

Content Validity of Dyadic Discernment Scales Using Content Validity Ratio (CVR) Lawshe's Method

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the content validity of Dyadic Discernment Scale (DDS) among young spouses in marital conflict using content validity ratio (CVR) methods. The constructs of DDS are based on al-Ghazali maqasid as-shariah theory; (i) hierarchy needs of a) *survival needs* (*Ad-daruriyat*) (b) *essential needs* (*Al-Hajiyyat*) and (c) *enrichment needs* (*At-Tahsiniyyat*) (ii) beneficent (*maslahah*) vs maleficent (*mafsadah*), (iii) specific beneficent (*maslahah khasah*) vs general beneficent (*maslahah ammah*). Eleven experts selected via purposive sampling to evaluate the content of DDS. Five professional university experts in psychometrics, family counselling and Islamic counselling, six marital and family counsellors from department of Islamic religion in Malaysia were consulted. The instrument content

validity process involved 86 items from three constructs and thirteen sub-constructs. The results showed that the instrument has a good content validity with 81 items reaching the cut-off CVR critical value ($N = 11$, CVR critical = .59). five items that did not meet the minimum CVR value will be purged and purified at the final stage of instrument validation process. The qualitative findings of the study indicated that the instrument was appropriate and relevant, thus had the potential to be a good instrument for measuring dyadic discernment among young couples who are in marital conflict on either to choose (i) maintain status quo (ii) divorce or (iii) reconcile. Further study is proposed to conduct i) item reliability test, ii) exploratory factor analysis and iii) confirmatory factor analysis for construct validity.

Keywords: content validity ratio, dyadic discernment, youth, marital conflict, scale development

1. Introduction

Research on marital conflict has been carried out for a long time but not many studies have been conducted on the ability of young couples in marital conflict to make wise decisions about whether to choose (i) maintain the status quo, (ii) divorce, or (iii) improve their marital relationship. Doherty et al. (2021) state that, marital conflict cases involve couples where one partner is leaning out of the relationship and is ambivalent about doing couples therapy, and the other partner wants to preserve the relationship and start couples' therapy. Ironically, it was found that cases like this are of little interest to marriage counsellors because they take a long time to resolve. Marital counselors are more likely to resolve cases involving issues that are consistent with either choosing the path of reconciliation or the path of separation. As a result, couples where one side tends to stay and the other side tends to divorce are more likely to remain silent and make their own decisions or file for divorce directly in court without going through a therapy session (Harris & Hall, 2020; Edwards, 2021). Their immature decisions make post-marriage life increasingly problematic (Majani et al., 2023), the family's economy and finances are bad (Harris & Hall, 2020), children lack parental love and become wild (Ward & Lee, 2020), and some are in a dilemma to continue with a second marriage (Doherty et al., 2021). Marital counselors are generally more effective in resolving cases where both partners align in their inclination, either towards reconciliation or separation. Conversely, couples in which one partner desires to maintain the relationship while the other leans toward divorce are more likely to disengage from the therapeutic process altogether. These individuals often remain silent, make unilateral decisions, or proceed directly to legal separation without engaging in counselling interventions (Edwards, 2021; Harris & Hall, 2020). Such premature decision-making frequently results in negative post-divorce outcomes, including increased emotional and relational instability (Majani et al., 2023), leads to financial hardship for the family (Harris & Hall, 2020), social maladjustment among children (Ward & Lee, 2020), and some individuals experience ambivalence about sustaining a second marital relationship (Doherty et al., 2021).

Despite the increasing number of couples in marital conflict applying for negotiation sessions every year, the majority of them are between 26 and 35 years old (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, JAKIM, 2021). However, as of July 31, 2020, out of the total 9,243

registered counsellors in Malaysia, there were only 1,605 of them who were competent to conduct marriage and family counselling. Thus, only 17.3 percent of the registered counsellors are available to deal with family issues among clients in Malaysia (Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development, 2020). Ironically, Muslim couples with marital conflicts in Malaysia referred their marriage issues to the state Islamic religious department. However, the consultation sessions conducted were in the form of advisory services. Consultants who are appointed are not in the field but instead fill vacancies based on promotions or existing officers changing positions (Md Salleh, 2013; Nordin et al., 2022).

