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Validation Study

Development and Validation of Conflict Sensitivity Knowledge Tool (CSKT) for Assessing Conflict Sensitivity Knowledge Among Humanitarian Actors

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ABSTRACT

During armed conflicts or other emergencies, as pre-existing tensions and inequalities exacerbate the problems, humanitarian interventions that do not consider the pre-existing context may further escalate things. Hence, humanitarian actors (HA) need to be conflict sensitive in the designing and implementation of all interventions to maximize impact and minimize harm. Despite the significant increase in conflict sensitivity knowledge over the years, the level of its application by HA have remained low. House of Peace (HOPe) have organized various trainings on the concept and application of conflict sensitivity for HA. As an organization in Lebanon, HOPe contributes towards advancing the capacity of HA in applying conflict sensitivity. HOPe has been investing on designing a tool to measure Conflict Sensitivity Knowledge (CSK) for evaluating the impact of their Conflict Sensitivity Trainings (CST). The aim of this study was to develop and validate a Conflict Sensitivity Knowledge Tool (CSKT). To the best of our knowledge, there are no tool currently available in literature that assesses a person's knowledge of conflict sensitivity; which furthers necessitates the need for this study. A rigorous process was used to develop and validate the CSKT using a sample of 76 participants selected using non probability sampling. Descriptive and cross-sectional research designs were employed for the study. The CSKT which initially contained 10 items was narrowed down to 7 items after an iterative and extensive process that included expert content validation, factor analysis, scale validity and reliability tests. The 7 item CSKT had an overall Cronbach Alpha Scale Reliability Coefficient of 0.7211 and an overall Internal Consistency Reliability Coefficient of 0.8016. A sample of 36 participants with complete pre and post CST data was later used to demonstrate the ability of the 7-item CSKT to show the impact of an CST. The implication of this study is that the 7 item CSKT obtained from this study acts as a baseline for future tools that measures an individual knowledge of conflict sensitivity and would be useful in the education of humanitarian actors and other stakeholders on conflict sensitivity and its application.

Introduction

Conflict sensitivity is the ability to understand the context where an intervention would be implemented and how the intervention may affect the context and the use of such understanding to avoid or reduce harm and expand the positive impact of the intervention (International Alert, 2004a). Presently, given the magnitude of adverse tensions across the globe, and the huge humanitarian thrust to remedy the situation, the importance of conflict sensitivity cannot be over-emphasized. Where there is armed conflicts or other adverse events, while pre-existing social tensions and inequalities within the given environment may exacerbate their effects,

humanitarian interventions which does not take into account the pre-existing context may further increase tensions instead of reducing them. Hence, humanitarian actors need to be conflict sensitivity in the designing and implementation of all interventions to maximize their positive impact and minimize harm (Harris & Lewer, 2010).

Despite the significant increase in the knowledge of conflict sensitivity among humanitarian agencies and actors over the years, the level of conflict sensitivity application by humanitarian agencies and actors have continued to be low since 2004 (International Alert, 2004b; CDA, 2014). International Alert noted as early as 2004 that the reason behind the low application of conflict sensitivity by humanitarian agencies was because of the poor effort put into building organizational capacity to apply conflict sensitivity (International Alert, 2004b). Hence, as asserted by Collaborative for Development Action (CDA), many humanitarian agencies do not integrate conflict sensitivity into their programs (CDA, 2014). In 2014, in order to help bridge the gap between the knowledge of conflict sensitivity and the practice of it, "mainstreaming" the long-term process of incorporating a concept into all areas of an organization's programs was proposed by the Collaborative for Development Action (CDA, 2014). One key component of the 5 components of mainstreaming was capacity building, which align with and help address the issue of poor organizational capacity to apply conflict sensitivity raised by International Alert in 2004 (International Alert, 2004b; CDA, 2014). To address the issue of poor organizational capacity to apply conflict sensitivity, some organizations exist today with one of their aims as advancing the capacity of humanitarian agencies to apply conflict sensitivity.

