. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/51228543\\_Six-Month\\_Changes\\_in\\_Spirituality\\_and\\_Religiousness\\_in\\_Alcoholics\\_Predict\\_Drinking\\_Outcomes\\_at\\_Nine\\_Months](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/51228543_Six-Month_Changes_in_Spirituality_and_Religiousness_in_Alcoholics_Predict_Drinking_Outcomes_at_Nine_Months)
4. Gutiérrez RR, Andrade PP, Jiménez TA, Saldivar HG, Juárez GF. Alcohólicos Anónimos: Aspectos relacionados con la adherencia (afiliación) y diferencias entre recaídas y no recaídas. *Salud Mental* 2009; 32 (5): 427-433. <http://www.scielo.org.mx/pdf/sm/v32n5/v32n5a9.pdf>
5. Mason SJ, Dean FP, Kelly PJ, Crowe TP. Do Spirituality and Religiosity Help in the Management of Cravings in Substance Abuse Treatment? *Substance Use & Misuse* 2009; 44:1926–1940. <http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1996&context=hbspapers>
6. Medina M. Instituto Nacional de Psiquiatría Ramón de la Fuente Muñiz; Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública; Secretaría de Salud. Encuesta Nacional de Adicciones 2011, Alcohol. Centro Nacional para la Prevención y el Control de Adicciones México, D.F. 2011.
7. Greenfield BL, Tonigan JS. The general alcoholics anonymous tools of recovery: The adoption of 12-Step practices and beliefs. *Psychol Addict Behav* 2013; 27 (3): 553-561. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3707937/>
8. Rosovsky H. Alcohólicos Anónimos. En: *Beber de tierra generosa. Ciencias de las bebidas alcohólicas en México*. Fundación de Investigaciones Sociales AC (eds); México: 1998.
9. Rosovsky H, Leyva G. Movimiento de alcohólicos anónimos en México. *Anales* 1990; (1): 5-8.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous. Twelve steps and twelve traditions. Alcoholics Anonymous World Services; New York: 1952.
11. Alcoholics Anonymous. Alcoholics Anonymous: The story of how thousands of men and women have recovered from alcoholism. 4. Alcoholics Anonymous World Services; New York: 2001.
12. Vázquez O, Whetsell M, Zavala MR. Bienestar espiritual y ansiedad en pacientes diabéticos. *Aquichán* 2006; 6 (1): 8-21. <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=74160103>
13. Campesino M, Belyea M, Schwartz G. Spirituality and cultural identification among latino and non-latino college students. *Hispanic Health Care International* 2009; 7 (2): 1-13. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2822391/>
14. Alcoholics Anonymous. 2011 Membership Survey. Alcoholics Anonymous World Services; New York: 2012.

15. Galvis LMA, Pérez GB. Perspectiva espiritual de la mujer con cáncer. Aquichán 2011; 11 (3): 256-273.  
<http://aquichan.unisabana.edu.co/index.php/aquichan/article/view/2016/pdf>

ISSN 1695-6141

© [COPYRIGHT](#) Servicio de Publicaciones - Universidad de Murcia