Based on the conducted literature analysis, it was discovered that there is currently no instrument available to measure the ability of young couples experiencing marital conflict to make informed decisions regarding; (i) maintaining their existing marital status, (ii) pursuing a divorce, or (iii) enhancing their marital relationship in Malaysia (Nordin et al., 2022). While various instruments to assess marital conflict have been developed, such as those by Park and Ros n (2013), Cano-Prous et al. (2014), and Hinson et al. (2017), these tools primarily emphasize instrument reliability, neglecting content validity, one of the primary types of validity in an instrument (Connell et al., 2018; Zamanzadeh et al., 2015). Notably, the existing content validity assessments are often limited and insufficient, typically involving only two experts, contrary to the recommended practice of involving a minimum of three experts, as observed in previous studies (Polit & Beck, 2006; Zamanzadeh et al., 2015). While content validity is not the sole criterion for a study, overlooking this aspect can lead to contested measurement results (Polit & Beck, 2006). Properly conducted content validity assessments are crucial as they ensure precise measurements aligned with the study's context (Mohammad Rahim et al., 2017). Consequently, this study aims to evaluate the content validity of dyadic discernment scales, employing the more detailed and systematic content validity ratio (CVR) method. This approach seeks to address the following inquiries:

- i. What is the validity value of the items in the dyadic discernment scale?
- ii. Is the measurement scale suitable and relevant for assessing the ability of young couples experiencing marital conflict to make well-informed decisions?

The study employs a comprehensive and systematic methodology to provide accurate insights into the content validity of the dyadic discernment scales, enabling a deeper understanding of the decision-making processes among couples facing marital challenges in Malaysia.

2. Literature Review

Continued research in the field of marriage and family consistently asserts that married individuals tend to be happier than those who are single, divorced, or widowed (Musthapar & Ahmad, 2022). Marital status significantly influences an individual's self-satisfaction and overall well-being within the context of family life (Noor et al., 2019). The irony lies in the fact that many people enter into marriage only to end up divorced, especially among young couples. Surprisingly, younger couples are more prone to divorce than their older counterparts, who tend to navigate significant marital adjustments more effectively (Nordin et al., 2022).

The Islamic Development Department of Malaysia (JAKIM) documented a total of 21,875 marriage consultation services provided by the state Islamic Religious Department (JAIN) between 2018 and 2020. These services primarily involved young couples aged 26 to 35 years (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, JAKIM, 2021). The conflicts leading to these consultations were attributed to social problems, irresponsible partners, communication issues, and a lack of religious understanding (JAKIM, 2021). However, a report from the Board of Counselors Malaysia highlighted a concerning statistic. As of July 31, 2020, out of the 9,243 counselors registered with the Board of Counselors Malaysia (LKM), only 1,605 were specialized in handling marriage and divorce issues. This indicates that merely 17.3 percent of registered counselors were equipped to address matters related to marriage and divorce in Malaysia (Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, 2020).

The study emphasizes that individuals who struggle to make informed decisions in marriage often find themselves entangled in marital dilemmas, leading to impulsive choices that result in lifelong guilt and regret (Choi, 2021). Within the context of marriage, spouses frequently exhibit harmful behaviors such as violence (Ali et al., 2024), verbal abuse (Barrett et al., 2024), susceptibility to external influences, and negligence in fulfilling financial responsibilities (Ahmad et al., 2017; 2019). Notably, Noor et al. (2019) highlighted in their research that couples with weak religious beliefs lack the self-assurance to protect their marriage, making rash decisions when faced with stressors.

Discernment refers to the ability of an individual to understand information clearly and accurately (Poore, 2014). Otherwise, dyadic refer to the interpersonal relationship between one person and another, or between one group and another (Doherty et al., 2021). Dyadic can occur in a variety of situations such as a person's relationship, marriage, and family (Nordin et al., 2022). Therefore, dyadic discernment in this study can defined as the wise decision-making process of couples who are in marital conflict on whether to (i) maintain the status quo and cope with the current situation while waiting for a better time; (ii) divorce or (iii) improve their marital relationship and increase marital satisfaction. Otherwise, Dyadic Discernment Scale (DDS) is meant to help youth in marital conflicts to discreate between harmful and beneficial decision-making. The constructs of DDS are based on al-Ghazali maqasid as-shariah theory; (i) hierarchy needs of a) *Ad-daruriyat* (b) *Al-Hajiyyat* and (c) *At-Tahsiniyyat* (ii) beneficent (*maslahah*) vs maleficent (*mafsadah*), (iii) specific beneficent (*maslahah khasah*) vs general beneficent (*maslahah ammah*).

Indeed, Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali (1058–1111) was a prominent figure in Islamic scholarship. He was born in Tus, Iran, and became a renowned scholar of Islamic jurisprudence at Nizamiyah University in Baghdad. One of his significant contributions was his exploration of the objective of shariah law, outlined in his book titled "Al-Mustafa Min Ilm Al-usul," where he emphasized the purpose of Shariah as protecting human needs (Al-Ghazali, 1987).