House of Peace (HOPe), officially registered as Threads of Peace, is a non-governmental organization (NGO) in Lebanon, that contributes towards advancing the capacity of humanitarian agencies/actors in applying conflict sensitivity in Lebanon and the Middle East. To that effect, HOPe has organized various trainings on the concept and application of conflict sensitivity for NGOs staff and volunteers, and for some public and private sectorial bodies in Lebanon that have some humanitarian priorities (HOPe, 2015). HOPe has been investing on designing a tool to measure Conflict Sensitivity Knowledge (CSK) for evaluating the impact of their Conflict Sensitivity Trainings (CST). The aim of this study was to develop and validate a Conflict Sensitivity Knowledge Tool (CSKT). To the best of our knowledge, there are no tool currently available in literature that assesses a person's knowledge of conflict sensitivity; which furthers necessitates the need for this study.

1.1 Item Generation

HOPe's internal conflict sensitivity specialists reviewed the literature on conflict sensitivity measurement. The literature review which was mainly based on the work of Conflict Sensitivity Consortium (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012) and International Alert (International Alert, 2004a) was used to generate possible questions to measure people's knowledge of conflict sensitivity. HOPe's internal conflict sensitivity specialists further brainstorm to refine the questions obtained from the literature review and at the end of the process, ten (10) questions/items (i.e. a 10-item scale) were proposed to measure conflict sensitivity knowledge (CSK). The items, and sources for the scale are shown in Table 1.

1.2 Expert Validation

Descriptive research design was employed in validating the content of the CSKT. After the 10 items were generated, five (5) external conflict sensitivity experts were contacted by HOPe to rate the degree to which each of the items in the 10-item scale was relevant to the domain conflict sensitivity. The experts were asked to rate the degree to which they think each of the 10 questions/items was relevant to the domain being measured on a 5-point scale (1 representing "not relevant" to 5 representing "highly relevant"). The first relevance rating calculation based on the feedback of the 5 experts, showed that the average score of the scale-level content validity index (S-CVI/Average) was 0.86 (86%) for the 10 items (see Table 2). Although the score (i.e. 86%) met the recommendation of 80% proposed by Davis L. L., it did not meet the criterion of 90% set for the study based on the work of Polit et al. (Polit et al., 2007). The experts feedback revealed that question/item 4 was very problematic with very low relevance rating. When question/item 4 was excluded from the calculation (the second relevance rating calculation), the average score of the scale-level content validity index (S-CVI/Average) was 0.91 (91%) for the 9 items (see Table 3), which met the criterion of 90% set for this study (Polit et al., 2007). The relevance rating calculation was based on the format suggested by Yusoff M.S.B in his work titled "ABC of content validation and content validity index calculation" (Yusoff, 2019). No adjustment was made to the CSKT after a pilot study was carried out.

Table 1: CSKT item pool and their source/support

Item Description	Item No.	Source
Conflict sensitivity is a positive concept	Q1	Developed by HOPe internal conflict sensitivity specialists
Conflict sensitivity can be applied at any level of a project	Q2	(Conflict Sensitivity Consortium 2012; International Alert 2004a)
Conflict sensitivity is the ability of organization and individuals to understand the context they work in and the interaction between their project and the context, then taking steps based on the new understanding	Q3	(Van Brabant, 2010; Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012)
I don't need to be working in conflict sensitivity, but I must be a peace-builder	Q4	(Van Brabant, 2010)
What is the primary goal of conflict sensitivity?	Q5	(Conflict Sensitivity Consortium 2012; International Alert 2004a)
Conflict sensitivity is only relevant in situations of armed conflict.	Q6	(Conflict Sensitivity Consortium 2012; International Alert 2004a)
In what situations might conflict sensitivity be particularly important?	Q7	(Conflict Sensitivity Consortium 2012; International Alert 2004a)
What is the first step in applying a conflict sensitive approach?	Q8	(Conflict Sensitivity Consortium 2012; International Alert 2004a)
Conflict Sensitivity is considered important only for organizations operating in conflict-affected areas.	Q9	(Conflict Sensitivity Consortium 2012; International Alert 2004a)
It is important to consider the potential impacts of a conflict sensitive approach on the long-term stability of a region or community.	Q10	(Conflict Sensitivity Consortium 2012; International Alert 2004a)