Al-Ghazali was also well-known for his work titled "The Incoherence of Philosophers," in which he challenged Muslim philosophers who prioritized logical reasoning over divine revelation. Despite his scholarly achievements, he embarked on a spiritual journey,

withdrawing from his career for a decade to seek spiritual enlightenment in seclusion. After this period of introspection, he returned and penned his most influential work, "Ihya ulumudin" (The Revival of Islamic Knowledge), which further solidified his reputation as a significant Islamic philosopher and theologian (Al-Ghazali, 1987).

Al-Ghazali theorized that the objective of shariah law (*maqasid as-syariah*) is to protect human needs. He proposed the hierarchy of human needs according to three levels of categories. The first level is survival needs (*ad-daruriyat*), the second essential needs (*al-hajiyat*) and the third enrichment needs (*at-tahsiniyat*) (Al-Ghazali, 1987). There are five survival needs (al-Daruriyat, or must haves) based on Al-Ghazali theory:

- i. Religion (*al-din*). Human have the intrinsic dispositions to believe in God and an afterlife. Through religion, people are guided to live a prosperous life and love each other. Religious life also helps people to be close to God.
- ii. Soul (*al-nafs*). After religion, the greatest blessing bestowed upon mankind is life. Every human has only one life. Appreciating the life given adds gratitude and draws closer to God.
- iii. Intellect (*al-aql*). Intellect (al-aql). Intellect is the ability of humans to think, understand, feel, and apply religious principles and moral values given by God in taking care of the basic needs and interests of humans.
- iv. Progeny (*al-nasl*). For sustainable human reproduction systems, Islamic law has legitimized marriage and forbid fornication.
- v. Wealth (*al-mal*). The assets owned are the property of Allah to be distributed lawfully and fairly. For the purpose of protecting human's wealth, earning a living through reckless means is prohibited.

The second essential needs are Al-Hajiyat. Al-hajiyat is something that should be there to give comfort to life but not to the point of bringing to the level of *darurah*. There are an unlimited number of essential needs and it is dependent on the context of the family system. For a family system to function and its members to survive, the needs in this category, such as leadership, guardianship, education, marital life and vocation, are considered essential (Al-Ghazali, 2011). The third category of needs in *maqasid as-syariah* is enrichment needs (al-tahsiniyat). Al-tahsiniyat is something that is needed to complete the affairs of daily life. Among the examples of tahsiniyat is the guarantee of quality, comfortable and controlled higher education. In this study, at-tahsiniyat is referred to the Chemistry of Happiness Book (Al-Ghazali, 2010) to explain (ii) beneficent (*maslahah*) vs maleficent (*mafsadah*), (iii) specific beneficent (*maslahah khasah*) vs general beneficent (*maslahah ammah*).

2.1 Content Validity Ratio (CVR)

The Dyadic Discernment Scale (DDS) employs the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) method as its approach to measure content validation. Developed by Charles Lawshe (1975), CVR is a quantitative method designed to gauge consensus among raters or judges regarding the essentiality of specific items. In comparison to alternative methods for assessing content

validity, such as Cohen's kappa, Tinsley–Weiss T index, and James, Demaree, and Wolf's index, CVR stands out for its simplicity, user-friendliness, and straightforwardness. It also includes a table for determining the critical cut-off value, making it a preferred choice among researchers (Wilson et al., 2012).

In the CVR method, raters evaluate each item as (1) essential, (2) useful but not essential, or (3) not necessary. The number of raters selecting "essential" for each item is tallied. A specific formula is then applied to calculate the CVR. This method's ease of use and effectiveness have led to its widespread adoption by both local and international researchers as the initial step in the instrument development process, as demonstrated in studies by Azimah et al. (2019), Kim (2011), Mohd Matore & Khairani (2015), Wilson et al. (2012) and Lawshe (1975):

$$CVR = \frac{ne - (N/2)}{(N/2)}$$

where CVR = content validity ratio, ne = number of panelists indicating “essential”, and N = total number of panelists.

The CVR value is a metric that ranges from -1 to +1. A CVR value closer to +1 signifies a high level of mutual agreement among experts regarding the essentiality of the respective item. Conversely, a negative CVR value is obtained when less than half of the experts deem the item as "essential" (Azimah et al., 2019). Lawshe established the accepted CVR value table as a reference for determining the CVR critical value (Lawshe, 1975), a table later revised and improved by Wilson et al. (2012). According to this table, with a total of 15 experts, the minimum CVR critical value for each item is .506 at $\alpha = .05$. If the items acquire values lower than this threshold, they should be refined or considered for removal from the instrument. This threshold serves as a criterion for ensuring the items' relevance and essentiality in the context of the research instrument.