Table 2: First Relevance Rating S-CVI Calculation

Item No.	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	Experts in Agreement	I-CVI
Q1	1	3	3	2	4	3	0.6
Q2	4	4	4	4	4	5	1
Q3	4	2	4	4	4	4	0.8
Q4	4	2	2	2	4	2	0.4
Q5	4	3	3	4	4	5	1
Q6	4	3	4	3	4	5	1
Q7	4	3	3	4	4	5	1
Q8	4	3	4	4	4	5	1
Q9	4	3	4	4	4	5	1
Q10	2	3	3	4	4	4	0.8
						S-CVI/Average= 8.6/10= 0.86	

Table 3: Second Relevance Rating S-CVI Calculation

Items	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	Experts in Agreement	I-CVI
Q1	1	3	3	2	4	3	0.6
Q2	4	4	4	4	4	5	1
Q3	4	2	4	4	4	4	0.8
Q5	4	3	3	4	4	5	1
Q6	4	3	4	3	4	5	1
Q7	4	3	3	4	4	5	1
Q8	4	3	4	4	4	5	1
Q9	4	3	4	4	4	5	1
Q10	2	3	3	4	4	4	0.8
						S-CVI/Average= 8.2/9= 0.91	

Research Methodology

The procedure employed in developing and validating the Conflict Sensitivity Knowledge Tool (CSKT) is in line with acceptable principles of instrument design (Latif, 2018) outlined below:

1. Item generation through literature review
2. Expert validation
3. Data collection
4. Factor analysis, and validity and reliability tests using STATA 14.0

2.1 Data Collection

This study was based on a secondary data which employed a non-probability cross-sectional sampling technique. Data was collected from participants (humanitarian aid workers & volunteers) who registered for HOPe's conflict sensitivity training program in 2024. All identifiers were removed to protect the privacy of the participants. A total of 76 respondents who had answered a questionnaire administered in both English & Arabic by HOPe were selected and included in the study. All the participants were adults of which 65.8% were females.

2.2 Statistical Analysis

All 10 items of the CSKT were analyzed even though question/item 4 was found to be problematic based on the external conflict sensitivity expert feedback (see Table 2 & 3 above). The sample of 76 participants used for the analysis was acceptable based on the work of Gunawan et al. titled "Establishing appropriate sample size for developing and validating a questionnaire in nursing research" which stipulated that a sample size of 70 is sufficient to carry out a validation study (Gunawan et al., 2021). In STATA 14.0, using an Eigenvalue of ≥1 as criterion, the principal component analysis (PCA) and factor analysis was done iteratively using Varimax Rotation until the desired result was obtained. Items with loadings whose uniqueness value was ≥0.7 was removed from the analysis. Convergent validity which measures the convergency of items which combines to measure the same factor was assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) statistic calculated by summing up each squared factor loading divided by the number of items – AVE ≥0.5 establishes a convergent validity (Latif, 2018; Leech et al., 2015). Discriminant validity was assessed by checking that a scale that should not correlate too highly with a measure of a different component actually do not correlate very highly – i.e. the item loaded highest on the factor it is intended to measure and had a difference of 0.2 with its cross loadings (Zikmund, 2013; Latif, 2018). The internal consistency reliability which measures the extent to which a set of latent factor items measures the construct of the study was assessed using standardized loadings and each items measurement errors (Latif, 2018). A value ≥0.70 reveals adequate internal consistency reliability (Hair et al., 2012). Cronbach's Alpha commonly used to assess the reliability of a construct was not relied on soley to determine the reliability of CSKT due to the findings of Cronbach and Shavelson found that showed that Cronbach's Alpha may not be sufficient (Latif, 2018). Hence, for this study, internal consistency reliability was also determined by generating the scale Omega coefficient using STATA 14.0.

The PCA and factor analysis was carried out iteratively four (4) times until the desired result was obtained. Items/questions that are deemed problematic based on the results of the PCA and factor analyses were not included in the subsequent analyses. Below is the detailed description of the iterative process used to generate the final components/factors and items of HOPe's CSKT.

Results

3.1 First PCA

All the 10 items of the CSKT were included in this phase. The PCA and factor analysis showed that there were three (3) components in the CSKT based on an Eigenvalue of ≥ 1 (see Table 4). Since the expert face value or content validity revealed that Q4 was problematic (see Table 2 & 3), and the factor analysis showed that Q4 lacked discriminant validity, Q4 was removed from the subsequent PCA. However, although Q1 and Q9 did not possess discriminant validity, they would be included in the subsequent analysis to see whether their loadings would be better. Similarly, Q7 and Q8 were included in the subsequent analysis although they both had high uniqueness value (>0.7) to see whether their results would improve.

Table 4: CSKT items and loadings

Variable	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3	Uniqueness
Q1	**0.3973**	**0.4655**	0.1871	0.5904
Q2	0.1164	0.9911	0.0652	0.0000
Q3	0.6380	0.3588	0.0359	0.4628
Q4	**0.2808**	**0.3613**	**-0.4557**	0.5830
Q5	0.1856	0.1706	0.7364	0.3943
Q6	0.7055	0.1360	0.3267	0.3770
Q7	0.4642	0.1595	0.0904	**0.7509**
Q8	0.3502	0.0759	0.0882	**0.8638**
Q9	**0.4517**	0.1053	**0.5272**	0.5070
Q10	0.5461	0.2913	0.0385	0.6154

3.2 Second PCA

All the 10 items of the CSKT except Q4 were analyzed. The PCA and factor analysis showed that there were two (2) components in the CSKT based on an Eigenvalue of ≥1 (see Table 5). Q8 had a high uniqueness value (>0.7), thus it was removed from the subsequent PCA. However, although Q7 also had high uniqueness (>0.7) and did not possess discriminant validity, it was be included in the subsequent analysis to see if it loading would be better.

Table 5: CSKT items and loadings

Variable	Factor1	Factor2	Uniqueness
Q1	0.5925	0.2812	0.5698
Q2	0.5499	0.1292	0.6810
Q3	0.7945	0.1764	0.3377
Q5	0.1902	0.5160	0.6976
Q6	0.4903	0.5250	0.4840
Q7	**0.2907**	**0.3556**	**0.7890**
Q8	0.3507	0.1374	**0.8581**
Q9	0.1369	0.9023	0.1670
Q10	0.5628	0.2208	0.6345

3.3 Third PCA

Q1 – Q3, Q5 – Q7, and Q9 – Q10 of the CSKT were analyzed. The PCA and factor analysis showed that there were two (2) components in the CSKT based on an Eigenvalue ≥ 1 (see Table 6). Q1 – Q3 and Q10 had convergent validity. While Q5, Q6, and Q9 showed they had convergent validity even though Q6 lacked discriminant validity. Q6 was included in the subsequent PCA, however, Q7 which both lacked discriminant validity and possesses high uniqueness was removed from the subsequent PCA.

Table 6: CSKT items and loadings

Variable	Factor1	Factor2	Uniqueness
Q1	0.6068	0.2759	0.5556
Q2	0.5752	0.1211	0.6544
Q3	0.7705	0.1805	0.3737
Q5	0.1897	0.5150	0.6988
Q6	0.4877	0.5253	0.4862
Q7	**0.2937**	**0.3542**	**0.7883**
Q9	0.1399	0.9017	0.1674
Q10	0.5668	0.2180	0.6312

3.4 Fourth/Final PCA

Q1 – Q3, Q5 – Q6, and Q9 – Q10 of the CSKT were analyzed. The PCA and factor analysis showed that there were two (2) components in the CSTI tool based on an Eigenvalue ≥ 1. The items of this final model found in Table 5 explained 62% of the total variance. Q1 – Q3 and Q10 had convergent validity. Q5 and Q9 had convergent validity. Q1 – Q3, Q5, and Q9– Q10, all had discriminant validity. However, Q6 did not possess discriminant validity as the difference between its loadings on the two factors/components was <0.2 (see Table 7). Nevertheless, Q6 was remained in the final model as it was deemed an important question because when removed it does not drastically change the total variance explained (62%), and it reduced the scale reliability coefficients. When Q6 was removed, the total variance explained increased from 62% to 64%, whereas the overall Chronbach Alpha scale reliability coefficient of the 7-item scale decreased from 0.7211 to 0.6972, and the overall Omega coefficient (or the internal consistency reliability) 7-item scale decreased from 0.8016 to 0.7603. Thus, Q6 was retained as part of the final model together with Q1 – Q3, Q5, and Q9 – Q10 (see Table 8 for more details).