3. Methodology

Experts are individuals possessing specialized knowledge and skills in a specific field. Their primary role is to rigorously evaluate each item under consideration, determining whether to retain or remove proposed items (Kamaluddin & Nasir, 2017). In content validation, two types of experts are commonly consulted: professional experts and field experts (Rubio et al., 2003; Zamanzadeh et al., 2015).

Professional experts are individuals who have published extensively or have significant experience working in the field, while field experts are people with practical expertise in the topic being studied (Rubio et al., 2003). The selection criteria for experts typically include having a background in the research area, possessing relevant working experience, being diverse in their opinions, and staying current with the latest knowledge (Powell, 2003). Additionally, Rubio et al. (2003) recommended considering the number of recent publications as a criterion for expert selection. These criteria ensure that the experts consulted bring a wealth of up-to-date knowledge and varied perspectives to the content validation process:

- Five (5) professional experts; (i) two in psychometrics, and (ii) three in Islamic Counselling
- Six (6) field experts in marital and family counselling

In this research, five professional experts from universities in Malaysia were carefully chosen according to the criteria outlined earlier. All these experts remain actively engaged in research and continue to publish in their respective fields. Additionally, six field experts specialized in marital and family counseling were also included in the selection process. The details of the professional experts are summarized in Table 1, providing a comprehensive overview of their expertise and qualifications for the study.

Table 1. List of professional experts

No	Initial	Expertise	Gender	Years of Experience	University
1	Prof A	Islamic and Family Counselling	Female	25	Former Professor at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor
2	Dr. B	Islamic and Family Counselling	Male	20	Sultan Idris Education Universiti
3	Dr. C	Islamic and Family Counselling	Male	10	Sultan Abdul Halim Universiti
4	Dr. D	Psychometrics & Psychology and management in counselling	Female	13	Islamic Universiti Science of Malaysia
5	Dr. E	Psychometrics	Male	15	Universiti Putra Malaysia

Additionally, six experienced marital and family counselors in Malaysia were carefully chosen to serve as practitioner experts in the content validation process, as detailed in Table 2. This group of experts played a vital role in addressing issues related to item phrasing and unclear terminology. They also provided valuable recommendations regarding other important or pertinent items, following the guidelines proposed by Rubio et al. (2003).

The selection of these practitioner experts was based on their extensive expertise in conducting marital and family counseling sessions, their years of practical experience in the field, their in-depth knowledge of marital counseling, and the in-service counseling training programs they had attended. The process of selecting both professional and practitioner experts followed a purposive sampling method, ensuring that experts with relevant and diverse expertise were included in the validation process (Kamaluddin & Nasir, 2017).

To involve the experts in the study, the researcher reached out to them via telephone or email,

seeking their consent to participate. Formal letters of appointment and related documents were then sent to them via email or regular mail. Each expert was given a period of two weeks to thoroughly evaluate the 81 items on the Dyadic Discernment Scales, enabling them to provide comprehensive and considered feedback.

Table 2. List of practitioner experts

No	Initial	Expertise	Gender	Years of Experience	State
1	Dr. A	Marital & Family Counselling	Female	15	Penang
2	Mrs. B	Marital & Family Counselling	Male	25	Negeri Sembilan
3	Mrs. C	Marital & Family Counselling	Female	15	Putrajaya
4	Mrs. D	Marital & Family Counselling	Female	17	Selangor
5	Mrs. E	Marital & Family Counselling	Male	15	Selangor
6	Mr. F	Counselling Measurement & Psychometrics	Male	13	Selangor

In this study, a total of 11 experts actively participated as content experts, surpassing Lawshe's suggested minimum of four experts. This approach adhered to the recommendations made by Rubio et al. (2003), who suggested having at least three experts in each group of content experts. Consequently, the study incorporated a higher number of experts compared to previous studies such as those conducted by Khazaei et al. (2017), Hazrati et al. (2017), and Noor et al. (2016). This expanded panel of experts ensured a comprehensive and diverse assessment of the Dyadic Discernment Scales, enhancing the robustness and reliability of the content validation process.

4. Results and Discussion

A total of 81 items underwent content validation through the assessment of eleven experts, utilizing the CVR method as per Lawshe's (1975) recommendations. Among these experts, six were male (60%), and five were female (40%). Notably, only one expert (0.07%) had less than 10 years of experience in the field. Seven experts possessed 10 to 19 years of experience as marital and family counseling practitioners (40%), while three experts had more than 20 years of practical experience in their respective fields (30%).