Table 7: CSKT items and loadings

Variable	Factor1	Factor2	Uniqueness
Q1	**0.6208**	0.2815	0.5353
Q2	**0.5789**	0.1217	0.6501
Q3	**0.7713**	0.1803	0.3726
Q5	0.2005	**0.5111**	0.6986
Q6	**0.4794**	**0.5115**	0.5085
Q9	0.1354	**0.9200**	0.1353
Q10	**0.5565**	0.2121	0.6453

Table 8: Item loadings from validity and reliability analysis

Item	Estimate /Loading	Omega Coefficient*	Chronbach Alpha+	AVE	Item-test Correlation	Chronbach Alpha when Item is Deleted
Factor1		0.764	0.684	0.41		
Q1	0.6208				0.811	0.633
Q2	0.5789				0.788	0.705
Q3	0.7713				0.718	0.654
Q10	0.5565				0.561	0.708
Factor2		0.736	0.711	0.46		
Q5	0.5111				0.505	0.705
Q6	0.5115				0.601	0.697
Q9	0.9200				0.536	0.701

Note: *Overall Internal Consistency Reliability Coefficient (or Omega Coefficient): 0.8016

+Overall Cronbach Alpha Scale Reliability Coefficient: 0.7211

Discussion

A rigorous process was used to develop and validate the CSKT. The tool which initially contained 10 items was narrowed down to 7 items after an iterative and extensive process that included expert content validation, factor analysis, and scale validity and reliability tests. The 7 item CSKT had an overall Cronbach Alpha Scale Reliability Coefficient of 0.7211 and an overall Internal Consistency Reliability Coefficient (or Omega Coefficient) of 0.8016.

The Cronbach Alpha Scale Reliability Coefficient and the Internal Consistency Reliability Coefficient (or Omega Coefficient) of the 7 item CSKT are both ≥0.70 which met the acceptable threshold (Hair et al., 2012). The widely accepted cut-off for AVE is ≥0.5, however the AVE of the components of the CSKT obtained in this study was <0.5. This may seem to raise questions over the construct's validity, nevertheless, according to Fornell & Larcker, an AVE of 0.4 is acceptable if the reliability measure was ≥0.6 (Huang et al., 2013; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In our case, the Internal Consistency Reliability Coefficient (Omega coefficient) of Factor1 & Factor2 are 0.764 and 0.736 respectively and both were ≥0.6 (see Table 8 for more details). The final draft of the 7-item CSKT is found in Table 9.

This CSKT does not just hold the prestige of being a pioneering tool measuring a person's CSK, its effectiveness has also been displayed. A sample of 36 participants with complete pre and post Conflict Sensitivity Training (CST) data was used to verify whether the 7-item CSKT was able to show the impact of the CST. The normality of the data was not achieved; hence a non-parametric analysis was carried out using Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test to compare the medians. The result of the non-parametric test is found in Table 10 and it showed that the 7-item CSTI tool found a significant difference between the pre and post CST based on the total score. Q1, Q2, and Q3 of the CSKT also showed significant results.

Nevertheless, the development and validation of this CSKT have some limitations. One limitation is the number of items. We recognize the fact that the number of items that makes up this CSKT (i.e. 7 items) may not be adequate and more items may be needed to properly examine one's knowledge of conflict sensitivity. However, based on the analyses of this study, the 7 items are a good starting point at measuring a person's knowledge of conflict sensitivity. Moreover, none of the external experts recommended adding more questions to the CSKT during the content validity analysis of this CSKT. We hope to increase the number of items in the updated version of the CSKT. Another limitation is that this CSKT only contains two components/factors; which obviously do not cover other areas relevant to measuring one's CSK. However, as already mentioned multiple times before, this CSKT serves as a baseline for future tools that measures an individual knowledge of conflict sensitivity and possible future update may include more than two components/factors. Finally, the sample size is another limitation. Although the work of Gunawan et al. provided the scientific basis from conducting this study (Gunawan et al., 2021), we are left to only wonder how much a larger sample size might have impacted the results of the study. However, in the possible future updates of the CSKT, that would be assessed as it would be carried out with a much larger sample size. Yet, the present sample size does not necessarily invalidate the findings of this study as a rigor process was undertaken to arrive at the study conclusion.

This CSKT we believe provides a good starting point towards efforts aimed at measuring an individual knowledge of conflict sensitivity. We believe there would be updates to the CSKT and we hope to keep working on adding new items as a revision to the CSKT, through continuous expert consultation on possible items to include, data collection as more humanitarian actors undergo HOPe's Conflict Sensitivity Training (CST) and finally analyzing the data to find out the validity and reliability values.

Table 9: The CSKT

CSKT Questions	**Item Number Code**
Conflict Sensitivity Perception	Factor/Component 1
Conflict sensitivity is a positive concept	Q1
Conflict sensitivity can be applied at any level of a project	Q2
Conflict sensitivity is the ability of organization and individuals to understand the context they work in and the interaction between their project and the context, then taking steps based on the new understanding	Q3
It is important to consider the potential impacts of a conflict sensitive approach on the long-term stability of a region or community.	Q10
Conflict Sensitivity Scope	Factor/Component 2
What is the primary goal of conflict sensitivity?	Q5
Conflict sensitivity is only relevant in situations of armed conflict.	Q6

Conflict Sensitivity is considered important only for organizations operating in conflict-affected areas.	Q9

Table 10: Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test*

Variables (N=36)	Sum Ranks	P-value
Total Endline Score – Total Baseline Score	Positive rank: 632.50 Negative rank: 27.5	**0.000**
Endline Q1 – Basline Q1	Positive rank: 478.00 Negative rank: 52.00	**0.000**
Endline Q2 – Baseline Q2	Positive rank: 550.00 Negative rank: 50.00	**0.000**
Endline Q3 – Baseline Q3	Positive rank: 576.50 Negative rank: 23.50	**0.000**
Endline Q5 – Baseline Q5	Positive rank: 195.00 Negative rank: 65.00	0.145
Endline Q6 – Baseline Q6	Positive rank: 71.00 Negative rank: 0.00	0.250
Endline Q9 – Baseline Q9	Positive rank: 67.00 Negative rank: 134.00	0.890
Endline Q10 – Baseline Q10	Positive rank: 36.00 Negative rank: 00.00	0.500

***Alpha= 0.05**

Conclusion

As the concept Conflict Sensitivity is gaining attention in humanitarian intervention, there is a need to streamline efforts towards facilitating the application of Conflict Sensitivity by assessing the knowledge of the concept among humanitarian actors. The aim of this study was to develop and validate a Conflict Sensitivity Knowledge Tool (CSKT). The CSKT which initially contained 10 items was narrowed down to 7 items after an iterative and extensive process that included expert content validation, factor analysis, and scale validity and reliability tests. The 7 item CSKT obtained from this study met acceptable standard of validity and reliability (Latif, 2018; Leech et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2012; Huang et al., 2013). The implication of this study is that the 7 item CSKT obtained from this study acts as a baseline for future tools that measures an individual knowledge of conflict sensitivity and would be useful in the education of humanitarian actors and other stakeholders on conflict sensitivity and its application.

Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Emmanuel Nwekeh Junior: Led the methodology, literature review, and write ups. He was responsible for writing the original draft.

Ahmad Addam: led the conceptualization, review of data, data collection, creation of the scale, and participate in the methodology conducted while doing revisions and editing on the paper.

Maya Farran: review the paper and participate in the editing of the paper.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that this work was carried out without any commercial, financial, or personal relationships that could be perceived as potential conflicts of interest.

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