It's worth mentioning that the experts were meticulously selected from various states across Malaysia, ensuring diverse perspectives and comprehensive insights during the content

validation process. This diverse representation of experts with varying experience levels and backgrounds strengthens the reliability and depth of the study's findings.

In summary, the results of the content validation process revealed that out of the 86 newly developed items, only five items fell below the critical CVR value of .59. According to expert feedback, these five items require refinement to clarify their meanings. This refinement process will involve aligning the items with the instrument's conceptualization and addressing the specific concerns raised by the experts. The identified items that need further refinement are as follows:

- 1) **Q14:** Extreme activities that my partner and I participate in endanger life.
- 2) **Q21:** I am depressed thinking about my partner's irresponsible attitude regarding alimony.
- 3) **Q28:** A child who is pious can be born through sex without marriage.
- 4) **Q37:** The busyness of everyday work at the office interferes with my love for my partner.
- 5) **Q60:** I find it difficult to forgive every mistake made by my partner.

These items, as highlighted in Table 3, will undergo necessary revisions to ensure clarity and alignment with the intended instrument's objectives, incorporating the valuable insights provided by the experts.

Table 3. Items that need to be refined based on experts' judgement

Item Number	CVR Value	Item	Item Refine
14 Soul	0.27	The extreme activities that my partner and I participate in are life-threatening	Activities performed by the partner cause me to feel neglected
21 Intellect	0.45	I'm depressed thinking about the irresponsible attitude of the spouse regarding alimony	I am depressed thinking about the irresponsible attitude of the couple
28 Progeny	0.45	A pious child can be born through sex without marriage	Sex without marriage can give birth to good offspring
37 Happiness-peaceful	0.45	The busyness of everyday work in the office interferes with my love with my partner	The busyness of everyday work in the office interferes with my love with my partner
60 Pleasure	0.45	I find it difficult to forgive every mistake my partner makes	I find it difficult to forgive my partner's mistakes

Item Q14, falling under the soul construct, was initially designed to gauge clients' and couples' perspectives on engaging in extreme activities such as illegal racing, gliding, and rock climbing. These activities, when undertaken without the supervision of trained coaches, pose significant risks. Apart from being life-threatening for the participants, they can also lead to neglect of children at home due to accidents involving their parents. The intention behind this item was to capture respondents' views regarding these perilous activities and their potential impact on family life and responsibilities.

The source of the breadwinner has died or is ill and has been left behind due to an accident. However, based on expert comments, here is a summary of the changes made to the items:

1. **Q14** (Soul Construct): Originally focusing on extreme activities, it has been revised to reflect feelings of neglect due to partners frequently being absent. The context shifted from dangerous activities to emotional neglect.
2. **Q21** (Intellect Construct): Initially about the abandonment of alimony, it was transformed into a general item, allowing respondents to make broader decisions about their relationship, not limited to financial matters.
3. **Q28** (Progeny Construct): The term 'righteous child' was removed, emphasizing respondents' opinions on the impact of engaging in sex outside of marriage, without focusing on specific characteristics of the child.
4. **Q37** (Happiness-peaceful Construct): Measuring respondents' agreement on the interference of work commitments with their relationship, aiming to understand the challenges faced in returning to a normal, married, and loving life.
5. **Q60** (Pleasure Construct): The term 'each' was removed from the sentence, refining the item's focus on the difficulty of forgiving mistakes made by the partner.

These revisions reflect a careful consideration of expert feedback, ensuring that the items align more accurately with the intended constructs and provide a clearer understanding of respondents' perspectives.

5. Conclusion

In summary, this study focused on calculating the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) values for the newly developed items in the Dyadic Discernment Scale (DDS). With the input from 11 experts, only five out of 86 items fell below the critical CVR value, indicating that DDS holds promise as a valid and reliable instrument. It aims to measure the decision-making process of couples facing marital conflicts, encompassing choices such as maintaining the status quo, pursuing divorce, or working on improving their relationship and increasing marital satisfaction.

Moving forward, the identified items below the critical value will be refined based on the experts' feedback. These refined items will then be incorporated into a pilot test instrument, involving young spouses experiencing conflicts in their marriages. The results from this pilot test will undergo further analysis, utilizing advanced measurement models such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS. This in-depth analysis aims to provide detailed insights into the items' performance and enhance the understanding of the decision-making

dynamics within marital conflicts among young couples.

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